



The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

INSIDE



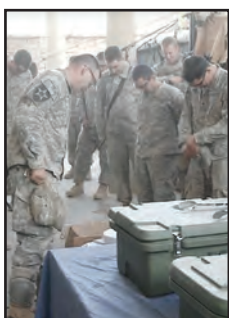
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Sharing the hope of Jesus

LMCO supports Alabamians, others taking gospel to far corners of the world

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

T.J. Odom says his family loves Scotland — they love the people's witty banter and their fun-loving nature.

But when he and his wife, Dena — members of Bethel Baptist Church, Citronelle — moved to Glasgow seven years ago it wasn't those things that drew them. It was the fact that underneath the Scots'

cheery exterior were hearts in desperate need of hope.

Though the country once had a "thriving bulwark" of a church it's now full of people whose main religion is secularism, humanism or even a "religious" devotion to soccer, Odom said. Less than 2% of Scotland's population are followers of Jesus, and that keeps the Odoms up at night.

So the couple —

along with their son, Eli, and daughter, Maggie — serve there with the International Mission Board (IMB) so they can show the Scottish people the love and hope offered in Jesus.

Seeing the Lord work

"We have spent the last seven years engaging with Scottish people, seeking to make disciples who make other disciples, with the prayer

that churches will be birthed as a result," Odom said.

In one place they have been working alongside a Scottish family to plant a church, and they "have seen the Lord work in ways that have not been prevalent in Scotland for a long time," he said.

"Through this partnership we have witnessed people coming to faith, disciples (See 'Lives,' page 10)



Photo courtesy of Odom family

T.J. Odom (left), an IMB missionary from Bethel Baptist Church, Citronelle, prays with other leaders of a church plant in Glasgow, Scotland.

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

Each gift to Lottie Moon, big or small, carries the gospel across the world

Dear Alabama Baptist pastors and church leaders,

One of the great privileges of my life is representing you as an Alabama trustee of the International Mission Board (IMB).

As we move into the month of December, Southern Baptists join with believers around the world in celebrating the coming of Christ.

We also come together to observe the season for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

'Greatest investment'

The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering provides about half of the total support Baptists send to missionaries who share the gospel around the world.

It enables our missionaries to plant churches, share Christ, minister to needs and carry the gospel to those who have never heard about the Savior's love and saving grace.

The Lottie Moon Christmas Of-

fering is one of the greatest investments any church can make in fulfilling the Great Commission.

Some people incorrectly think a lot of the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering is used to keep the organization going, but IMB President Paul Chitwood and IMB leadership have made calling and equipping missionaries their highest priority for the future.

In fact the Lord has given Chitwood a vision of 1,000 additional missionaries on the field in the next five years.

Achieving that goal will take all of us diving in with both feet.

Last year half of our Southern Baptist churches did not participate

in the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. Imagine what could happen if everybody chose to make a sacrificial gift.

What an incredible thing it would be to see 100% of Alabama Baptist churches take up a Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

I am aware that some can give more than others, but every church can make a sacrificial gift that will carry the gospel of Jesus to lost people around the world.

Thank you for considering your gift to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering this year.

Pastor Jim Cooley
First Baptist Church,
Birmingham



*Do you have a
Jesus story
 that you would like
 to share with us?*

Email us at
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The crossword puzzle can be found on page 17.



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at

The Alabama Baptist

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"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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Communicating with 'all cards on table' builds trust, respect

Full disclosure, “all cards on the table” discussions always work best and definitely end better for all parties involved. The alternative actually shows disrespect to the others involved even if we don't mean for it to do so.

In his Nov. 14 post-game press conference, Cleveland Browns head coach Freddie Kitchens called out a reporter for not being clear.

Kitchens shook off the convoluted question about defensive end Myles Garrett's helmet attack on Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Mason Rudolph and asked for a straight-up question.

“Just ask me point blank what you're asking,” he said.

Kitchens' response made me think of the times I've confused people because I added too many extra details rather than zeroing in on the main point.

I've also started asking people to rephrase their questions when I'm not absolutely confident in what they are asking so I avoid causing unnecessary confusion with my answer.

Many times it comes down to trying to explain too much in our comments and questions, but other times we dance around what we are trying to ask or share if the topic is uncomfortable for some reason.

But think about it from the various vantage points — yours, the other person/people and the overall result which spills over to affect countless others.

If any of the people involved in the discussion have difficulty

with clarity or decide to hold back information or concerns then the potential for wasted time and effort, future frustrations and even possible problems rises significantly.

If we don't take the opportunity to share transparently during the discussion phase of making decisions, then we could have pent-up, unresolved issues that will likely come out later in unproductive venting or through a lack of energy and enthusiasm.

Another reason to choose clarity over roundabout suggestions is to ensure everyone can trust what is being stated.

Have you ever interacted with someone who played games and you had to attempt to read between the lines to grasp the full meaning or expectation?

It's much less stressful to interact with people who say what they mean and mean what they say — even if they do come across a bit harsh at times.

Of course improvements can be made there as well with a deep breath, softer voice level and gentler tone.

If someone is known for his or her sharp responses then many times others will avoid being

on the receiving end of those responses which may mean not sharing fully and clearly.

Others who hold back may fear rejection or assume the person can't handle all the details and in an attempt to protect the person's feelings restrict details.

And then there's the common situation where we self-diagnose the reasoning behind a comment, decision or action based on partial information.

The guessing game ends, however, when we show mutual respect by clearly sharing the full truth with each other. 🌈

RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

Taking a few moments for old school-style, in-person conversations, playing without mobile devices might be our new 'apple a day'

When I sorted through the mail a few weeks ago and discovered a four-color Christmas catalog for toys — Amazon's Ultimate Wish List — my mind jumped immediately to my childhood when we received the annual Sears Christmas Wish Book.

Everyone received the Wish Book back in the day. It's how we made our list for what toys and gifts we wanted for Christmas — that and the commercials on Saturday morning of course. The Wish Book had all the latest toys displayed in four color.

The Sears Wish Book is no longer printed but even if it were I can't imagine it would have the same impact as it did then — with no internet and no mobile devices with which to compete.

While it seems ironic that in this



high-tech, digital age an online sales company mails out print catalogs, it does make sense as a way to stand out. Children and their parents are bombarded with digital screens in every part of life now so the promo-

tions and ads all kind of run together sometimes.

Multimedia offers countless positive aspects and we at TAB are excited about ways we will continue growing our digital presence. But the saying “strength overdone becomes weakness” applies in the area of multimedia as much as any other.

Too many hours a day looking at a screen, especially without proper body alignment and rest breaks, will cause physical issues that come with any type of over-use situation. And emotionally and mentally the scars from over-use will no doubt run deep.

A few moments talking in person rather than texting and silencing the nonstop dings around us might just be our new “apple a day” remedy. 🌈

Your Voice



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

All I wanted for Christmas was an Apple Watch but God...

It was a beautiful fall day, mid-60s and sunny. As I walked around outside I took a few minutes to calm my mind and just listen to God.

I wish I could say I do this often, but it was an exercise I was asked to do and I reluctantly complied. The topic I pondered was generosity. It's that time of the year after all when we think about what we're thankful for and contemplate God's ultimate gift that came at Christmas.

As I walked and listened I thought about my selfish nature, how I hold things with a tight fist and how I desperately wanted freedom from the anxiety that comes with that mentality.

I told God I wanted everything I have to be His and I was willing to give up whatever He asked. That's always a dangerous prayer.

At that moment God asked me to give up the Apple Watch.

My old watch had died a few months ago and with finances tight I wasn't willing to spend the money to buy a new one. But now the Apple Watch 3 was going on sale for Black Friday.

'Give it up'

My wife and I have been married long enough that there aren't many surprises when it comes to Christmas gifts so I told her that's what I wanted. And it was on sale for \$130 — not bad right? But now God was asking me to give it up and give that money away.

Why would He do that?

I don't think it had anything to do with the price tag. We are blessed and \$130 won't change much in our lives. It was about my attitude related to the watch.

I had researched this watch. I had stalked the online sites. I was thinking about how nice it would be to have one again. Basically I was coveting this possession and it wasn't healthy. I knew He wouldn't let go of me unless I gave in.

Once I conceded I asked, "What do I do with this money?"

Many things came to mind. It could be my church or struggling families I knew or even great Baptist causes in our state, but nothing clicked. I felt God telling me to open Instagram and look at the first picture that came up (God can even use Instagram for good).

The first picture I saw was that of the editor of *The Alabama Baptist* with a group of people in her office.

"You want me to give this money to *TAB*?" I asked. No that wasn't it. God wanted me to share my story.

I was scared and nervous, but I did what He asked me to do. And what a moment of joy, peace and complete

fulfillment to be part of what God is doing, to know without a shadow of a doubt what He was asking me to do and to follow through and do it.

It was a moment of immediate freedom. I didn't have to research that thing anymore. I didn't have to consider the lines on Black Friday.

I'm free to focus on God and others.

This is where you come in, readers.

Why can't we all do this? This wasn't about the monetary value, it was about giving

up something I covet, the watch, for something I covet more, closeness to God.

Generosity is not about the gift or even who receives it. Giving is for the giver. It changes the longings of our heart and can remove greed and selfishness if practiced often.

I may never own a smart watch again. Or maybe God will work something else out and I will. Ultimately it doesn't matter because God is getting what He wants from me — my heart and my obedience.

Let me invite you to participate. What is that one particular gift you really want for Christmas?

Maybe it's not what you want for yourself but a gift you want to give.

We like to think of ourselves as generous when we give gifts to other people but often we are seeking their approval or affection. Can you give that up to God and see what He does?

The money I would have spent on the watch will now go to my church because I want to be a part of the vision God has given us. And the obedience in telling my story is what you are reading here.

Lifestyle of generosity

Maybe you want to give to your church, to *TAB*, to the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries or to someone you know who really needs it. It's important to whom you give but not as important as your willingness to give.

This isn't a fun one-time Christmas promotion — this is a lifestyle. It's a reminder of the One who gave you everything, who owns everything and who desires all of you.

So definitely give. And tell us your story so we can share what God is doing. Tell us what you're giving up, who you are giving to and what God does when you do.

Can you imagine the excitement when you see the upcoming issues of *The Alabama Baptist* where Christians across the state are sharing their stories of how God is speaking to them?

I can't wait!

EDITOR'S NOTE — The author works for an Alabama Baptist entity and asked to remain anonymous.



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Share your story online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“Once in our world, a stable had something in it that was bigger than our whole world.”

C. S. LEWIS
Author and lay theologian

Pastors are often seen as those who do not need help. Yet behind that curtain are pastors who are struggling and don't know where to turn.

Ed Stetzer
Author and speaker

Life is tough, so much so that it can be near impossible to find any joy in it. When we set our eyes on our every day nonsense, we are not setting our eyes where God told us to put them.

Slow down and take time to notice the gifts that God has given us every day. Look outside and see His creation. Fall is one of the most beautiful times of the year, and God created that especially for you to enjoy and to make you smile.

“God saw all that He had made and it was very good” (Gen. 1:31). Enjoy the beauty every day, embrace love and joy every day and soon it will become your life

Amy Hacker
TAB staff member

It is when we trust God and obey His will, even against our own better judgment, that we are able to see His glory and find the joy that comes from serving Him.

Jeffery M. Leonard
Samford University

During the holidays, some students might be a bit more on edge than usual. It's possible that they'll be more quickly angered or annoyed. They might snap back at

someone when they normally wouldn't. They might not fulfill their responsibilities in your group as well as they normally would. Chances are they're trying their best to juggle school, family, friends and responsibilities at church, and they desperately want to do that well.

When they're late for praise band practice or they forget that they're supposed to lead the Bible study on Thursday night, cut them a little slack. Show some grace, and remind them that they don't have to be perfect. Remind them that their value comes from Christ and not from their accomplishments.

Lauren Cumbie
YMLink.org



BP photo
Ronnie Floyd is president and CEO of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee.

Diversity in the SBC

Southern Baptists have proven and affirmed upon several occasions our commitment to stand on the word of God — that the Bible is truth without any mixture of error.

We stand on this truth as stated in the Baptist Faith & Message and its call to take the gospel to every person in every town, every city, every state and every nation.

We as leaders should be committed to this.

One key to a healthier culture in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) is to empower all churches, all generations, all ethnicities and all languages for gospel service. Strengthening our commitment to becoming a multiethnic, multilingual denomination begins in the local churches and should be carried all the way through our presidential appointment process and trustee appointment process.

It's my prayer that Southern Baptists remain a people of The Book while also realizing we have no choice but to become as diverse as possible — both in our churches and our leadership. This is imperative if we are going to reach the people of America and the peoples across the globe. Now is the time to lead.

(Adapted from an article originally posted on bpnews.net)

—Ronnie Floyd

From the *Twitterverse*

@PriscillaShirer

... Every knee will bow ... You can do it now voluntarily. Or you can do it later mandatorily. But make no mistake, every knee will bow at THE NAME.

@Slsellers7170

This I know out of suffering. The Master Conductor is writing a beautiful symphony that He, the Lord, will be [gloriously] exalted! When it's played through your life, it's a beautiful song of grace.

@macbrunson

Eph. 4:32: Be kind to one another, tenderhearted ... Every leader and pastor of the (Southern Baptist Convention) needs to seriously read and pray over this before they engage on social media. Seriously, what are we teaching our people and what are we saying to the watching world?

@MichaelCatt

Until the church learns to function in the power of the Spirit, we will be a dysfunctional family arguing over preferences, straining at gnats and by default unable to share a viable witness with the lost world.

@danwhitejr

No one teaches you in seminary how to forgive congregants for the wounds inflicted that they'll never apologize for.

@tobymac

As we enter this week of Thanksgiving we have something we'd like to share. Such overwhelming love has surrounded us this last month. We still don't quite know which end is up but we do know we are loved. As we mourn our firstborn son, God has poured out His love on us through people. He has loved

us through you ... your kind acts and words and prayers and thoughts and songs and poems and teachings and gifts and meals and time and expertise and travel have made death bearable. You have been God's light to us in our darkest days. ...

@LifeWay

“We all walk through seasons of suffering. We don't have to do the winning. Let's fight to be thankful that He's already won.”
— @ScarletEH

@scottdawson

So thankful for the body of Christ. I'm overwhelmed with gratitude for all of us working together.

We may have differences and even different agendas but wrap us all up and you get an incredible display of God's greatness.

Thank you, Father, for your body!



Decrease holiday stress by simplifying, being missions-minded in your giving

By Janet Erwin
The Alabama Baptist

Creating new holiday experiences with my family is high on my list and Christmas is a great time to be missions-minded in one's giving — both in time and gifts.

If your family has time to give consider blessing others in some way. A few years ago my mother was spending her first Christmas in an assisted living facility almost a two-hour drive from my home. With the distance factor and her health issues our family decided to take Christmas to her and the other residents of the facility.

I prearranged with the facility director to present a program for any

who wanted to participate. My son, Trey, plays the guitar and he and my husband, Monte, sing. They began by singing and leading us in Christmas carols while my younger son, Trent, interspersed the songs with portions of the Bible story from The Message Bible.

Monte shared the story behind “Silent Night” and Trey (who had been studying German for four years and was a summer missionary there the previous summer) sang the song in German.

I opened the picture book, “The Legend of the Candy Cane” and

read the story while turning the pages for all to see. I also brought materials for the residents to craft candy canes out of pipe cleaners and beads.

We assisted those who couldn't see well or whose hands were too arthritic to complete their candy canes. Then we distributed store-bought candy canes as a treat. We encouraged the men and women to share one of their candy cane treats with another resident

who didn't attend and to tell that person the Christmas story.

While our family's Christmas Day was different that year, God used

us to bring a Christmas experience that focused on Jesus to these dear people. Perhaps your family or small group could engage in something similar this Christmas.

Purpose-filled gifts

Or maybe your time is limited but you still have lots of gifts to purchase for your family, co-workers or small groups. Consider giving gifts with a missions purpose. That's what I did last year for family stocking stuffers. I picked up a gift catalog from Baptist Global Response (BGR) and began planning.

As I turned the pages packed with photos and stories illustrating ways for my gift giving to meet global needs while at the same time introducing people in other cultures to





Baptist Global Relief photo

Baptist Global Relief is one of several organizations offering catalogs that show how monetary gifts equate with the practical costs of ministry. For a list of other gift catalogs, go to www.tabonline.org/gift-catalogs.

Jesus, I began to match projects and items with family members.

For my 9-month-old granddaughter I chose infant formula. I selected a blanket for refugee relief as a reminder of the time my husband had assisted in blanket distribution to refugees in Albania. My younger son has a heart for rescuing people from human trafficking and I discovered I could connect with his passion by providing a safe place for a day. I continued until everyone was matched with a gift for people all over the world.

How to get started

To get started, download the BGR catalog at gobgr.org/gift-catalog or call 866-974-5623 and request one be mailed to you.

To emphasize the gift aspect of each follow these steps after making selections:

1. Download and complete the BGR gift catalog order form and send your payment.
2. Cut out the descriptions of the gifts.

3. Tape or glue each description onto an index card.

4. On the other side of the index card, write the reason for the gift choice on behalf of the family member. On my granddaughter's card, I wrote: *Meredith, I chose this gift of baby formula with you in mind. I know your mommy and daddy feed you well each day but some children in our world go hungry. This gift will help another baby like you survive.*

5. Designate a special stocking or gift box to store the cards in.

6. Select a family member (consider a child old enough to read) to pull out the cards one by one and distribute them to the recipient.

7. Listen as each person reads aloud about his or her gift.

8. Pray for the global recipients of these gifts.

Begin with Christmas gifts and then expand your catalog gift giving to birthdays, holiday gifts, Vacation Bible School offerings or missions projects for small groups.✝

SHARE YOUR STORIES

What are some creative ways you and your family share the good news at Christmas?

Share your stories with us at
news@thealabamabaptist.org.

Teaching children to find the TRUE MEANING of CHRISTMAS

Christmas catalogs and online advertising may promote the commercial aspect of the holidays, but Christian parents also work to keep “Christ in Christmas” by teaching children to focus on the spiritual aspects more than the commercial parts. Teaching youngsters that “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35) is one way. Another way is service to others and service to God. Here are some suggestions:

1. FILL YOUR HEART AND MIND WITH THE JOYS OF THE SEASON.

In the rush of all things Christmas decide as a family what you will attend and participate in ... and what you will not. A calendar filled with a multitude of busy activities leaves little time to savor the meaning of Christmas.

2. ENJOY THE MUSIC OF CHRISTMAS HYMNS.

Many churches and communities perform concerts and music that focuses on the familiar hymns of Christmas. As you gather together talk about the words and music — often written centuries ago — but still well known today.

3. START A WINTER CLOTHES CLOSET AT YOUR CHURCH.

Gently worn clothing including caps, mittens and boots can be collected by your church and distributed to a low-income area or homeless center. Pray with your children for the youngsters who will receive their contribution.

4. GIVE A GIFT MADE WITH LOVING HANDS.

This year set an example of a gift made with love, instead of a store-bought item. Teach children to be creative in thinking about a special gift for a family member or friend.

5. SUPPORT FOSTER CARE FAMILIES IN YOUR COMMUNITY.

Contact your local Department of Human Resources or the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries (www.alabamachild.org) for a list of donations the organization can accept on behalf of foster families.

(Adapted from article by TAB correspondent Carolyn Tomlin)

Celine Simpson was born and raised in France and met her husband, Troy, at one of the U.S. military bases in Germany. After they married they moved to South Carolina and then to Alabama 10 years ago.

True surrender

From Army wife to church secretary, Simpson sees God's hand at work

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

God may have used a burning bush in the past to make a calling known, but for Celine Simpson, it was a burning pile of brush.

It started out simple, she said. Her husband, Troy, had set fire to some sticks and leaves outside their new house in rural Alabama and the neighbors had noticed.

"They thought our house was on fire so they called the fire department and then came down to help," Simpson said. "Just like real Christians they were loving their neighbors."

Fanning the flame

They invited the Simpsons to visit their church, Crawford Baptist, Phenix City, and in doing so, they fanned the flame of another fire.

God was at work in Simpson's life.

It was a story He had started writing "way before I was born," Simpson said, but she first began to notice it when she met her now husband on the other side of the world.

"I was born and raised in France, and I met my husband at one of the U.S. military bases in Germany," she said.

And one night as the two walked through the streets they passed a church and he asked her if she believed in God.

"I said no and my heart just ached," Simpson said. "I knew I had told a lie. But I didn't know anything about Him so how could I say I knew Him or believed in Him?"

She said God continued to stir in her heart even through her own wedding. In the middle of the ceremony she felt deep conviction as the minister spoke. When they moved to South Carolina to start their family people began to ask her more and more about her faith.

"I visited a church and after the service I was bawling," Simpson said. "The pastor asked if he could talk to me and he told me more about who God is and what Jesus Christ had done for me."

She was baptized in May 1997 when she was eight months pregnant with her older son, Dylan, but her newfound faith was still finding its feet, she said. When she moved to Alabama 10 years ago she was just leaving the "wilderness" of figuring out what surrender really meant.

"I truly believe I didn't really surrender until right before we moved



Photo courtesy of Celine Simpson

to Alabama," Simpson said. "We had worked hard at being good parents, but I don't think we had really realized what it meant to survive by faith."

But she said God knew exactly what He was doing when He led the family to Alabama for her husband to work at the nearby Army base. She was forced to start over again in an unfamiliar place and she learned to lean on Him daily. She felt like God gave her Joshua 1:8-9 in that season — to encourage her to be strong, courageous and walk into the life God had for her. It wasn't long before the Simpsons started attending their neighbors' church.

'Above and beyond'

And not only that — she secured a part-time job as Crawford Baptist's secretary.

Pastor Steve Williamson said it was a life-changing move for her — and for the church.

"She thought she was just getting a part-time secretarial job to help make ends meet, but she began to see the calling on her life," he said.

And over Simpson's past decade of service — which the church recently honored her for — Williamson has come to rely on her as ministerial staff, he said.

"The way she ministers to others and cares for others goes above and beyond her job title," he said. "Her faith has matured over the years, and she now understands that what she does has eternal consequences. It's been unique watching her come to the realization that she was called to do what she does."

Mutual investment

Her earnest prayers and investment in the community have changed lives, he said.

And the congregation of Crawford Baptist has invested back. Through the years as Simpson's parents have come to visit from France the church has welcomed them in as family. And when Simpson's younger son, Sebastien, was baptized a few years back, Williamson memorized the words to say in French so that Simpson's parents would be able to understand.

Simpson said it's been amazing to see God's story unfold in her life.

"When I look back and I really realize what He's done it's amazing," she said. "I just love Him so much because He loved me all the way in France before I was even born. He seeks all of us and He has sought me all the way." ✠

"I just love Him so much because He loved me all the way in France before I was even born. He seeks all of us and He has sought me all the way."

Celine Simpson



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Christmas Features and Figures

Angels and Carols

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

Some of the common features and figures made prominent in our Christmas celebrations can serve as pointers that lead us back to their counterparts in the biblical record of Christ's birth.

Among such present-day figures found in programs and pageants are people dressed as shepherds, angels and wise men. Some of the common features in our celebrations include singing carols, entertaining guests, exchanging gifts, decorating a tree and stringing lights.

In this month that brings us to another Christmas season Theology 101 will follow some of these features and figures back into Scripture to think anew about their significance in Christ's coming and in our Christian living.

This week we begin by thinking about angels and carols.

'Good tidings of great joy'

Children dressed as angels often appear in Christmas pageants. When we look again at the biblical account of the first Christmas we encounter angels who visited shepherds as they tended their flocks near Bethlehem. The account tells of an angel of the Lord who appeared to shepherds: "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11). Might we not say that sharing God's good news is an angelic thing to do?

Our Christmas worship typi-

cally includes the singing of familiar Christmas carols. Behind this cherished practice is the biblical record that a choir of angels suddenly joined the angel of the Lord. Those heavenly visitors appeared singing heaven's praise to God: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill toward men" (Luke 2:13-14).

The message brought by the messenger angel to the shepherds reminds us that as Christians we also have a message to share. Our message is one that causes singing and praise when experienced and when shared.

We have a Savior and we are under a divine mandate to bear witness to Him to the ends of the earth. From the caroling angels we are reminded that as Christians we have the highest reasons for being praising people.

Our message and our praising are not merely for the Christmas season. The message is to be shared everywhere to everyone all the time. Such is our missionary mandate from the Christ who came at Christmas.

May Christmas celebrations again this year make their impact on the joy of our hearts and the extension of our message.✝

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.



Richness of God

Troy church's door-to-door efforts result in changed lives, blessings

Parker Roberts said he'd heard before that door-to-door evangelism is dead. He'd heard it several times, in several different places.

But he says what he's found in the neighborhoods surrounding his small church in Troy is that it's very much alive.

Roberts, who has served as pastor of Mount Moriah Baptist Church since March, goes out with other members of his church and knocks on doors and he says they're seeing God change lives one person at a time.

"We try to tell people about God and invite them to church," he said. "A few of them come and some stay and become members of this church just by us knocking on their door.

The ones who have come here have said they have seen a visible and apparent change in their lives just by making church and God a priority."

'Visible' results

Roberts said he's heard testimony after testimony of that happening.

"One guy said he was struggling in his marriage and he doesn't know exactly how it happened, but ever since he committed to making church a priority in his life things have been healing," Roberts said.

He also said people are feeling

God's provision for their physical needs.

"Nobody over here is rich, I don't think, but people are seeing God help them pay their bills and put food on the table," he said. "We recognize that our richness doesn't come from our money but from God. People are trying to seek God first for the first time and He's tak-

ing care of them. It's been so visible here."

It's the first pastorate for Roberts, a student at nearby Troy University. Kenneth Baggett, director of missions for Salem-Troy Baptist Association, said Roberts has an "eager pastor's heart."

"He has been able to relate well to the people there and they relate well to him," Baggett said.

"He's been instrumental in leading the evangelism effort and I think in time they will see it bear a lot of fruit. God honors our obedience."

Roberts said they're observing some of that fruit already — they've baptized several this year.

"We're a small church. Our max capacity is probably 60 people in our sanctuary and that's pushing it — we may have to bring out some extra chairs," he said.

"But we've seen some growth here just by knocking on doors. God's been blessing us bountifully over here." (Grace Thornton)

"We recognize that our richness doesn't come from our money but from God. People are trying to seek God first ... and He's taking care of them."

**Pastor Parker Roberts
Mount Moriah Baptist Church,
Troy**



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T.J. and Dena Odom, along with their children Eli and Maggie, have spent the past seven years as IMB missionaries in Glasgow, Scotland. Their work is supported by gifts to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

Lives being changed



Photo courtesy of Odom family

Be in prayer for Odoms, other missionaries carrying gospel around the world

(continued from page 1) being made and now a new generation of young leaders being trained.”

Thanks to the gifts of Southern Baptists, IMB personnel like the Odoms are taking the gospel to people all over the world who haven't heard it yet. They're witnessing lives being changed and churches planted. More than 3,600 IMB workers are scattered across the globe engaging unreached people with the hope of Jesus.

One major way that work is funded is through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering (LMCO) for International Missions, named in

honor of Moon, a missionary who gave her life to take the gospel to China more than a century ago. One hundred percent of LMCO goes straight to missionaries who are making disciples and multiplying churches among unreached people groups. The national offering goal this year is \$165 million.

Featured missionaries

This season of giving begins with the Week of Prayer for International Missions, set this year for Dec. 1–8.

The week will highlight stories of missionaries who, like the Odoms, are sup-

ported by the LMCO:

► Bulgarians are desperate for hope but they're not interested in anything to do with religion. So Brian and Mandy Davis spend their days building relationships to display the life-changing love of Jesus.

► Of the 50 least-reached campuses in North America, 34 are in Quebec. But IMB missionaries Robert and Sharon Pinkston say they believe if students could just experience the opportunity to hear the gospel many of them would believe it.

► The homeless men who live on the streets of Tokyo aren't used to being looked in the eye, much less called

by name. So when Mark Bennett gives them bread, loves them like Jesus and greets them personally it's a game changer.

► In South Korea, IMB missionary Hun Sol believes missions and revival go together. As he trains Korean students to go out into other parts of Asia and share the gospel he hopes the passion they bring back with them will spark a movement back home too.

► For months Venezuelans have been spilling into Colombia by the thousands. They're hungry and desperate for help and hope. Paul and Robin Tinley say it's round-the-clock work to meet the onslaught of needs — but also an unprecedented open door for the gospel.

► The plight of migrant workers in Mexico can seem depressing — they

live in poverty and perform backbreaking work every day with very little rest.

But David and Ann Boyter and their teammates say God is breaking their cycle of hopelessness with new life.



Photo courtesy of Odom family
IMB missionary T.J. Odom (right) baptizes a new believer at a church plant in Glasgow, Scotland.

► In the East Asian country where Peter Station serves reaching nomadic herdsman with the gospel is like hitting a moving target — they pack up their tents and change locations as often as once a month.

But even so he's watching disciples grow strong roots in the gospel.

Guides and videos

Prayer guides and videos with these stories and more are available for individuals, groups and churches to download or order for free. For more information visit imb.org/lottie-moon-christmas-offering.



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**The Week of Prayer
for International Missions
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Lineville Baptist Church and pastor Ben Curlee have a growing partnership with two Alabama natives serving as IMB missionaries in Ireland. The church has sent three teams since September 2018.



Photo courtesy of Ben Curlee

Pushing the gospel into darkness

Lineville Baptist partners with missionaries in Ireland through IMB, LMCO

Ben Curlee says it may sound a little strange but conversing with people in Ireland reminds him a little bit of east Alabama.

“There are a lot of cultural and worldview differences, but at the end of the day the Catholic and high Protestant influence in Ireland gives the people there a passing familiarity with the

gospel,” said Curlee, pastor of Lineville Baptist Church in Carey Baptist Association. “They may belong to a church and go for weddings and funerals. Talking with them sounds a lot like talking to a buddy just down the road who might be a member of so-and-so Baptist church but doesn’t have a real understanding of the gospel.”

Making this connection has impacted Curlee and his church deeply. Lineville Baptist has a growing partnership with two Alabama natives serving in Ireland as International Mission Board missionaries and has sent three missions teams since September 2018.

It becomes real

“Our church has come alive with the understanding of lostness in Europe,” Curlee said. “For those who have been it has changed

the way they see missions.”

When you spend time with missionaries, go to their grocery store, meet the friends they’re trying to reach and visit the coffee shop where they are working to engage people it becomes real, he said.

“We have names, faces and a relationship with folks who partner with us and directly benefit from our Lottie Moon emphasis,” Curlee said. “Our church is passionate and loves the work we accomplish to-

gether through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, but this gives us a personal touch we’ve never had before.”

‘Powerful tool’

It’s also been a reminder of what’s important and how God uses the faithfulness of believers to push the gospel into the darkness, he said. “This partnership is a powerful tool that the Lord is using to stir our hearts and wake us up.” (Grace Thornton)

“This partnership is a powerful tool that the Lord is using to stir our hearts and wake us up.”

Pastor Ben Curlee
Lineville Baptist Church

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Beeson Divinity School offers new scholarship for military chaplains

Gen. James M. Hutchens was brought to faith in Jesus Christ while he was an enlisted paratrooper by his Army unit chaplain. And because of that chaplain Hutchens not only became a Christian but also felt a call to follow him into military chaplaincy.

After leaving the Army and while both were students at Wheaton College, Hutchens was asked a simple but profound question by his fiancé: "If you could do anything you wanted to do without a fear of failure, what would you do?"

"I think I'd like to serve in the chaplaincy," he replied. "That's where I found the Lord and that's where I got direction and a sense of purpose."

After college and seminary Hutchens entered the Army as a chaplain, serving as a Green Beret in the 10th Special Forces Group.

During the Vietnam War he served with the 173rd Airborne Brigade and be-

came the first chaplain wounded in Vietnam. He later was awarded the Purple Heart and two Bronze Star Medals for valor.

By the time he retired in 1994, Hutchens had earned the rank of brigadier general.

Just like the chaplain who changed Hutchens' life, he changed the lives of many men in his units including Birmingham doctor Alton Baker.

'Stabilizing influence'

Baker, a nuclear medicine physician at Princeton Baptist Medical Center and part-time Beeson student, met Hutchens while serving in the 10th Special Forces Group as group surgeon.

"Jim Hutchens was a real stabilizing influence in our lives in the Special Forces," Baker said.

For that reason Baker wanted to honor Hutchens and ensure his legacy by making it financially possible for men and women to prepare for military chaplaincy at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School.

"We want to make Beeson the premier divinity school that supplies military chaplains," Baker said.

The General James M. Hutchens Military Chaplain Scholarship will be awarded to men and women enrolled in the master of divinity program and who are committed to pursuing a career in the military as an active duty chaplain.

"We are tremendously grateful to the Bakers for establishing this scholarship and being fully committed to providing an excellent pathway to military chaplaincy for appropriately called and gifted Beeson students,"

Beeson's Dean Douglas A. Sweeney said. "Those serving in the armed forces stand in need of the best possible spiritual guidance and care. Now some of them can get that care from future Beeson alumni."

For more information go to www.beesondivinity.com. (Samford)

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

Macedonia Baptist Church, Gadsden, is prayerfully seeking a full-time pastor. Send resumé to: macedoniapastorsearch2019@gmail.com or mail to: Macedonia Baptist Church, 2040 Macedonia Road, Gadsden, AL 35801.

PASTOR

College Heights Baptist Church, Glencoe, is searching for a full-time pastor. Send resumé to: College Heights Baptist Church, 411 Rabbittown Road, Glencoe, AL 35905.

PASTOR

Cave Spring Baptist seeks full-time, energetic pastor for a motivated, multi-generational flock to accomplish Kingdom work in the fast-growing area of Priceville, Alabama. Only those whose life and principles align with 1 Timothy 3:1-7 need apply. Deadline: Dec. 28. Email resumé to: info@thecsbc.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Moundville, Alabama, has position available for bivocational pastor. Send resumé to: jbshaw@mound.net or cindyathews0126@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

First Baptist Church, Uriah, is prayerfully seeking a bivocational pastor. Please mail resumé to: First Baptist Church, ATTN: Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 337, Uriah, AL 36480.

YOUTH MINISTER

Silver Run Baptist Church seeking a part-time passionate youth minister with 1 year or plus experience in leadership associated position with youth. Send resumé to: P.O. Box 8, Seale, AL 36875, ATTN: Lena Harris or email to: cowgirllena@yahoo.com.

BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH MINISTER

The focus is loving and discipling our youth. Dogwood Grove Baptist, Adger, Alabama. Email queries to: pastor@bobfitz1.pcc@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL/PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER

Montevallo First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 46, Montevallo, AL 35115 is prayerfully seeking a part-time youth minister. To apply, please submit a cover letter and resumé to the above address or email to: mfbcbellsouth.net.

OTHER POSITIONS

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

Sulphur Springs Baptist Association, consisting of 20 churches, accepting resumé for bivocational director of missions. Send to: DOM Search Committee, 4501 Greathouse Road, Dora, AL 35062, or email to: SSBAoffice@gmail.com.

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

The Lamar Baptist Association is prayerfully seeking and currently accepting resumé for the position of director of missions. This person should have a background in pastoral service or missions related experience. This will be a bivocational position with a minimum hourly requirement for weekly duties. Resumé should be sent to: Lamar Baptist Association, P.O. Box 550, Vernon, AL 35592 or dropped by the office at 175 10th St. NW, Vernon, AL. No application will be considered without a resumé and references. The deadline to submit is Dec. 15. Contact the association office at 205-695-9165 with any questions.

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3 stories

you should know



Photo by Hannah Muñoz

Tom Richter (center), pastor of First Baptist Church, Cullman, shares with church planters during the Alabama Church Planters Network meeting at 3Circle Church — South Campus, Fairhope. Richter also spoke during the dinner portion of the meeting held Nov. 10.

Tony Evans publishes CSB study Bible

Tony Evans has become the first African American to publish a study Bible.

Evans is pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship, Dallas, and founder of The Urban Alternative.

He has been in pastoral ministry for more than 50 years and has authored more than 100 books, Bible studies and devotionals.

Evans said he developed this study Bible and commentary to help people grasp a Kingdom-oriented mindset.

“The CSB Tony Evans Study Bible” from the Christian Standard Bible and “The Tony Evans Bible Commentary” are published by LifeWay’s B&H Publishing. (BP)



EVANS

Coptic Christians attacked in Egypt

The elder son of a Coptic Christian family is in critical condition after he, his mother and younger brother were stabbed by a Muslim assailant while sitting outside their house in Egypt’s Nas-siriya village Nov. 17.

Residents in the predominantly Coptic community said the man, identified on Facebook as a Muslim, assaulted the family members with a dagger after arguing with them. According to media reports the attacker told his victims that Christians must not sit outside.

Security forces in Minya have reportedly arrested the suspect.

Egypt is a majority Muslim country and ranked 16th on Christian support organization Open Doors’ 2019 World Watch List of countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian. (MS)

— NEWSBRIEFS —

Wilks celebrates 20-year anniversary as pastor of NorthPark, Trussville



When Bill Wilks was called as pastor of Roebuck Park Baptist Church 20 years ago it was in the middle of a lot of change.

“They had a great history, but the community was changing and the church was declining,” he said.

Together they followed through on what the church had already voted to do — they moved to Trussville from Birmingham, built a new facility and changed their name to NorthPark Baptist.



WILKS

“We put our hand to the plow and didn’t look back, and we’ve seen God do some great things over the years,” Wilks said. “We’ve seen a lot of growth.”

One way that’s happened is through a disciple-making model Wilks started called D-Life.

“We have been able to train a lot of people to live a lifestyle of discipleship,” he said.

That goes for NorthPark, where they’re seeing conversion growth, but it also goes for the roughly 500 churches in seven countries now implementing the D-Life model.

“The key to revival in America is not the megachurch but the many churches we have across the nation. If they would adopt a disciple-making culture we would see revival,” he said.

Wilks noted that he’s thankful for a church home that would lead out in that grassroots effort.

“We are grateful for the people at NorthPark. They’re loving, they’re kind and they’ve been a wonderful family to my family,” he said. “We feel incredibly blessed to have been here 20 years.” (Grace Thornton)

Harvest Bible Chapel leaders failed to provide oversight, report says



A “massive corporate governance failure apparently developed over several years” at Harvest Bible Chapel primarily because of its former pastor, James MacDonald (pictured), according to

a report released Nov. 21 by the Chicago-area megachurch.

Among other concerns the report cites a lack of “adequate checks and balances” in the church’s finances. Harvest plans to approach MacDonald for reimbursement of items that shouldn’t have been purchased with the church’s money by the end of the year, according to Harvest treasurer Tim Stoner, who said elders want to give the former pastor “every opportunity to make right what has been done wrong and to make restitution to the church.”

The church has already implemented a number of changes, including closing private accounts, forming a new finance committee and tightening requirements for documentation for credit card purchases. Stoner said the church’s growth in numbers and giving was “exhilarating” but led to minimizing problems.

“We allowed the ends to justify the means by



RNS photo

News near you

BALDWIN ASSOCIATION

► **Bayside Baptist Church, Lillian**, will host guest speaker Wayne McMillian on Dec. 15 at 10:30 a.m. McMillian served with the International Mission Board for 10 years in Africa and served with the North American Mission Board in the Dakota Baptist Convention. Tom Harris is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

► **Kelly Spence** is the new children's director at **Eden Westside Baptist Church, River Campus in Trussville**. Spence holds degrees from Judson College in Marion and University of North Alabama in Florence. She previously served alongside her husband, Michael, as youth director at several churches. Spence and her husband, Michael, have six children. ► **Deerfoot Baptist Church, Trussville**, will host "The Polar Express" Family Fun Night on Dec. 13 from 6 to 9 p.m. and Dec. 14 from 4 to 8 p.m. The event will include train rides, storytelling by Saint Nicholas, games, crafts, hot chocolate and cookies.



SPENCE

Train space is limited. To sign up visit www.tabonline.org/polarexpress. Glenn Sandifer is pastor.

CHILTON ASSOCIATION

► **West End Baptist Church, Clanton**, will present the Living Christmas Walk on Dec. 13–15 from 6 to 8:30 p.m. nightly at Goosepond Park in Clanton. Guests will walk through the live scenes as guides share the message of each scene. Hot chocolate will be available and the West End Baptist Hand Bell Choir will be featured. James Watkins is pastor.

CLARKE ASSOCIATION

► **Mark Presswood** is the new associational missions director of **Clarke Baptist Association**. He began Dec. 1. Presswood previously served as pastor of New Zion Baptist Church, Oak Grove, Louisiana. Prior to serving at New Zion Baptist he served for 15 years as minister of music and education at Farmstead Baptist Church, Jasper. Presswood holds a masters degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He and his wife, Deanie, have three children.



PRESSWOOD

MORGAN ASSOCIATION

► On Oct. 13 more than 120 people gathered at **Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Decatur**, to celebrate its 175th anniversary.

Pastor Chris Martin preached and the Denard Family brought special music. Bobby Head served as guest music director for the celebration.

A video history of the church was shown during the service and Lonette Berg presented the church with a certificate from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission.

A group photo was made on the front steps of the church. Lunch followed the service.

"It was a really good day," Martin said.



Photo by Lonette Berg

WALKER ASSOCIATION

► On Oct. 13, **First Baptist Church, Dora**, hosted its centennial celebration.

Pastor Ken Mostella delivered the message and special music was brought by New Life Quartet.

The church was presented certificates by David Miller, director of missions for Walker Baptist Association, and Johnie Sentell, from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission. Photos were displayed throughout the church and copies of the church history were distributed.

Lunch followed the service.

"We had a great day of celebrating. We enjoyed seeing old friends," said Mostella. "We are looking forward to continue to minister to the community of Dora."✠



Photo by Johnie Sentell

— NEWSBRIEFS —

which those results were achieved and this was wrong," he said. (RNS)

Jenkins marks 50 years in ministry, plans for many more years



Edwin Jenkins' first official ministry position was at First Baptist Church, Trussville, in 1969, and this year he celebrated his 50th year in gospel ministry.

Jenkins currently serves as interim/transitional pastor at Sherwood Baptist Church, Huntsville. He has served as a pastor for 33 years and spent 10 years with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

Jenkins retired from First Baptist Church, Athens, in 2015 and has served as transitional pastor at Mount Zion Baptist Church and Wall Highway Baptist Church, both in Huntsville. He also served as interim/transitional director of missions for Morgan Baptist Association.

Jenkins says he hopes to continue in ministry for many more years.



JENKINS

"I want to be a good steward of the excellent health God has blessed me with," he said.

Jenkins can be reached at edwinjenkins@gmail.com. (TAB)

Faith-based refugee resettlement groups sue federal government



Three faith-based groups that assist with refugee resettlement are suing the federal government, arguing a September executive order granting state and local officials the authority to block refugee resettlement violates federal law and inhibits their ability to practice their faith.

The order calls for resettlement of refugees "only in those jurisdictions in which both the state and local governments" have consented to accept them in writing.

HIAS (founded as the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society), Church World Service (CWS) and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) filed the suit Nov. 21 alleging the order violates existing law that leaves decision-making power about where to place refugees with the federal government and does not allow

state and local governments to have veto power.

The complaint also asserts the order doesn't clarify which local authorities would need to sign off to allow refugees in their area and that it could inhibit the reunification of refugee families.

The faith leaders characterized the new policy as a blow to a decades-old refugee resettlement apparatus in the U.S. that relies heavily on religious groups. Six of the nine organizations that partner with the federal government to help resettle refugees are faith-based, including HIAS, CWS and LIRS.

In recent years the annual number of refugees allowed to be resettled in the U.S. has drastically decreased. The limit in 2020 has been set at just 18,000 — a historic low.

Erol Kekic of CWS said the order would prevent local religious groups "from fulfilling their faith calling and missions to 'welcome the stranger.'" (RNS)



RNS photo

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Event and location is followed by SBOM contact person and extension.

For more information on these events, call 1-800-264-1225 or (334) 613-2 + the extension, or visit alsbom.org.

DECEMBER

- 12 **Early Bird Tax Conference**, SBOM Office Facility, Prattville, Linda Hicks, ext. 263
- 25 **Christmas Day**

JANUARY 2020

- 5-12 **January Bible Study**, Daniel Edmonds, ext. 285
- 9 **Church Tax Conference**, Decatur First, Lee Wright, ext. 241
- 12-13 **Who's Your One? Tour**, Gardendale FBC, Lori McGough, ext. 258
- 14 **Church Tax Conference**, Birmingham Metro Baptist Association Office, Lee Wright, ext. 241
- 16 **Church Tax Conference**, Mobile Baptist Association Office, Lee Wright, ext. 241
- 17-18 **Student Missions Weekend**, WorldSong, Cook Springs, Kaley Stephens, ext. 278
- 21 **Church Tax Conference**, Eastern Shore, Daphne, Lee Wright, ext. 241
- 23-25 **Southeast Youth Conclave**, Chattanooga, Tenn., Scooter Kellum, ext. 280
- 23-24 **Alabama Baptist Church Planting Basics**, House of Hope and Restoration Church, Huntsville, Jeff Mann, ext. 332
- 23-24 **Discipleship Network of Alabama**, Hunter Street, Hoover, Daniel Edmonds, ext. 285
- 28 **Church Tax Conference**, Calvary, Dothan, Lee Wright, ext. 241
- 30 **The Secret of Teams: What Great Teams Know & Do**, SBOM Facility, Prattville, Mike Jackson, ext. 210
- 31 **Renovate 2020 Johnny Hunt Simulcast**, various locations, Larry Hyche, ext. 268
- 31-2/1 **Alabama Bible Drill Retreat**, Shocco Springs, Belinda Stroud, ext. 255
- 31-2/1 **Activators Training**, WorldSong, Cook Springs, Laura Glass, ext. 226

FEBRUARY

- 1/31-2/1 **Activators Training**, WorldSong, **Listed on January calendar
- 1/31-2/1 **Alabama Bible Drill**, Shocco Springs, **Listed on January calendar
- 9 **Racial Reconciliation Sunday**, Keith Hinson, ext. 289
- 11 **Minister's Tax Conference**, FBC Decatur, Lee Wright, ext. 241
- 13 **Minister's Tax Conference**, Birmingham Metro Baptist Association Office, Lee Wright, ext. 241
- 14 **Parish Nurse Training 1**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Kathryn Helms, ext. 325
- 15 **Children's Missions Day**, Amanda Armstrong, ext. 223
- 16 **Hunger Sunday**, Jim Swedenburg, ext. 283
- 18 **Minister's Tax Conference**, Mobile Baptist Association Office, Mobile, Lee Wright, ext. 241
- 20 **Minister's Tax Conference**, Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne, Lee Wright, ext. 241
- 21-22 **Pursue**, First Baptist Church, Montgomery, Mike Nuss, ext. 276
- 21-22 **Bivocational Minister/Spouse Retreat**, Linda Hicks, ext. 263
- 22 **Renew...a day away with friends**, Westwood Baptist Church, Alabaster, Amanda Armstrong, ext. 223
- 23-24 **State Evangelism Conference**, Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery, Lori McGough, ext. 258
- 23 **Disciple Making Ministries Dinner**, Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery, Daniel Edmonds, ext. 285
- 24 **Reaching Gen Z**, Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery, Lori McGough, ext. 258
- 24 **Ministers' Wives Luncheon**, Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery, Kathryn Helms, ext. 325
- 24 **Sharing Hope Conference for Hispanic Pastors and Leaders**, Heritage, Montgomery, Annel Robayna, ext. 270
- 27 **Minister's Tax Conference**, Calvary Baptist Church, Dothan, Lee Wright, ext. 241
- 28-3/1 **Children's Honor Choir Tour**, North Alabama area, Karen Gosselin, ext. 318



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STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS



Marion Association crosses state line into Mississippi for gospel outreach

Jim Berrian says for him Marion Baptist Association's missions trips are like a "revival on steroids." There's preaching. There are testimonies. But there's also construction work, backyard Bible clubs and occasionally sports camps and cheerleading camps.

"It's a blessing," he said. This year's trip was no different. Berrian, a member of Hines Memorial Baptist Church, Bear Creek, led the association's team to help build a new facility for a church in Gunnison, Mississippi. They hung insulation and did the wiring while others led backyard Bible clubs and did community outreach.

For the first three nights C.W. Box — the father of Keith Box, director of missions for Marion Baptist Association — preached and on the fourth night the team shared testimonies.

"The Lord met with us," Berrian said.

And at the end of the week three people professed faith in Christ.



Photo courtesy of Jim Berrian

A team from Marion Association helps install insulation and wiring in a new facility for a church in Gunnison, Mississippi.

"There is a great need over there," he said, noting that many people are stuck in a cycle of generational poverty. "God is moving to help those folks. We just want them to see the love of Christ through our missions work and share Jesus with them."

Zane Miles, student minister and associate pastor at First Baptist Church, Guin, said the youth who went on the trip embraced that opportunity as they led backyard Bible clubs and ministered to

children at a Boys and Girls Club in the area.

"For me personally it was phenomenal to see the students that I interact with on a daily basis become the leaders and begin to share Christ with the people around them," Miles said. "They kept saying, 'Man, I didn't know that I could love somebody so much in such a short amount of time,' and 'I didn't know these kids would have such an impact on my life.'" (Grace Thornton)

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Christian Crossword

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Across

- Rather give ___(s). (Luke 11:41)
- Crustacean.
- Like a ___ planted by the rivers. (Ps. 1:3)
- Roman numeral 52.
- Samuel answered, ___ am I. (1 Sam. 3:4)
- Saul came after the ___. (1 Sam. 11:5)
- Who will have all ___ to be saved. (1 Tim. 2:4)
- Grain.
- How ___(ble) are thy tabernacles. (Ps. 84:1)
- He shall give his ___ charge over thee. (Ps. 91:11)
- Meekness, ___ ance. (Gal. 5:23)
- New. (prefix)
- Mouths.
- A cave.
- The flesh of the child waxed ___. (2 Kings 4:34)
- ___ not two

- sparrows sold. (Matt. 10:29)
- Eggs. (Latin)
- But seek not ___. (Amos 5:5)
- The vision of ___ the son of Amoz. (Isa. 1:1)
- Before (poetic).
- And ___ brought forth her firstborn son. (Luke 2:7)
- Of ___ many books there is no end. (Eccles. 12:12)
- Sons of ___; Joseph and Benjamin. (Gen. 35:24)
- Belonging to Hezekiah's mother. (2 Kings 18:1,2)
- Kemuel the father of ___. (Gen. 22:21)
- Short for Abraham.
- Is not. (slang)
- To be prolific.
- The 23rd letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
- Loiters behind.
- Good woman's name.

- The sons of ___ were sons of Belial. (1 Sam. 2:2)
- Down**
- ___ Mater.
 - Property right.
 - Chinese dynasty.
 - He was moved with ___ against him. (Dan. 8:7)
 - Let us ___ together. (Isa. 1:18)
 - Nathan said to David, thou ___ the man. (2 Sam. 12:7)
 - Though I ___ all my goods to feed the poor. (1 Cor. 13:3)
 - Absalom had a fair sister whose name was ___. (2 Sam. 13:1; alt. spelling)
 - Star of your god ___han. (Acts 7:43)
 - Great Lake.
 - Southward were Kabzeel, and ___. (Josh. 15:21; alt. spelling)
 - Compass direction.
 - Historical period.

- The fourth part of a ___ of dove's dung. (2 Kings, 6:25)
- Form of "to be."
- Former serviceman.
- Me. (French)
- Madame Peron.
- Stadium cheer.
- Robberies. (slang)
- Sea eagle.
- Ambassador.
- Hear, O ___. (Deut. 6:4)
- Bezer, and Hod, and ___. (1 Chron. 7:37)
- Atomic Energy Commission. (abbr.)
- Out to the south side to ___eh. (Josh. 15:3)
- Solomon thrust out ___thar. (1 Kings 2:27)
- ___ of kings. (Rev. 17:14)
- They that ___ the righteous. (Ps. 34:21)
- I command you this day in mount ___. (Deut. 27:4)
- Jacob's third son by Leah. (Gen. 29:34)
- Peleg ... begat ___. (Gen. 11:18)

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For December 8

Explore the Bible

By Douglas K. Wilson, Ph.D.
Dean of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



GOD JUDGES Numbers 14:5–19

Throughout the book of Numbers the people of Israel continually complained against God, Moses and Aaron, or their food and water supply. With each rebellion God brought judgment.

Moses had sent 12 men, one from each tribe of Israel, to survey Canaan in preparation for claiming the land promised to Abraham. The majority report, brought by 10 of the men, stated that the land was plentiful but the enemy was insurmountable. They concluded that Israel could not take the land regardless of what God had promised in the past. Only two of the scouts, Joshua and Caleb, took God at His word.

In the verses immediately preceding our passage the people complained against Moses and Aaron. Immediately after our focal passage God stated His judgment. The people of Israel cried out, “If only we had died in the land of Egypt or if only we had died in this wilderness!” (Num. 14:2). As a result God granted their request. The 10 men died of a plague (Num. 14:36–37) and an entire generation of adults would die in the wilderness before Joshua could lead Israel into the promised land (Num. 14:28–35).

Our text reveals that God judged rebellion, either immediately or over time.

Challenge Issued (5–9)

Whenever Moses’ leadership was questioned he responded with humility (Num. 12:1–3; 14:5). Israel rejected Moses as God’s chosen leader and they rejected God’s chosen path. They wanted to choose their own leader and choose their own path by returning to Egypt. The people openly rebelled against God.

Joshua and Caleb mourned over the people’s rebellion by tearing their clothing. They warned the people not to stand against God and they declared victory was at hand because “the Lord is with us.”

Accountability Comes (10–12)

What was Israel’s response to their challenge? They picked up stones to kill Joshua and Caleb. This unregenerate group wanted to kill

the men who told them God is trustworthy.

We see a similar response throughout Scripture. People wanted to stone Jesus (John 8:59; 10:31), others killed Stephen in Jerusalem (Acts 7:58–60) and still others left Paul for dead outside Lystra (Acts 14:19). Believers today who are being stoned for sharing the gospel are in good company.

We need to be careful when reading Numbers 14:11–12. When God asks questions He already knows the answers. Each question from God is an opportunity for those whom He questions to confess and repent of sin or to take God at His word. God asks, “How long?” He knows how long. God says, “I will make [Moses] into a greater and mightier nation than they are.” This is an invitation for Moses to confess confidence in what God has already revealed about Himself.

Grace Sought (13–19)

Here we encounter Moses’ selfless plea for God to fulfill His word. The Lord had released Israel from Egypt by His mighty hand (Ex. 13:16). God has led them by His glorious presence ever since they left Egypt (Ex. 13:21–22). Moses now pleads for the Lord not to allow His name to be dishonored among the nations by rejecting Israel. Moses quotes God’s own words back to Him (Num. 14:18–19; see Ex. 34:6–7) demonstrating his faith that the Lord is consistent in His character and faithful to His word. Moses asked for God to demonstrate His grace because God is gracious and to forgive their rebellion because God is forgiving.

On this side of the cross we can become so familiar with God’s grace that we assume it. Ten men faced God’s judgment for leading a rebellion. An entire generation died in the wilderness after rejecting God’s authority.

The psalmist later referred to such rebellion: “Today if you hear His voice do not harden your hearts” (Ps. 95:7–10). The New Testament echoes this warning (Heb. 3:7–18). Today is the day to repent. 🌿

Bible Studies for Life

By Dr. Jim Barnette, Professor, Samford University
Senior Pastor, Brookwood Baptist Church



IS THERE A GOD? Psalm 19:1–6; 111:7–10

Nature points to God. (19:1–6)

Without question Jesus Christ is the definitive self-disclosure of God to our world. But even before the advent of our Savior on Earth, God was revealing Himself in powerful ways. Psalm 19 offers an engaging reflection on God’s self-disclosure to humanity through the majesty of nature.

The sun was an object of worship in the ancient Near East. However, the psalmist makes it clear that the sun, along with the heavens, the firmament and day and night, were created by the sovereign Creator of all things. No corner of the cosmos is unreached by the omnipotent and omnipresent Lord.

In Romans 1:20 the Apostle Paul addressed God making Himself known through creation: “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities — His eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen being understood from what has been made ...”

The psalmist calls attention to the sun, the most dominant of the heavenly bodies in relation to the Earth. The heat of the sun, from which nothing is hidden, speaks to the sun’s pervasive, empowering and life-giving power.

Scripture reveals God. (111:7–9)

Verses 7–8 speak of God’s laws that were given to the Israelites on Mount Sinai after the exodus from Egypt and before the conquest of the promised land. As Psalm 119 states in similar terms, God’s laws are just, faithful and trustworthy. They serve to seal the covenant that God established through Moses.

On a wider scale Psalm 111 celebrates God’s sovereign reign over the entire world and the human agents chosen to reveal it. God chose Israel and King David to bring peace and justice to the world.

We can pray this psalm to express our gratitude for the kingdom of God and for Christ the Son of David who reigns as King of kings.

The words “faithful” and “trust-

worthy” in verse 7 are from the same Hebrew root. God relates faithfully to His people and God expects faithfulness in return. God’s work of redemption calls for the people’s work of obedience.

The name of God is “holy and awesome,” as He is able to do works that no other god can perform. The Hebrew word for “awesome” in verse 9 is of the same derivation as the word “fear” in verse 10. The awe-inspiring splendor of God leads us to worship Him with the highest and deepest of reverence.

When we reverently acknowledge God we are on the path to wisdom and insight. (111:10)

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom for wisdom is given only to those who revere the Almighty God. Wisdom demonstrates itself through following God’s precepts because it imparts understanding about the world and how to live in it.

The word “precepts” refers to God’s laws that enable God’s people to worship reverently and act justly. Verse 10 is one of the hallmark sayings of wisdom instruction, substantiated by its presence also in Proverbs 1:7 and Job 28:28.

Understanding the word “fear” is vital for embracing and practicing the words of this verse. Fearing the Lord is a way of describing faith. It is a faith that carries a sense of awe at the greatness of God and a sense of wonder at His redeeming grace.

You are in such awe of God for His greatness and for His grace towards you that it controls every aspect of your life, not merely part of your life. Your faith in God’s greatness, God’s sovereignty and God’s boundless love is what governs your life. Faithful fear of the Lord informs how you make decisions and leads you along your life’s journey until you reach His throne.

“Forever” is the fifth time that the limitless time of God’s reign is mentioned in the psalm (see verses 3, 5, 8, 9 and 10). Thanks be to God who invites us to His eternal dwelling. 🌿

Staff picks

- 1. His Holiday Family (A Town Called Hope Book 1)**
By Margaret Daley
- 2. Back to Christmas**
By Dennis Canfield
- 3. Christmas in Winter Hill**
By Melody Carlson
- 4. The Best Christmas Pageant Ever**
By Barbara Robinson
- 5. Expecting Christmas (a devotional)**
By Iron Stream Media
- 6. The Characters of Christmas: The Unlikely People Caught Up in the Story of Jesus**
By Daniel Darling
- 7. Holiday Living: Using Year-Round Holidays to Build Faith and Family**
By Brenda Poinsett
- 8. Celebrating Christmas with Jesus: An Advent Devotional**
By Max Lucado
- 9. The Dawning of Indestructible Joy: Daily Readings for Advent**
By John Piper



Media reviews

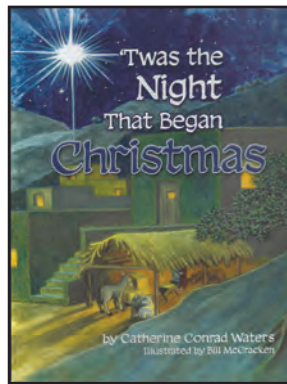
BOOKS

'Twas the Night That Began Christmas

Catherine Conrad Waters. Illustrated by Bill McCracken. Daphne, AL: SBA Books, 2019. 31 pp. (Large hardback).

Twas the Night That Began Christmas" is a children's book modeled after the famous poem, "'Twas the Night Before Christmas." I generally don't like takeoffs of other works, and hasn't this one been done enough? I mean, how many variations of the poem do we need anyway?

Well, maybe just one more. This one. It is really well done — it doesn't sound like a copy at all even though the author was careful to preserve the rhythm of the original. This variation begins with the



search for a room at the inn and ends with the resurrection and anticipation of the second coming.

The illustrations in the book enhance the story beautifully. The book would be an uplifting addition to the pile of Christmas books we pull out every year to enjoy with those special children in our lives.

Glimpses of the Savior: 50 Meditations for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and the New Year

Shirley Crowder & Harriet E. Michael. Dallas: Pix-N-Pens Publishing, 2018. 224 pp. (Paperback).

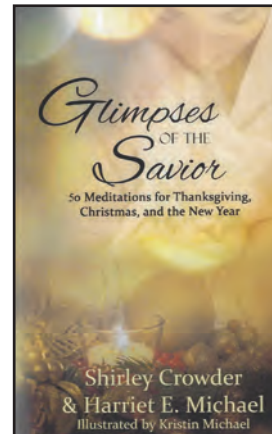
What a great idea — we start thinking about Christmas well before December arrives so why not start our Christmas devotions then too?

These well-written devotions begin with the first fall of leaves and the imagery of apples and colorful trees and

continue into the shiny new year with its fresh opportunities.

The authors are lifelong friends whose parents served on the missions field in Nigeria together when they were children.

Their readings are sprinkled with stories of that experience and many others, rich and varied, yet always directing the reader toward glimpses of Jesus.



The Perfect Love Song

Patti Callahan Henry. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2019. 240 pp. (Hardback).

Somebody tell me how it is that I was unaware of author Patti Callahan Henry until now!

I did know about one of her books, "Becoming Mrs. Lewis," but I never slowed down long enough to see who wrote it.

"The Perfect Love Song" is the sweet story of a young musician who struggles to make sense of his life and priorities in light of his newfound success.

The author has deftly woven together a story with many moving parts (even the legend of the Claddagh ring for you Irish enthusiasts) and made it all work smoothly together to explore, in the words of the author, "what happens when our hearts quiet" and "what opens up when our souls reach for what lasts."



A Christmas Home

Marta Perry. New York: Jove, 2019. (ebook).

After 10 years of moving from place to place with her widowed father Sarah finally feels her younger siblings are old enough to take care of themselves so she returns to the Amish community of Promise Glen, home to her grandmother and most of her relatives. Much more quickly than she expected Sarah finds a job working as office manager for a furniture maker with twin sons but no wife.

Noah's wife had left him one day without a word. As far as anyone knew Noah has made no effort to find his wife and he doesn't know where she is.

You can guess where this is going, can't you? Like all good romances, and especially Amish romances, the reader can take comfort in its predictability.

But a well-written romance also has an element of surprise ... and this one is well-written and enjoyable.

It is warm and inviting, with smells and sights and sounds of a close-knit Amish community and a love story that you know will develop, but you just can't quite figure out how. ✨



Meet the reviewer

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



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If you have a book you would like reviewed, mail a copy to: P.O. Box 1504, Hartselle, AL 35640.

Seeing the BIGGER PICTURE

UNA lineman Ethan McMullan knows what strength really is

By **Bill Sorrell**

Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Standing 6'4" and weighing in at 278-pounds, University of North Alabama (UNA) offensive right tackle Ethan McMullan bench presses 405 pounds, squats 550 and power cleans 315. But he says his sister, Alana, is the strong one.

In March 2018, Alana was diagnosed with brain cancer. She underwent surgery on her 17th birthday at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee, and then endured nine months of chemotherapy.

When Ethan transferred to UNA in January 2019 he would drive four hours home each weekend to visit his sister and family.

Cody Mann, UNA senior center from Winfield, didn't know why Ethan was going home each weekend.

Family cancer fight

"Finally he told us about his sister," Mann said. "That showed how much he cared and loved her. He was going home to make sure she was all right and if there was anything she needed."

But Alana wasn't the only family member who battled cancer. Grandparents Doyle and Janie McMullan each had it along with Ethan's maternal grandfather, Glenn Frank.

Then his mother, Eileen, was diagnosed in June with colon cancer and had surgery to remove tumorous cells.

'Remarkably blessed'

"She's doing well," Ethan said. "We're remarkably blessed."

Ethan said his faith has been strengthened watching his family, especially his sister, battle cancer.

Before transferring to UNA, Ethan played two years at East Central Community College in Decatur, Mississippi. But he wasn't playing much and thought about hanging it up. His sister's strength changed his mind.

"If she can go through cancer and chemotherapy that's a whole lot worse than going out in the heat and playing football," Ethan said. "If she is tough enough to do that, I am tough enough to play football. I can help my family by getting scholarships and not letting them have to worry."



Facebook photo

(L to R) Eileen, Ethan and Alana McMullan

And from Alana's first diagnosis through the last chemotherapy treatment people were praying for her in every state. The community showed "insane" and "remarkable" support, Ethan said.

On Dec. 21, 2018, she was declared cancer free.

Though he accepted Christ at age 9 and was baptized at Clarke Venable Baptist Church, Decatur, Mississippi, Ethan said his faith has grown through his sister's ordeal.

Increased faith

"It makes me see the bigger picture," he said. In Florence he has attended Church of the Highlands, Faith Church and Highland Baptist Church and goes to pregame devotions.

UNA offensive line coach Zach Lisko said Ethan "checked all the boxes" during recruiting and Lisko admires his determination and character.

"I believe that throughout all the challenges that have come his family's direction in the last few years Ethan has used those to further his faith and personality," Lisko said. "He is as competitive as any athlete that I have coached. That is a trait that has developed throughout his family's fight. It is special to see." 🙏



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash