



The Alabama Baptist

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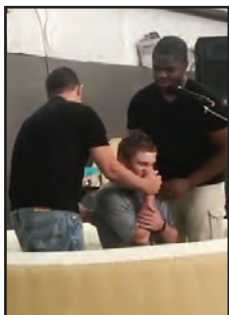
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Sharing Space

Children at The Church at Birmingham participate in a Sunday School class held at Southside Baptist.



Korean Baptist Church is one of several congregations meeting at Southside Baptist.



Maximizing building use, increasing ministry footprint

By Lanell Downs Smith
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Churches with unused building space possess a unique opportunity to serve their community by sharing space with other organizations, and many Alabama churches are maximizing the use of their buildings while increasing their ministry footprint in that way.

For more than 30 years Southside Baptist Church, Birmingham, has been seizing that opportunity by housing other congregations and compatible nonprofits.

According to Timothy Kelley, pastor for congregational ministries at Southside, the church began hosting other groups to maximize the use of a space provided by the

generations who had gone before. The congregation, which boasted 3,800 members at its peak, now has around 300 active members.

‘Compelled by love’

“We are compelled by the love of Christ to ask ourselves how we can use [the building] in more ways,” Kelley said. “God is not dependent on us to start the work. He is already

out there doing things and we just have to keep our eyes open and ask ourselves how we can use the resources that are ours to do something for the cause of Christ in this community.”

Building sharing began at Southside in the late 1970s when the church hosted a Christian outreach to local (See ‘Partnerships,’ page 14)



Photos courtesy of Tim Kelley, Southside Baptist Church

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

Your ministry partners at The Alabama Baptist/TAB Media



Photo by Tracy Riggs

The staff of The Alabama Baptist/TAB Media and several ministry partners gathered at the home office in Homewood on Jan. 6–7 for TAB Retreat 2020. Back row (l to r): Bill Gilmore, Brian Harris, Michael Williams, Chris Williams, Romeo Penn, James Hammack; second to back row (l to r): Debbie Campbell, Susan Stevens, Deb Lowery, Richard Maddox, Linda Harrison, Grace Thornton, Janet Erwin; second to front row (l to r): Lauren Grim, Sarah Gill, Pam Holt, Amy Hacker, Margaret Colson, Haley Piersol, Cynthia Watts, Carrie Brown McWhorter; front row (l to r): Annette Brown, Hannah Muñoz, Jennifer Davis Rash (center), Jessica Ingram, Melanie McKinney. Staff titles are listed in the masthead on the right of this page. Ministry partners are Dogwood Media Solutions (Brian Harris); Michael R. Williams, CPA, P.C. firm (Williams brothers); and PennPoint Counseling Ministries (Romeo Penn).



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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It's time to select our best work from 2019

Our editorial staff is currently looking back through our 2019 issues and selecting the best work to submit to national award competitions.

Some of our top article choices include the monthly Faith & Family feature, the "Growing older, caring well" series (found in the March

2019 issues), the border crisis series (found in several issues throughout the fall of 2019), "They gave me hope" (found in the Nov. 14, 2019, issue), "Snowflake babies" (found in the May 9, 2019, issue) and "God's grand design" (found in the Jan. 24, 2019, issue).

We also chose several complete issues to submit for overall content and design. Our favorites issues of 2019 are March 7, March 14 and Nov. 28.

2019 also was a big year for special issues — something we hope to continue going forward. The special

edition designed specifically for the Southern Baptist Convention and the "Fruitful" magazine, specially designed for the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting, will both be submitted for judging.

The awards process gives us an opportunity to evaluate our work for the past year and find ways to improve our products going forward.

What are some of your evaluations of the paper in 2019? What areas would you like to see polished, changed or updated?

Call 1-800-803-5201 or email news@thealabamabaptist.org. (TAB)



The crossword puzzle can be found on page 17.

Listen to the TAB News podcast anywhere you get your podcasts or visit thealabamabaptist.org/explore/podcasts.



MY RASHIONALE

By Jennifer Davis Rash
President and Editor-in-Chief

jrash@thealabamabaptist.org
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TobyMac: ‘God has you in Heaven, but I have you in my heart’

Iwonder what sport she would be playing and how she would like middle school. Would she still capture everyone’s heart the minute she met them? Would she still love to laugh and be super silly?

What would she be like? What would she be doing?

Our family’s “what if” thoughts started five years ago — Belle Mitchell (2007–2015) — but we are not alone. We have friends who have been working through decades and decades of similar questions following the loss of a child.

Where would he have gone to college?

What would she have chosen as her career?

What would he look like?

What would her interests be?

The memories of the time they were with us will always be a precious gift but sometimes it’s hard to let their story end where it did.

Making sense of the fact that our stories continued moving forward and theirs didn’t — at least not on earth — leaves us with a specific segmented story of our own, before and after.

And while grief captures everyone who has experienced a loss, we know those who know Christ do not grieve as those with no hope (1 Thess. 4:13).

Still, grief is a real part of our journey, and we all will walk the path at some point in some form — some more often than others and some in more tragic ways.

When it comes to the loss of a child, the devastation mounts at a level truly unbearable.

Countless parents across the globe and through the ages have confessed that only because of their relationship with Christ were they able to survive.

Many will lash out and blame God in their grief, but we can’t hold God to something He never promised. We can, however, hold tightly to Him.

Grammy Award-winning artist and Christian rapper TobyMac lays it out with a rawness that can only come from one who

has experienced it in his recent release “21 Years.”

“Are you singin’ with the angels?/ Are you happy where you are?/ Well, until this show is over/ And you run into my arms/ God has you in Heaven/ But I have you in my heart.”

In a statement Jan. 9 following the Oct. 23 unexpected death of his 21-year-old son, TobyMac said, “‘21 Years’ is a song I wrote about my firstborn son, Truett Foster McKeehan. I loved him with all my heart. Until something in life hits you this hard, you never know how you will handle it.

“I am thankful I have been surrounded by love, starting with God’s and extending to community near and far. ...

“Writing this song felt like an honest confession of the questions, pain, anger, doubt, mercy and promise that describes the journey I’m probably only beginning. The rest is yet to come.

“One thing I know is that I’m not alone. God didn’t promise us a life of no pain or even tragic death, but He did promise He would never leave us or forsake us. And I’m holding dearly to that promise for my son as well as myself.” ✝

RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

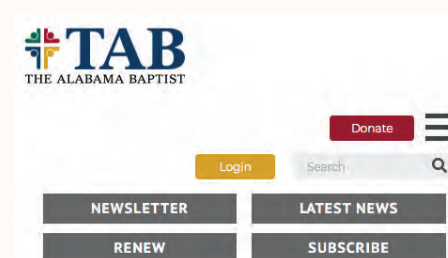
Wow, wow, wow — thank you so much for the amazing response to help us with our ministry efforts at TAB

Ican’t thank you all enough for the amazing outpouring of support to help us with our various ministry efforts, especially the new audio/podcast ministry for the visually impaired.

We are excited to offer special cartridges with an audio digest of each week’s paper plus the TAB News radio show for no charge to those who have trouble reading printed materials.

Our team also works consistently to find the next steps we need to take to better share — in a variety of forms — edifying and uplifting content for believers trying to navigate today’s world.

Your consistent engagement with TAB remains an important part of our success. Whether it be the weekly print edition, the digital version, the variety of online



options, our social media platforms, the radio show, the podcast or the audio digest — or a mixture of all of them — we need your help to spread the word.

Tell others about TAB and how to get involved. Continue to help support the publishing ministry through

donations and/or subscriptions. Your engagement truly does make a difference.

Your endorsement of the experience, the relationship and the community we are building takes TAB to a new level. It allows even more individuals to find a calm and safe place to think through the issues, learn about various topics and find needed resources.

And in the end we hope your engagement with TAB helps you draw closer to Christ, grow in your faith walk and develop a disciple-making focus.

Our staff members love the Lord and desire to wholeheartedly serve Him — and we get the privilege of working out that calling through serving you.

—Jennifer Davis Rash

Your Voice



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

Denominational discourse and the future of the SBC

by Jason K. Allen

President, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

With the arrival of the internet and in particular blogging and social media, ... there's an imbalance of loss when public accusations are made. The one who leads a public ministry has everything to lose, while an anonymous blogger has nothing to lose.

This new reality is causing chaos in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). False accusations are circulated online daily. Ironically, some of these instigators aren't even Southern Baptist. Nonetheless, they malign SBC ministries and sully the reputations of those who lead them. And for Southern Baptists, our cooperative work is being threatened.

Complicating matters is whether or not one should respond to a false accusation. It is simply a catch-22. The larger the ministry platform

one has, the greater the dilemma. Whichever way you choose to respond, you lose. There is no upside.

If you choose to respond, you give oxygen to the story. You'll draw more attention to the false claim and protract its news cycle. You'll extend both the range and the duration of its reach. You'll generate more clicks for the website, which is often exactly what the accuser is after anyway.

Additionally, responding (and all that response might entail) takes time, and that's time most Christian leaders don't have to waste. Even worse, to respond can be dirty. As Adrian Rogers warned, "You can't wrestle with a skunk and come out smelling like a rose."

Yet, if you don't respond, on-lookers may conclude the article is accurate. People may interpret your silence as a tacit admission of guilt. What is more, the lie may continue

to be repeated. And, as Adolf Hitler famously reflected, "If you tell a big enough lie, and tell it frequently enough, it will be believed."

Credible sources?

In recent days, I experienced such an attack. It's not the first, and it won't be the last. Inexplicably, an anonymous website published an anonymous article that cited anonymous sources. From start to finish, the article was a complete lie. ... Its intent was to slander me, to impugn me and to do me harm.

Thankfully, the accusations were relatively benign. The blogger wasn't accusing me of scandalous behavior or immoral activity. Thus, the substance of the accusations didn't alarm me much. Rather, the fact that the accusations were so patently untrue did. Thus, I chose not to ignore this one. I chose to engage the article head-on.

I demanded this person produce evidence or retract the article and publicly repent. After 24 hours of pressure, the article was retracted and something of an apology was issued. It was a small, qualified victory in a larger struggle the SBC seems to be losing. ...

For inquirers, the best way to express concerns, especially if you don't personally know the leader, is by writing that person a letter.

A letter arrives with a certain degree of formality, which prompts a response. A letter has a name associated with it, a return address and, hopefully, a cogent statement of the question or concern.

If you write a letter to a ministry leader, especially a Southern Baptist leader, I'm confident you'll

receive an answer from them or their office. If not, you'll have a legitimate complaint and perhaps legitimate cause to escalate by writing the entity's trustee chairman or even drawing public attention to the matter.

In summary, questions are always in bounds. Accusations are always out of bounds. Honest inquirers should be treated with respect. Direct questions should receive direct answers. False accusations should be dismissed, and those who traffic in such should be called out.

The SBC's organizing principle is that our churches can accomplish more collectively than we can individually. Within the boundaries of the Baptist Faith & Message 2000, we choose to partner for missions, evangelism, theological education and the like.

Trust under assault

The SBC's linchpin is mutual trust, which is built upon shared convictions and shared mission. When false accusations abound, that mutual trust is weakened.

No organization can long survive, much less thrive, if that trust is daily under assault. Southern Baptists are a great people, but if we are able to maintain doctrinal accountability while rejecting false accusations, we'll be even greater.

As the famous saying goes, "A lie can travel halfway around the world before the truth can get its boots on."

If the Southern Baptist Convention is to endure, we're going to have to get our boots on more quickly. (BP)

Letter to the Editor

Jennifer Davis Rash's "My Rationale" column in the Jan. 9 issue of *TAB* about prioritizing concerns for 2020 helps us set the tone for this new year.

In this one article, Rash accomplishes *TAB*'s three-fold mission/purpose.

It lets readers know the *TAB* staff understands the plethora of issues that are dear to the hearts of *TAB* readers.

It encourages Christ-followers to focus on being obedient to God's commands and to be witnesses for

Him wherever we find ourselves.

It also is an encouragement for Christ-followers to prayerfully consider how through the extraordinary empowerment of the Holy Spirit, their spiritual gift (or gifts), combined with their talents, abilities, experiences, personalities and circumstances, have prepared and equipped them to serve the Lord.

And finally, it is encouragement to continue loving God and people as you serve!

Shirley Crowder
Birmingham, Ala.

“As long as I’m with [God], I’m right where I belong.”

SHAQ HARDY

Student pastor and former foster child

God loves people because of who God is, not because of who we are. ... God’s grace is not a grandfatherly display of “niceness,” for it cost the exorbitant price of Calvary. ... Grace is free only because the Giver Himself has borne the cost. ... Grace means there is nothing we can do to make God love us more. ... And grace means there is nothing we can do to make God love us less. ... We do not have to achieve but merely follow. [Jesus] has already earned for us the costly victory of God’s acceptance.

Philip Yancey
“What’s So Amazing About Grace?”

If you’ve never gone on a missions trip, don’t put it off and then

one day look back with regret ... go! It will cost you money and you won’t get paid, but I promise you it will be one of the most fulfilling experiences of your life. You will be blessed as you bless those you’ve gone to help.

Bill King
Associational missions director
Tuskegee Lee Baptist Assoc.

To those in whom the Spirit resides, God has given great gifts: gifts of teaching, proclaiming, discernment, faith, service and so much more. The Holy Spirit empowers us to do the good things He has ordained for us to do and shows us the unique part we have in the body of Christ. But God has also made us to need each other.

We don’t have to walk alone; we don’t have to try to figure out what gifts we have and how to use them on our own. We have each other, brothers and sisters in Christ who encourage us in Kingdom work. We help each other see how our gifts complement each other and how we can best work together to spread the gospel. What a precious gift from above!

Selah Ulmer
WMU.com/blog

[Combating anti-Semitism] begins with each of us in our various communities speaking to the need of this.

Chairman Tony Perkins
U.S. Commission on Int’l Religious Freedom

Like an arrow seeking a chink in a warrior’s armor, doubt always aims for the Christian’s feelings as a prime target for attack. Whenever you have established a faith position before God, it is first and foremost a conviction of the will. Never allow doubt to steal your faith because you don’t like how faith feels — faith is driving the train, not your feelings.

David Jeremiah
Pastor, author, radio host

When we can perform to the best of our ability, we give glory to Him. So I take that mindset with me every day.

Michael Smith
LSU football player

From the *Twitterverse*

@NationalWMU

When you do something that matters to someone else, you can feel the satisfaction from the positive impact. You know you are making a difference. How are you making a difference?

@DiscoverHGBC

“Be killing sin or it will be killing you.” — John Owen, “The Mortification of Sin.” This is the epic personal struggle that every Christian ought to be in but so few actually really are. @pastorclint

@MichaelCatt

They say, “Measure twice, cut once.” If it’s true in carpentry, it might also apply to social media.

“Ready, shoot, aim.” Too many are on the attack before we know the facts or the real enemy. Be quick to hear, slow to speak.

@EdLitton

James 5:9: “Brothers, do not complain about one another, so that you will not be judged. Look, the judge stands at the door!”

@kristenpadilla

“Work, then, my daughter, in the field you see God calling you to work in, and don’t trouble or weary your spirit over what is said to you but carry on courageously. Fear and serve God selflessly, and then don’t be bothered by what people say, expect to have compassion for them.”

— Catherine of Siena writing to Daniela da Orvieto in 1378 yet still speaking a good word to all us women called to gospel ministry.

@bubbasims

Social media has amplified the fringes of SBC life. If we don’t get a grip and stop believing everything we see on Twitter it could be the straw that breaks the camel’s back.

@Ameen_HGA

If your Christianity constantly needs to find a cultural enemy to battle with in order to thrive and keep you engaged, then Christianity might actually not be what you have at all.

Leaders help plant the seeds for children who grow into adults called to full-time or short-term missions by engaging children in meaningful activities that promote learning in a wide variety of ways and styles. Leaders take time to see each activity, each learning opportunity and each recipe as a chance for a child to feel God tugging at his or her heart. Great leaders invest time and effort into learning activities that involve movement, a few messes and motivation to understand one’s place in the Great Commission.

Heather Keller
Children’s Ministry
Consultant
National WMU

Connecting *with* God's word *when* words aren't easy



Learning disorders like ADHD may interfere with Bible study but help is available

By Lanell Downs Smith
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

One important way believers connect with God is through reading the Bible, but individuals with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) can face challenges connecting with the written word, including God's word. Fortunately, those challenges are not insurmountable.

ADHD, also known as ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder), is one of the most common childhood disorders, affecting more than 6.4 million children in the United States. Children or adults with ADHD struggle with inattention, hyperactivity or impulsivity or a combination of all three.

Maintaining focus

According to Cindy Hall, Dyslexia Center director for Lindsay Lane Christian Academy in Athens, individuals with ADHD have difficulty maintaining focus.

Believers with ADHD can struggle

with their studies, including personal devotions and may have trouble paying attention to Scriptures and extracting their meaning.

Combating distraction

"Studying the Bible is doubly hard for those of us with ADHD because we are so easily distracted," said Jamelyn Smith, functional family therapist with AMI Kids in Montgomery. "Even during prayer we get distracted, and we feel guilty about it. Guilt can lead to resentment because it's hard. It's easy to make excuses not to read the Bible and then feel guilt over letting it go."

Hall has observed these challenges among students in a classroom setting but noted that many with ADHD are able to maintain focus in areas of special interest and in which they have specific talents or abilities.

Spiritual life, she said, can be one of those areas.

"I have had students who seem to struggle to memorize academic facts, yet shine in the area of Scripture memory," Hall said. "It is my



123rf.com

personal observation that the Holy Spirit can overcome any negative bends and minister to the hearts of each of us."

Brenda Brown, secretary for Randolph Baptist Association, has found this to be true for her granddaughter who was diagnosed at an early age with ADHD.

"She will sit and read her Bible," Brown said. "When she reads, it just comes to life. She loves it. Her Sunday School class provides a notebook to help students learn. She enjoys doing that."

Strategies that work

Anna Meherg, University of Mobile student support services coordinator, assists a large number of students diagnosed with ADHD.

"They can't help that they cannot focus," Meherg said. "If they could flip a switch and change it, they would in a heartbeat."

Meherg encourages these students

to think outside the box and to ask themselves the question: what must study look like?

She encourages students to learn what works for them and to employ alternative methods that help them to connect with God's word.

"Having a devotional book separated by subjects and finding one of particular interest for my day really helps," Smith said. "I also find times to study when I'm not easily distracted. Everyone needs to find a plan that works for them."

Auditory learners may enjoy listening to recorded Scriptures and Bible studies or using a phone app like Streetlights, which features interpretive reading of Scripture passages.

"Your quiet time doesn't have to look like our grandparents' quiet time, where we are sitting down for hours to take in information," Meherg said. "It's all about taking in information and not being afraid to change it up because when it comes

Tips for connecting with God's word

▶ **Use** apps like Streetlights that offer interpretation in the form of the spoken Word.

▶ **Read** small chunks at a time.

▶ **Study** topics of special interest.

▶ **Satisfy** the urge to fidget with tools like a stress ball, which can be used in discreet ways.

▶ **Color code** types of infor-

mation to help stimulate and engage.

▶ **Employ** lists, reminder notes, phone alarms or strict places for books and study items — organization can help learners to stay on track.

▶ **Add** variety to combat boredom, such as reading/listening, journaling and writing Scriptures, prayer requests and answers to prayer.

(Lanell Downs Smith)

to studying and learning there is no one right way. We want them to know that it's okay they don't learn like everyone else. As long as they are getting the point, understanding the message and getting the truth, that's what matters."

Managing ADHD can improve as a student ages and gains experience with coping skills. Parents of children with ADHD can help them stay on track by providing organization, accountability and the study tools needed for their particular learning style.

Bible teachers can help students succeed by understanding the challenges of ADHD and helping students find creative ways to engage with the Scriptures.

Finding what works

Hall noted that ADHD is a brain chemistry imbalance. As with other physical problems, medication may help. Families and individuals with ADHD should consult their physician to discover whether medications may be beneficial.

Hall said a devotional plan and dedicated study space with organized study materials can remove the distractions that invade quiet time. Adding variety can also help.

"God is not limited by our human frailties or struggles," Hall said. "The Holy Spirit's ministry is stronger than a learning disability. We have the promise in Isaiah 55:11 that God's word will not return void, and I fully believe that." ✝

"God is not limited by our human frailties or struggles. The Holy Spirit's ministry is stronger than a learning disability."

**Cindy Hall
director, Dyslexia Center
at Lindsay Lane Christian
Academy**

Dyslexia makes reading hard but 'the heart who seeks God finds a way'

By Lanell Downs Smith
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

An estimated 1 in 10 people worldwide have dyslexia, a specific learning disability characterized by difficulties with accurate, fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities.

Dyslexic individuals face challenges studying the Bible, but many find that God is faithful, guiding those who seek Him in spite of their learning difficulties.

Cindy Hall, director of the Dyslexia Center at Lindsay Lane Christian Academy (LLCA) in Athens, defines dyslexia as "surprising confusion about language, despite average or above average intelligence, adequate instruction and working in one's native language."

According to the International Dyslexia Association, individuals with dyslexia experience problems with reading comprehension and reduced reading experience.

For those seeking to connect with God through the written word, dyslexia creates real challenges with reading and comprehending the Bible.

"Students with dyslexia aren't lazy," Hall said. "They are actually probably working harder than every other student in the class," Hall said.

Dyslexia is also not an intelligence issue, Hall said. Dyslexic individuals are bright, talented and creative people who are often very gifted.

"It is important to know that dyslexia can be remediated but can never be eradicated because it is a characteristic, not an illness," Hall said.

The Dyslexia Center at LLCA began after school administration realized the difference that Hall's Orton-Gillingham tutoring method made for a dyslexic kindergarten child, Hall said.

The Orton-Gillingham approach to instruction provides phonemic awareness to teach students how to listen to single words or syllables and to break them into individual phonemes.

The approach helps students

blend individual sounds into a word, changing, deleting and comparing sounds in their head.

"Teaching by phonics is the key to success for a dyslexic child because word memorization doesn't usually work with these students," Hall said. "But if you can teach them the letter sounds, basic phonics principles and how to break words into syllables, those are really helpful."

Phoneme/grapheme correspondence defines which letters represent each sound and how to blend letters into single-syllable words.

Through the Orton-Gillingham approach, learners gain knowledge of English, including syllables and rules of the language, Hall said.

Supporting students

At Lindsay Lane, this approach is combined with classroom accommodations, small groups, private tutoring and awareness activities which help all LLCA students understand dyslexia and support their dyslexic classmates.

"Our students improve in their reading ability and are able to read well by the time they graduate out of the program," Hall said. "They may never be avid book readers; however, they are certainly able to read. Dyslexia would not be the hindrance that would keep our Dyslexia Center graduates from reading God's word."

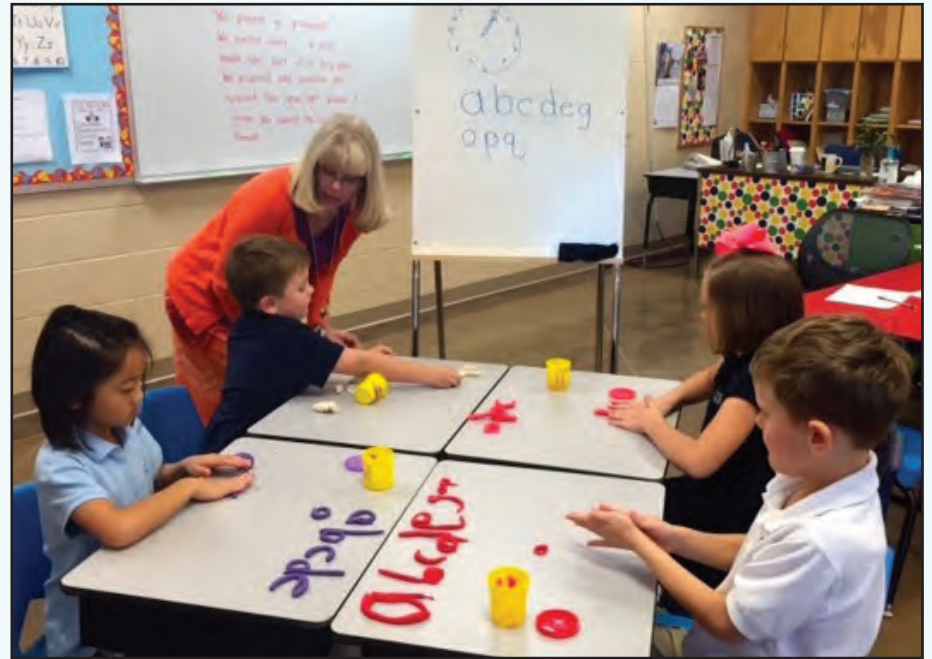


Photo courtesy of Cindy Hall

Cindy Hall, director of the Dyslexia Center at Lindsay Lane Christian Academy in Athens, teaches a first grade small group.

Last year, LLCA graduated 18 students out of the Dyslexia Center. Those students have returned to the mainstream classroom, studying all subjects with accommodations support.

Following the center's theme verse, 1 Peter 4:10, Hall counts it a pleasure to serve students and families affected by dyslexia.

Help for teachers

And for classroom or Sunday School teachers who wish to help students struggling with dyslexia, Hall offers two pieces of advice: learn more about dyslexia and employ basic accommodations to remove the burden of excessive writing and reading.

Believers with dyslexia also can benefit from private tutoring and instruction in basic phonics, Hall said. Listening to Scriptures through an app, podcast or audio Bible can help them connect with God through the written word.

"It has been my experience that the heart who seeks God finds a way to connect with Him, despite any challenges he or she faces in their lives," Hall said.

More information on Orton-Gillingham training and resources through the Orton Academy are available at www.ortonacademy.org. ✝

Ethelsville Christians meet a 'unique need' in community

Joey Brown said it started out simple enough.

He and the brotherhood group at Ethelsville Baptist Church heard about a woman who had come into some hard times. Her husband had died recently, and funeral costs had sapped a lot of her finances.

And the winter was sapping her wood supply.

"We found out she needed some wood to burn," Brown said.

He knew how to supply that need. He and his two brothers are in the logging business, and he made a plan for them and other volunteers to get together and carry her some wood.

"I said we could try to get some more too, if we could find some more people who needed it," he said.

They did — 18 truckloads worth. That was 10 years ago; this year, volunteers split and delivered more than 140 loads of firewood before the Iron Bowl started Nov. 30.

"It's probably the best year we've ever had," Brown said.

For the past decade, he has received scrap wood donated by nearby lumber companies, and volunteers from local churches have come out to chop it up and deliver it on the Saturday after Thanksgiving and the second Saturday in February.

"We've never had to buy any wood — God has always provided us with wood," Brown said.

And throughout the past 10 years,

nearly 30 area churches from across denominational and racial lines have come together for the "wood bus-tin'" and delivery.

"It's fun to watch everybody work — all the volunteers really work hard," Brown said. "The people who take it out and deliver it really get a blessing from that too. It's just really uplifting to talk to the people and see the appreciation in their faces. They can't believe someone would go out of their way to do that for them."

Brown's sister-in-law, Wendy, said she's proud of the vision he had.

'Just love people'

"This has stretched all over the county and into Mississippi helping people," she said. "And the wood isn't just available on those two days — it's available at our family farm anytime for people to come and get."

Sometimes people who can afford to buy wood will come there to get it and leave a donation, and Brown uses that money to pay the gas bills of people in the area who don't burn wood and need a little extra help.

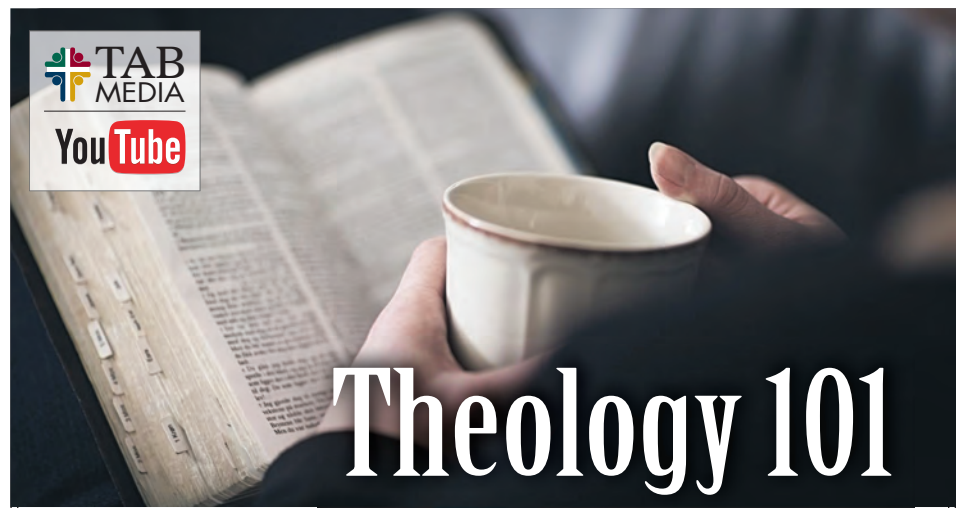
Jordan Lollar, pastor of Ethelsville Baptist, said he thinks it's a great ministry to the community — a perfect way for Brown to use his gifts to meet a unique need.

"It's a great way to come together and present the gospel and just love people," Lollar said. (Grace Thornton)



Photo courtesy of Wendy Brown

Ten years ago, Joey Brown, his two brothers and other volunteers from Ethelsville Baptist Church volunteered to gather and deliver firewood to a local widow running low on wood for the winter. Now they chop and deliver loads of firewood twice a year. In November they delivered more than 140 loads.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

What's New?

A New Creation

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

As Theology 101 continues into the new year by pondering God's new things, we give thought this week to the personal newness salvation brings.

We read about this newness in 2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."

God's New Covenant calls for and provides the means for sinners to become new creations in Christ. After referencing the primary personal sign of ritual circumcision under the Old Covenant, Galatians 6:15 affirms, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation."

Glancing back at last week's topic, we should take note that the New Commandment Jesus gave about loving one another as He loves us cannot be fully obeyed until we have been made new creations through faith in Him. Herein we experience divine mercy for our sinful corruption and spiritual deadness.

Many of us had these words of Romans 6:4 pronounced at the time of our Christian baptism: "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

God's goal in providing eternal salvation is that as a new creation we should experience a new life,

one that is Christlike and eternal. This same passage in Romans 6 goes on to declare "that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin." Hence, we are freed to be new creations in Christ.

This new creative work involves not only a new birth but also the ongoing indwelling of the Holy Spirit. A quick reading of 1 John will encounter a good half dozen references that repeatedly point to God as the source of this new birth, while a reading of Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus in chapter 3 of the Gospel of John reminds us that the Holy Spirit is the agent of this new life.

This spiritual work operates from the inside out and not from the outside in. Natural growth, development, refinement or reformation will not make a sinner a new creation. A radical internal change must occur, and then outward evidences of the Spirit's creative work will follow.

The overall emphasis is on a change of heart not mere reformation. The end result is a new creation experiencing moral transformation in outlook and actions.✠

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.



‘A Kingdom story’

Aging church births 3 new church congregations, 1 new church partnership

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Michael Ethridge says what’s going on at Trinity Baptist Church is a “small story, but it’s a Kingdom story.”

It depends on what you call small.

Sure, the group meeting at the storefront building in Argo on Sundays might be small — 30 to 35 — but they’re like a “house church on steroids,” said Ethridge, who serves as Trinity’s minister of music.

“It’s a very healthy congregation,” he said. “It’s warm and affirming, and it’s actively reaching out to the community.”

And the church’s story is layered like an onion, starting all the way back with a core group at South Roebuck Baptist Church, Birmingham, who didn’t want to see its church’s mission stop.

Gary Fisher, who serves as pastor of both South Roebuck and Trinity, said it’s a “unique thing that God has done.”

Back in 2005, before Fisher was pastor, South Roebuck felt like God was leading them to do three things — honor the legacy of an aging congregation, reach the next generation and plant a new ministry in their current building that would outlive them.

‘Threefold plan’

“The congregation didn’t want to alter their style of worship because that’s what made church church for them,” Fisher said. “They wanted to accommodate that but also reach the changing community.”

So first they raised \$850,000 in a campaign and planted North Valley Church, Margaret, in 2006 under the leadership of then-pastor Chris Crain. At first, Crain served as pastor of both campuses, with the new church aimed at reaching young families through its contemporary



Photos courtesy of Michael Ethridge

In 2005, South Roebuck members felt like God was leading them to do three things — honor the legacy of an aging congregation, reach the next generation and plant a new ministry in their current building that would outlive them — said Pastor Gary Fisher (above, left). One result is (left) the congregation of Trinity Baptist Church (formerly The Chapel) in Argo.



worship style and a strong weekday early learning center for preschoolers. But as the North Valley congregation grew larger, Crain decided to focus his energy there.

That’s when Fisher was called as pastor of South Roebuck.

And it wasn’t long before the

original congregation’s threefold plan got more involved. Over time, South Roebuck planted Kingdom Family Christian Fellowship in the Huffman area, a congregation that’s “thriving,” Fisher said. They also partnered with New Beginnings Christian Fellowship, a pre-

dominantly African-American congregation that meets in South Roebuck’s sanctuary.

And South Roebuck started The Chapel, a small, older congregation that met for traditional worship in a mobile building on the North Valley campus. Its intention was to reach retirees who were moving to the area alongside young families. Eventually, The Chapel members felt the need to step out on their own, and they moved to the storefront and changed their name to Trinity.

‘Wonderful continuation’

“When we were The Chapel attached to North Valley and a part of that strategy, it made sense to have that name,” said Ethridge, who along with Fisher serves both the South Roebuck and Trinity campuses. “But in a storefront, that name conveyed more of ‘this is a wedding chapel’ than a church.”

And they want people to know they are a church.

“I really sense a new spirit of ‘let’s reach out and find people we might connect with,’” Ethridge said. “It’s a wonderful continuation of South Roebuck’s long history of missions support.”

Congregations must adapt to life cycle of churches

Gary Fisher said he believes churches are like people — they have a life cycle of their own.

“They grow through infancy, become adolescent[s], grow through adulthood and at some point they may reach an elderly stage where they’re not able to do what they used to do,” said Fisher, pastor of South Roebuck Baptist Church, Birmingham.

At age 71, Fisher said he spends a lot of his energy pouring into his grandchildren, and he said metaphorically speaking,

that’s what South Roebuck is doing now too.

“There is dignity in aging,” he said. “The church may not be able to go out and reach the neighborhood themselves, but they can support their children and grandchildren while they do it.”

‘Keep on working’

That’s what they’re doing through North Valley Church, Margaret; Trinity Baptist Church, Argo; and two other congregations they’re partnering with (see story, this page). And they support all of the social ministries of Birmingham

Metro Baptist Association, Fisher said.

“I think it is fitting for me to say, ‘As your pastor, I’m going to love you, and we’re going to have worship and feel His presence.’ I’m committed to be here for every single church member who needs a pastor to be there as they age,” Fisher said. “We’ve got a succession plan here, as long as the Lord lets us, we’re going to continue to pray and worship. We will keep being South Roebuck Baptist Church, and we will keep on working.” (Grace Thornton)

‘Strangers care’

Ministries provide housing for out-of-town patients, caregivers during medical stays

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

At four months pregnant, Brett went in for her normal checkup to find out if her baby was a boy or a girl.

She found out — a girl — but she found out something else too.

“We found out that she had a hole in her heart,” Brett said.

“We were sent to a specialist in Huntsville.”

That specialist gave the hole a

name and told them their little girl had a cleft lip and palate and radial dysplasia, or a club hand. He also told Brett and her husband that their daughter would never survive outside the womb without some help.

“This was happening whether we were prepared for it or not,” Brett said.

A few months later, she had her daughter, Isla, at UAB Hospital.

“We wanted to be close to our daughter, but we couldn’t get any rest in her room,” she said. “A couple of days in, we were brought the information about Red Mountain Grace from a social worker.”

It was a godsend for Brett. Red Mountain Grace — a local ministry started by Jason Carroll and John Burdett — provides housing for out-of-town patients and caregivers during their extended medical stays in Birmingham. Carroll, a member of The Church at

Brook Hills, Birmingham, and Burdett, a member of Church of the Highlands, wanted to serve families who are enduring the trials of distance medical care.

For Brett, the fully furnished apartment “felt like a little piece of home” — a welcome rest amid their “heartbreaking” reality. She ended up staying there for

seven months.

She said Red Mountain Grace stood in the fire for her and her family.

“We’re so thankful for Red Mountain

Grace and their generosity and their love,” she said.

Through the past six years, Red Mountain Grace has provided housing for 450 families coming to Birmingham for cancer treatment, transplants and other long-term medical treatment. The ministry started with two apartments and now has 18 adopted by individuals or groups who pay the rent. Volunteers also bring food to the families and decorate the apartments to make them feel as much like home as possible.

Temporary home

“At this very moment, we’re pretty much full — we have a wait list,” said Lindsay Miller, marketing and events coordinator for Red Mountain Grace. “Our work is far from over, but we’re one of the fastest growing nonprofits in Birmingham. We want to continue to grow as long as there is a family that is

sleeping on the patient’s floor of our local hospitals.”

Michael Ethridge, director of operations for Birmingham Metro Baptist Association, said the association is hoping to help meet some of those needs too. The association ran an apartment ministry near UAB Hospital until the building they were using was torn down.

Now they’re working on an arrangement to use the sixth floor of Brookwood Baptist Medical Center’s emergency room building as a hotel for out-of-town families facing medical issues at any area hospitals, not just Brookwood.

Called the Caring Hands Lodge, it will be a “wonderful ministry opportunity to



Photo courtesy of Red Mountain Grace

Volunteers with Red Mountain Grace deliver a Christmas meal to a family staying in one of the ministry’s apartments.

come alongside and walk with people who are going through really difficult times,” Ethridge said, noting they hope to open as soon as July. “We’re really excited.”

Blessing families

Debbie Jones, director of Samaritan’s Inn in Montgomery, said it’s been a blessing for them to help families in need too, though their model is slightly different. The Montgomery Baptist Association ministry uses donations to subsidize

room costs at area hospitals to make it more affordable for out-of-town patients and their families.

They also have a three-bedroom house that was renovated and decorated by dozens of volunteer teams.

“Our families come here, and they don’t know anybody. Most of ours are coming because of a crisis situation, and they were not prepared for this,” Jones said.

“To let them know someone cares makes a difference. They are in awe that strangers care.”✝

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TRUE OR FALSE?

Discerning credible journalism, truth in social media-fueled culture takes effort

By Margaret Colson
The Alabama Baptist

Americans are increasingly skeptical about the trustworthiness of what they read or view online or in print publications and most are uncertain about their ability to tell the difference between truth and “made-up” news.

According to a recent Pew Research Center survey, just 29% of Americans are “very confident” in their abilities to check the accuracy of a news story, 46% are somewhat confident and 24% have little to no confidence in doing so.

Damaging to U.S.

Americans also believe the creation and spread of “made-up news and information” is damaging to the country and must be curtailed. In fact, Pew Research Center reported, “more Americans view made-up news as a very big problem for the country (50%) than say the same about terrorism (34%), illegal immigration (38%), racism (40%) and sexism (26%).”

Clay Carey, assistant professor of journalism and mass communication at Samford University, told TAB News host Jennifer Davis Rash and co-host Debbie Campbell that the



central purpose of trustworthy journalism is to inform people in order to facilitate a better public conversation.

“All of us are part of at least one community and sometimes many different types of communities,” Carey said. “In those communities when we can be active participants, when we can put our ideas, our beliefs and our thoughts into the ebb-and-flow of

discussion in those places, then we become active participants, and the community becomes better for our participation.”

Journalists, he believes, can “enable” or “restrict” such public conversations.

Rocking the boat

Sometimes even well-meaning journalists, in an effort of “not wanting to make people upset, not wanting to rock the boat,” avoid certain topics or ideologies. This approach, he said, “works to the detriment of life in a community or life in a nation.” Sometimes, good journalism “requires making people uncomfortable.”

He teaches the importance of “fairness” to his journalism students, but he

also recognizes that it is “so easy for people who wish to deceive or ... push an agenda or idea, regardless of whether the facts support that — it’s become so easy for them to create something that looks authentic. It is quite concerning in terms of what people can produce to try to mislead an audience,” he said.

Fairness needed

“Fairness and making an active effort to be fair is one of the central antidotes for journalists being perceived, and sometimes rightfully so, as being a voice for only one side of an issue.”

One challenge, he said, is that, “We live in a world now where anybody theoretically can be a journalist — anybody can pull out their cell phone and record a video and put it on the internet and have an impact.

“It’s very easy for people who wish to spread misinformation to do so in a shell that looks completely legitimate.”

Professional journalists through the ages have been expected to adhere to the

Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) Code of Ethics, which calls for journalists to seek truth and report it, minimize harm, act independently and be accountable. The SPJ Code of Ethics states that the code “is not a set of rules, rather a guide that encourages all who engage in journalism to take responsibility for the information they provide, regardless of medium.”

To check the accuracy

of a news story, Clay encourages news consumers to avoid the temptation to “only consume news” presented from one ideological position.

“We’re better informed when we’re catching information from different perspectives,” he said.

And if only one media outlet, such as a blogging website, is reporting a story, that’s a “cue that what you’re looking at maybe deserves an extra level of skepticism.”

News consumers should become more astute at understanding various terms, such as news analysis or commentary, which can tend to be subjective rather than objective.

Clay added that email newsletters help him to be a better news consumer.

Credible sources

Further, Clay encourages news consumers to look for the primary source of the reported information.

“Good journalists, acting in a transparent way, will make it very clear where the information they’re getting is coming from,” he said.

“Historically, across the long arc of journalism in America, there hasn’t been a huge demand for journalists to be transparent. ... Journalists can’t operate like that anymore; journalists have to be more transparent. ...

“That lack of transparency, I think, is a key contributor to some of the trust issues that journalism is seeing right now.”

To listen to the TAB News podcast in its entirety and to read the SPJ Code of Ethics, go to tabonline.org/credible-news.

Just 29% of Americans are “very confident” in their abilities to check the accuracy of a news story; 46% are somewhat confident, and 24% have little to no confidence in doing so.

Pew Research Center survey

3 stories you should know



Photo courtesy of Todd Stewart

Strong storms moved through Alabama on Jan. 11, causing several deaths and toppling trees and structures, including the steeple of First Baptist Church, Saks, Anniston, in Calhoun Baptist Association. In Pickens County, where three people were killed when a tornado touched down near Carrollton, a first responders' appreciation dinner planned by Pickens Association WMU carried on, offering to-go plates to first responders serving in storm-affected areas. (TAB)

Tennessee joins other states with adoption bill

Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee announced Jan. 14 his plans to sign into law a measure that would assure continued taxpayer funding of faith-based foster care and adoption agencies even if they exclude LGBT families and others based on religious beliefs.

Tennessee joins several other states, including Alabama, in supporting similar bills. Supporters argue such measures are needed to protect against potential lawsuits hostile to the religious beliefs of faith-based groups.

A proposed rule by the Trump administration would offer the same protections nationwide, rescinding an Obama-era rule that withheld federal funds from agencies whose policies restricted families based on sexual orientation and gender identity. (AP, TAB)

Puerto Rico Baptists continue relief work

Two Baptist churches in Puerto Rico — Grace Baptist Church (Iglesia Bautista La Gracia) in Yuaco, and Chiquito River Baptist Church (Iglesia Bautista Rio Chiquito) in Ponce — are feeding and sheltering earthquake survivors as aftershocks continue to fuel fears on the island.

Around 60 people took refuge at each of the two churches following the first of several earthquakes ranging in magnitude from 4.1 to 5.6 that have struck the island since Jan. 10. Other area churches also are assisting in meal preparation for earthquake survivors.

Send Relief, the compassion ministry arm of the North American Mission Board, has been providing generators, food, water and support to those staying at the churches and the volunteers serving them. (BP)

— NEWSBRIEFS —

Gardendale 'Who's Your One?' rally kicks off Alabama evangelism effort

It's a simple premise really: Prayerfully choose someone who needs Jesus. Commit to praying for that person and developing a relationship. Invite that person to church. Then watch for an opportunity to share the gospel.

"We need to get back to making the main thing the main thing," Johnny Hunt, senior vice president of evangelism and leadership for the North American Mission Board (NAMB), told those gathered at the "Who's Your One?" tour stop at Gardendale First Baptist Church on Jan. 12.

"Who's Your One?" is an evangelism initiative launched by NAMB in February 2019 to promote intentional evangelism among Southern Baptists.

"If just 10% of the people who attend our churches prayed for and reached just one person, the results would be the best year for baptisms our convention has ever experienced," Hunt said.

The Sunday night rally was followed by an evangelism workshop Jan. 13 focused on practi-

cal ways to reach the lost. Workshop presenters included Kevin Hamm, pastor of Gardendale First Baptist; H.B. Charles Jr., pastor of Shiloh Metropolitan Baptist in Jacksonville, Florida; and James Merritt, pastor of Cross Pointe Church, Atlanta.



Photo by Tracy Riggs

A series of "Who's Your One?" district training events are scheduled throughout Alabama in March and April. For a complete list of trainings, go to alsbom.org/tag/whos-your-one. (Tracy Riggs)

Hong Kong church stands firm amid chaos in country's conflict with China

As months of violent clashes between police and protesters continue in Hong Kong, Kowloon International Baptist Church (KIBC) offers the hope of Christ in the midst of the conflict.

"We've been praying for years that Hong

Kong would see its brokenness, and boy do they ever now," said Butch Tanner, KIBC pastor.

The Hong Kong protests began in June over the government's plans to allow extradition to mainland China.

Under the "one country, two systems" arrangement from 1997, Hong Kong maintains some autonomy from China, and its people enjoy certain rights. The extradition bill was withdrawn in September but protests continued. Now, protestors demand full democracy and an inquiry into actions taken by the police.

More than 6,000 have been arrested and the country is in an economic recession. KIBC has become a refuge from the chaos. It hosts special prayer nights for the city, and in the pews each week sit people, many who are first-generation Christians, from all three sides — protestors, government and police — worshipping together.



Submitted photo/BP

News near you

BALDWIN ASSOCIATION

▶ **Fish River Baptist Church, Fairhope**, will host Ivan Parker in concert Jan. 31 at 7 p.m. For more information call 251-928-0402. Donations will be taken at the door. Terry Blair is pastor.

BESSEMER ASSOCIATION

▶ **The Baptist Church at McAdory, McCalla**, will host the J.O.Y. Fellowship Luncheon on Jan. 28. Lunch will be served from 11 a.m. to noon in the fellowship hall followed by a special program featuring Eileen Mitchell, an associate in the office of Sunday School and discipleship for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, who will share a musical journey called “The Sun and the Stars.” Bill McCall is pastor.

BIBB ASSOCIATION

▶ **Four Points Baptist Church, Centreville**, will host the 2020 We Believe Bible Conference on Jan. 24–26. Conference teachers will be Jim Parker, Steve Headrick and Mike Shaw. Register online at www.four-points-baptist-church.buildachurchexpress.com. The Friday session of the conference will begin at 5 p.m. with registration opening at 4:15 p.m. Saturday’s session will run from

8:15 a.m. to 5:45 p.m. and Sunday’s session will be from 8:15 a.m. to 6 p.m. with a men’s breakfast at 7 a.m. For more information call 205-926-7775 or email 4pointsbaptistchurch@gmail.com. Stan Huguley is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

▶ **Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Birmingham**, will host the Songs and Stories Conference on Jan. 27 from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information or to register visit www.shades.org/events/songs-and-stories. Danny Wood is pastor.

ETOWAH ASSOCIATION

▶ **Union No. 3 Baptist Church, Gadsden**, will host New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary classes beginning Feb. 13. Classes will run through April 2. Introduction to New Testament Study: The Early Church will be offered from 6 to 8 p.m. and Evangelism will be offered from 8 to 10 p.m. Dr. Steve Fain will be teaching. For class prices or to register call 256-494-9180.

FAYETTE ASSOCIATION

▶ **Southside Baptist Church, Fayette**, will host Life Action Ministries for a Summit Conference on Feb. 9–16. For more information call 205-932-6804. Robert Parrish is pastor.

MOBILE ASSOCIATION

▶ **Dayspring Baptist Church, Mobile**, will host Night to Shine, a prom for people with special needs, Feb. 7 from 6 to 9 p.m. Night to Shine is sponsored by the Tim Tebow Foundation. For more information on Dayspring Baptist’s Night to Shine visit www.dayspringchurch/events. For more information on the

worldwide Night to Shine movement visit www.timtebowfoundation.org/ministries/night-to-shine.

PICKENS ASSOCIATION

▶ **Calvary Baptist Church, Fayette**, will celebrate its 20th anniversary Jan. 26. Special music concert will begin at 9:30 a.m. with preaching at 10:30 a.m. Founding pastor David Cullison will speak. A fellowship lunch will follow the service. David Kelley is pastor.

SHELBY ASSOCIATION

▶ **Shelby Baptist Association** will host a ministers conference Feb. 4 in the Physicians Conference Room at Shelby Medical Center. Daniel Wilson, co-director of the office of evangelism at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, will be the guest speaker. Lunch will be served at 11:30 a.m. Reservations are required. Register at www.shelbybaptist.org or call 205-669-7858 by Jan. 29. Hugh Richardson is associational missionary.

SELMA ASSOCIATION

▶ **Selma Baptist Association** will host the Sunday School directors Munch and Mingle luncheon Jan. 30 at noon. Call 334-872-1640 to make reservations with the Selma Baptist Association office by Jan. 27. Tom Stacey is director of missions.

WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION

▶ **Washington Baptist Association** will host a church tax seminar Jan. 31 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the association office. Don Setser will lead the seminar. All are welcome. Larry Thompson is director of missions.✠

— NEWSBRIEFS —

KIBC reports an unusually high number of baptisms in the last six months since the protests started. Several are waiting to be baptized, with even more interested in talking about a relationship with Christ.

“That seems to be a huge plus in the middle of all this,” Tanner said. (BP)

Schroeder named EC’s associate VP for convention news, will head BP

George Schroeder has been named associate vice president for convention news for the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee (EC). A veteran journalist, Schroeder will lead the editorial team at Baptist Press, the SBC’s news service.

Schroeder has earned nine Associated Press Editor awards for his national college sports coverage, and he has written for *USA Today*, *The Register-Guard* (Eugene, Oregon), *The Oklahoman*, *The*



SCHROEDER

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette and *Sports Illustrated*.

A graduate of Oklahoma University, Schroeder serves on the board of neverthirst, a ministry which grew from the membership of The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, with the goal of providing clean water as a conduit to share the gospel. (BP)

Survey: Pastors don’t link world events to hastening Christ’s return

Many Protestant pastors believe Christians can speed up the return of Christ but not through involvement in conflicts in the Middle East, according to a recent LifeWay Research study.

According to the survey of 1,000 Protestant pastors, 41% believe Christians can hasten Jesus’ second coming through world evangelism. Only 12% believe Christians can speed up Jesus’ return by supporting geopolitical changes mentioned in the Bible.

A 2013 LifeWay study conducted during a time of heightened conflicts with Syria found many Americans were likely to link global con-

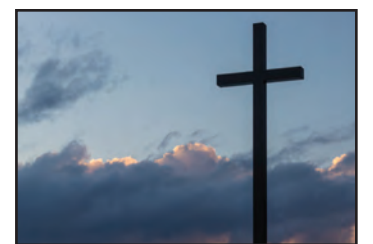
flict with end times. Almost 1 in 3 Americans in that survey saw the conflict as part of the Bible’s plan for the end times. One in 4 thought a U.S. military strike in Syria could lead to Armageddon. And 1 in 5 believed the world would end in their lifetime, including 32% of evangelicals.

In the most recent study of Protestant pastors, no significant difference exists between mainline and evangelical pastors regarding their views about international political affairs speeding up the return of Christ.

Whenever the second coming of Christ may be, most Protestant pastors believe immorality will be more common until Jesus returns.

Almost 7 in 10 (68%) of pastors surveyed agree “culture will increasingly get less moral until Jesus Christ returns.”

For more information or to view the complete report, visit LifeWayResearch.com. (BP)



Unsplash.com

Partnerships help Birmingham churches steward resources

(continued from page 1)
Chinese believers. Since then, a variety of churches, nonprofits and civic groups have come and gone from the Southside campus.

In the late 1980s, the church became home to Bridge Ministries, a homeless outreach, and Family Promise, a shelter for homeless families. Both ministries still serve the homeless from the Southside campus.

"We have been blessed by people who went before," Kelley said. "We couldn't justify our congregation staying here if we didn't have enough people to do the work, to do the basic ministries. If we partner with nonprofits and other churches, we can continue to be a presence here."

Several nonprofits make their home at Southside, including Alabama Possible, Collaborative Solutions and Family Promise of Birmingham.

A ministry called Jesus Said Feed the Hungry uses the Southside kitchen to cook for the homeless of Birmingham and Maranatha Academy, a school for at-risk students also shares space at Southside.

Many congregations

The facility is currently home to several congregations, including Korean Baptist Church, Lighthouse International Church, The Church in Birmingham and Iron City Church.

Iron City Church, launched in 2013 by Valleydale Church, Birmingham, com-



Photo courtesy of Toni Wall

FBC Center Point, shares a large metal building with Birmingham Metro Baptist Association — the newly dedicated Jim Cleghorn Building — to store disaster relief equipment.

pleted a building usage agreement in August, holding evening worship services as well as children's and college ministries on the Southside campus.

While churches may choose to lease their space, Southside charges a building usage fee that helps to offset the cost of utilities. Each hosted entity must be a nonprofit organization and carry liability insurance, Kelley said.

In addition, each group provides Southside with a copy of its bylaws, articles of incorporation and financial statements, along with a list of current employees and board members. Both parties enter into a building use agreement that lays out the terms of the building usage.

Sharing space with multiple congregations is "maximizing the use of that which God's people have left for us," Kelley said.

First Baptist Church, Center Point, also has found creative ways to use its facil-

ity by sharing a large metal building they lovingly call "the barn" with the Birmingham Metro Baptist Association to store disaster relief equipment. A nearby mission house will also serve as disaster relief headquarters when available.

"We want [the association] to have a place where the equipment can be out of the weather, and they can work on it in a sheltered environment," said David Haynes, pastor of First, Center Point.

The facility has been offered to the association at no cost, Haynes said.

Working together

Sharing space with other groups does come with its fair share of challenges which can include scheduling and parking concerns.

From a legal standpoint, the two most important space-sharing concerns for the host church are liability and taxable income, according to Jim Swedenburg, director of Cooperative Program and stewardship development for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

For more information on these issues, contact Swedenburg at jswedenburg@alsbom.org or visit brotherhoodmutual.com for guidance and online forms. ✝



Photo by Leah Grace Photography

Iron City Church holds evening worship services as well as children's and college ministries at the Southside campus.

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MINISTRIES

SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN BOOK EXPO

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Overcoming ADDICTION

Year-long residential discipleship ministry, personal relationships bring young man to Christ

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Jake Matulia said baseball was beyond just being important to him — it was in his bloodline.

“Baseball is a big deal in our family,” Matulia said. “Both of my brothers played professional baseball, and my dad was a college baseball coach for 30 years. He was a scout with the Braves and with the Royals.”

Matulia thought it was his destiny too, but stronger than his bloodline was something that got in his bloodstream — Adderall. Somebody gave him his first dose of the amphetamine drug the summer before his sophomore year of high school.

“I was really tired, and my dad was doing lessons with this guy, and the guy said, ‘Hey, here’s a pill.’ I didn’t even know what it was,” Matulia said of Adderall, which is used to treat attention deficit disorder.

He took the pill, and he had “crazy focus” and a lot of energy that day.

“I came back the next day, and I bought a bunch from him,” he said.

A dangerous path

It set him on a course and all throughout high school and into college, Matulia took more and more Adderall until he was taking eight to 10 pills a day. He was on the baseball team at Flagler College in St. Augustine, Florida, but he kept missing



Jeff Hand (left) and Terrence Jones (right) baptize Jake Matulia, who gave his life to Christ and was brought out of Adderall addiction by a program through Strong Tower at Washington Park, Montgomery. Matulia now serves as an intern to Jones.

class, practices and games. Finally, one day the coach sent him home.

The road contained some twists and turns from there, but through the help of his parents, brother and the county sheriff, they eventually got Matulia settled at Fishers’ Farm, a year-long residential discipleship

ministry run by Strong Tower at Washington Park, Montgomery, that helps men struggling with “life-dominating sins” like drug or porn addiction.

“I came to Fishers’ Farm thinking I was a pretty good person and I just had a struggle with drugs, I just took too many pills,” Matulia said.

But the first night he arrived, Jeff Hand, who directs the ministry and serves

as the missions pastor for Strong Tower, shared his testimony with Matulia.

A pattern of sin

“Then he asked me about my life, and he said some hard things,” Matulia said. “He said if your life is characterized by a pattern of sin, you may not be a Christian. It really messed me up, and I wondered, ‘Do I really believe this stuff?’”

Hand began walking Matulia through Scripture, and within two weeks of arrival Matulia had given his life to Christ.

“God began to show me my sin and that it was so much more than a drug addiction, it was a whole life that was in rebellion against Him,” Matulia said. “Over the next year, Jeff disciplined me, and I got to see what his walk with Jesus looked like, how he loved his fam-

ily, how he treated people.”

When Matulia first arrived at Fishers’ Farm, he had intended to go back to Adderall and baseball, but God had other plans, he said.

Now he’s taking online classes from Boyce College in Louisville, Kentucky, and serving as an intern to Strong Tower’s pastor, Terrence Jones.

“When you’re addicted to drugs it can seem like there’s no way out,” Matulia said. “Even if you get off drugs and you don’t know Christ, you’re going to run after something. It’s going to be money, or you might worship your family. The only way to be at peace is through faith in Christ.”

Hand said he hopes all the men who come to Fishers’ Farm find peace like Matulia did.

Several others graduated from the program in August, including Buddy, a man who is now living a brand-new life and working to provide for his wife and two children and love them well.

“Some of the guys have had their lives changed by the gospel,” said Hand, who also grew up in a broken family and struggled with

addiction before coming to Christ. “I’m just grateful God lets me be a part to see guys like Jake come in and see God change them.”

A second chance

While men are at Fishers’ Farm, they share meals together with Hand’s family, study the Bible together, work a job and get involved in church at Strong Tower. They also submit to a 31-day blackout period when they first arrive, which means they can’t use their phones or contact their

friends or family.

“This gives them a chance to focus on the Lord,” Hand said. “Most of the men who make it through the blackout period make it to graduate from the program.”

Jones said he loves the way the

program aims to offer them both faith and a spiritual community.

“We have the opportunity to take guys whose lives are broken and disciple them,” he said. “These guys not only deal with their sin but also get involved with the church, and then when they get out, we’re finding that they’re staying.”



MATULIA

“God began to show me my sin and that it was so much more than a drug addiction, it was a whole life that was in rebellion against Him.”

Jake Matulia
intern, Strong Tower at Washington Park

For more information, visit fishersfarm.org.

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Someone You Should Know

GARY FENTON

By Leigh Pritchett
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Gary Fenton of Vestavia frequently shares with ministry and corporate leaders lessons learned from his 45-plus years in ministry, including 25 years as senior pastor of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham. Currently he serves with Samford University and on the boards of The Alabama Baptist/TAB Media and the Salvation Army.

tus) Bob Terry speak at an event at which he quoted E. Stanley Jones: “There comes one moment in a person’s life in which you must place all of your weight upon Jesus or forever live as a coward.” I knew this was my moment and moved to the church. While the church did not grow numerically, I grew spiritually perhaps more than any other time in my life.



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

A: As a young pastor I was serving a fast-growing congregation in an exciting location, and I sensed God leading me to move to a church that had small numerical potential and was located in a very small community. I did not want to go. I heard (TAB editor emeritus)

Q: Have you ever read a book that changed the way you think about God and faith?

A: “Renovation of the Heart” by Dallas Willard helped me have a more fully integrated view of spiritual growth. While Bible study was important, spiritual growth also involves relationship — the way I used my mind, my body and my emotions.

MINISTRY: Senior advancement officer for Samford University and retired longtime pastor

CHURCH NAME: Dawson Memorial Baptist Church in Birmingham Metro Baptist Association

LIFE VERSE: “And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou has sent” (John 17:3).

Prior to reading this book, I focused my attention on learning Bible information rather than using the truths of the Bible to intentionally influence every dimension of my life.

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

A: When I served as pastor I loved the tradition of the parent-child-church dedication. A child is not only a gift and a responsibility to parents but to the church as well. Helping the church family accept its responsibility was meaningful to me.✝

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Christian Crossword

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Across

- Lot sat in the ___ of Sodom. (Gen. 19:1)
- Son of Shem. (Gen. 10:22)
- Rehoboam sent ___ who was over the tribute. (1 Kings 12:18)
- Where the altar is in an Eastern Church.
- Person.
- Sick people ... taken with ___ diseases. (Matt. 4:24)
- Elder son of Zeus.
- Sanballat the ___. (Neh. 2:10)
- Name prefix (Simon ___ Jonah).
- Pertaining to an ecological sere.
- Newspaper person. (abbr.)
- British thanks.
- False god.
- Hide thyself by the brook ___. (1 Kings 17:3)
- ___ in Me, and I in

- you. (John 15:4)
- By the ___ of Babylon, there we sat down. (Ps. 137:1)
- Fairy queen.
- He was. (Latin)
- Civil Aeronautics Authority.
- Put on strength, O ___ of the Lord. (Isa. 51:9)
- Let his habitation be ___. (Acts 1:20)
- Curved molding.
- Neighbor of Iraq.
- Snatches.
- Vertical take off. (abbr.)
- When Sanballat ... and ___ heard of it, it grieved them. (Neh. 2:10)
- A curvy shape.
- Norse god.

Down

- Wife of Hosea. (Hosea 1:3)
- Belonging to a son of Jether. (1 Chron. 7:38)

- Sunbathe.
- Printer’s measure.
- He laid the foundation thereof in ___ his firstborn. (1 Kings 16:34)
- Edom ___ted from under the hand of Judah. (2 Kings 8:20)
- So be it.
- Seagoing prefix.
- And ___ told Jezebel all that Elijah had done. (1 Kings 19:1)
- He set it up in the plain of ___. (Dan. 3:1)
- It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a ___. (Matt. 19:24)
- In the borders of ___ on the west. (Josh. 11:2)
- Abraham ... offered him ... in the ___ of his son. (Gen. 22:13)
- Warmths.
- Mix.

- Business watchdog.
- The king of ___ they took alive. (Josh. 8:23)
- Give recognition.
- For the laborer is worthy of his ___. (Luke 10:7)
- Avoiding.
- Short answers.
- Motorists’ club.
- Woman’s name.
- Court. (abbr.)
- Once more.
- Slew the kings of Midian ... Zur ... Hur, and ___. (Num. 31:8)
- Network.
- Southeast Asian country.
- Is there any taste in the white of ___ egg? (Job 6:6)
- NASA prefix.
- In him is the love of ___ perfected. (1 John 2:5)
- ___ visit the fatherless and widows. (James 1:27)

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For January 26

Explore the Bible

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



GOD IS HONORED Deuteronomy 4:1–9

An entire generation of Israelites failed to honor God after He delivered them from bondage in Egypt. The book of Numbers records their continual acts of rebellion against God, His appointed leaders and His commandments. They wandered from the wilderness of Sinai (aka Horeb) to Kadesh Barnea (in Zin) to Moab. As they made preparation for entering the promised land, Israelite men committed both physical and spiritual adultery at Peor in Moab (Num. 25:1–5).

God wanted Israel to honor His covenant with them, but they dishonored God and themselves.

Listen (1–5)

Several times in Deuteronomy, Moses called for Israel to listen (4:1, 5:1, 6:4 and 9:1, among others). This call meant more than simply acknowledging that God had spoken. To listen means both to hear and to heed, with the expectation of acting upon what has been communicated.

The group of men who prostituted themselves with the women of Moab, who bowed down and worshipped the fertility god Baal at Peor, were executed for their idolatry. They had not listened to Moses at Sinai, and they suffered for it.

Walking in covenant with God requires listening, and those who ignore God's words face His judgment.

Honor (6–8)

Consider this legal reality: persons taken into custody will be read their Miranda rights. They may listen to those rights or not. They may choose to speak or to remain silent. If they choose to speak, they are inviting a prosecutor to use their words against themselves.

It takes more than listening to laws for justice to be done; those laws must also be honored.

Such is the case with Moses' message to Israel. This passage begins with the words "carefully follow them." Moses explained that Israel's obedience would be a testimony to the surrounding nations. After all, God had called Israel to be a "royal priesthood" (Ex. 19:6) and to reflect

God's holiness (Lev. 11:44–45).

These commands were not simply words to be heard; they were to be honored and followed. Our Lord Jesus issued a similar calling to the disciples: "Follow Me" (Matt. 4:19 and 9:9). He also warned His listeners that hearing His words was insufficient. We must act upon them (Matt. 7:21 and 24–27).

Teach (9)

The first generation of Israelites from Egypt spent their time complaining. They complained about a pursuing army, an unchanging food supply, tainted water and dissatisfaction with leadership. Rather than passing on the Ten Commandments (and other instructions) to their children, they griped and complained about their discomfort.

By contrast, the second generation was specifically instructed to "teach them to your children and grandchildren." The word for "teach" here is a causative form of the verb "to know." In other words, parents and grandparents were commanded to "cause the family to know" what God had done and what God had spoken. This instruction is not to be rote memory by mere repetition; the content was to be presented in such a way that children would truly learn it.

How would this be possible? How could parents and grandparents make their children learn these things? The answer is this: in order to teach God's revelation, one must first know it and live it.

Moses addressed Israel as if speaking to each individual: "Be on your guard and diligently watch yourselves [literally, "watch yourself"], so that you don't forget the things your eyes have seen and so that they don't slip from your mind." Later, he said: "These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart" (Deut. 6:6).

In Ephesians 6:4, Paul wrote: "Fathers, don't stir up anger in your children, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." Spiritual leadership requires words and actions of faith.✠

Bible Studies for Life

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



WHY AM I SUFFERING?

Job 11:13–16; 23:8–12;
John 9:1–3

Suffering is often erroneously considered a consequence of disobedience to God. (Job 11:13–16)

Job's "friend," Zophar, is convinced the reason Job is suffering is because Job has sinned. Therefore, with no sense of sympathy or compassion, he advises Job to repent. Then, Zophar believes, Job would automatically be restored. The darkness and gloom would vanish, and all would be sunshine and happiness.

Zophar's cold response shows how little he has heard Job's heart. We understand Job's outburst, as we have had such moments during times of hardship and grief. In Job's pain, we find his humanity, and we are reminded of our own.

Earlier, Job's friend had declared that only God is wise (vv. 5–12). However, Zophar seems to have considered himself an exception — only he and God have the truth.

Zophar tells Job to stretch out his "hands" toward God. To have wrongdoing in one's hand is a common idiom for guilt (see 1 Sam. 24:12; 1 Chron. 12:17–18).

Putting sin away from one's hand implies a reordering of the will, since the hand was a metaphor for power and control.

Even the righteous experience suffering. (Job 23:8–12)

Job desires a trial through which he can be vindicated for his stated griefs. However, this trial is blocked by what he deems the elusiveness of God. Job has looked everywhere for Him. Job notes the four directions he has sought God during this time of trial. "Forward," "backward," "left hand" and "right hand" can also be rendered: east, west, north and south. In the Old Testament, directions are described on the assumption that one faces the rising sun. So east is "forward," west is "backward," north is "left" and south is "right." Job is stressing that he has looked everywhere for God and cannot find Him. Of

course, God is not to be "found," as God is everywhere. Psalm 139 is a marvelous exposition of this reality that shuts down any claim that God is absent at any time or anywhere.

Verses 8–9 suggest Job has been looking for God in the created universe. But God is not to be identified only through His creation. A fuller revelation of God has come through His history. All the more, Jesus is the definitive self-revelation of God in our world. We need not be terrified by the hiddenness of God. God is always revealing Himself, seeking us out in our life-stories. And in His Son, the God who sometimes seems hidden revealed Himself clearly and unmistakably.

Jesus affirmed suffering is not always related to personal sin. (John 9:1–3)

After leaving the temple in Jerusalem, Jesus spotted a beggar who had been blind from birth. This was the first miracle of healing by Jesus in John's Gospel where a person had been afflicted from birth. For centuries many Jews believed suffering was a direct result of a person's sin or the sin of the person's parents. Jesus refused to assign blame to the man or to his parents. Instead, he introduced the opportunity to minister to a person in crisis. Jesus did not teach that God made the man blind so Jesus could perform a miracle. What Jesus taught was the man's blindness offered a moment of ministry that would demonstrate the power of God in Jesus' life.

A visit to Jerusalem makes one appreciate the blind man's journey to the pool of Siloam after Jesus rubbed the mud on the man's eyes. Today, a walk from the location of the temple to the pool is a good 20 minutes at a strong pace. No doubt the man who was yet to see clearly would have made a more challenging trek from temple to pool. His awkward pilgrimage to the miracle of sight reveals his own desperate faith in the One who can bring sight to all of the spiritually blind.✠



Media reviews

C.S. Lewis' 'The Screwtape Letters' coming to Birmingham in February

By Tracy Riggs
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

C.S. Lewis' classic work on temptation and spiritual warfare "The Screwtape Letters" is coming to Birmingham on Feb. 8.

Many Christians have heard of Lewis' tale of a senior demon named Screwtape, who writes a series of letters to his nephew, Wormwood, a less experienced demon.

In a series of 31 letters Screwtape guides Wormwood in how to tempt his charge, known as "the patient," into various sins so he will turn away from Christ.

"The play explores spiritual warfare from a demon's point of view through an imaginative theatrical experience that is not pedantic or preachy," said Max McLean, founder and artistic

director of Fellowship for Performing Arts (FPA), the New York-based production company bringing the story to life. "At the same time the play reminds us that 'He who is in you is greater than He who is in the world' (1 John 4:4)."

'Faithful adaptation'

Lewis published "The Screwtape Letters" in 1942. He conceived the idea for the novel after listening to a BBC Radio broadcast of Adolph Hitler addressing German legislators at the Reichstag in 1940.

Of the speech, which was translated into English during the broadcast, Lewis wrote: "I don't know if I'm weaker than other people, but it is a positive revelation to me how while the speech lasts, it is impossible not to waver just a little. ... Statements which I know to be



Photo by Joan Marcus

'The Screwtape Letters'

untrue all but convince me ... if only the man says them unflinchingly."

The story wasn't developed into a play until 2005.

FPA, which produces theater from a Christian worldview, received permission for the adaptation from the C.S. Lewis estate, and McLean wrote the script.

The stage version is a faithful adaptation of the novel, he said.

Brent Harris, who previously played Scar in the national tour of "Disney's The Lion King," plays Screwtape.

Since its first run, "The Screwtape Letters" has been performed in New York, London and dozens of other cities.

The Birmingham produc-

tion will be held in the concert hall of the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex (BJCC).

Ticket information is available at ticketmaster.com. Information on special rates for groups and those under 30 years old is available at fpatheatre.com/#tickets.

Other plays


FPA is touring two other plays based on Lewis' work: "The Great Divorce" and "C.S. Lewis on Stage: The Most Reluctant Convert." More information about FPA is available at fpatheatre.com.



Photo by Joan Marcus

A drama adaptation of C.S. Lewis' 'The Screwtape Letters' is coming to the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex concert hall Feb. 8. Ticket information is available at ticketmaster.com.

Want your book considered for a review?

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Watching God work MIRACLES

Baptist Friendship House marks 75 years as a beacon of hope in the heart of New Orleans

By **Trennis Henderson**

WMU National Correspondent

Baptist Friendship House has stood as a beacon of hope in the heart of New Orleans for 75 years. For the past 20-plus years, Kay Bennett has played a key role in sharing that hope with area residents in need.

“What keeps me motivated is the fulfillment of watching God work miracles in people’s lives,” said Bennett, who has served as Friendship House’s executive director since 1997.

‘Alive and vibrant’

The ministry center, which first opened its doors in 1944, has operated from its current location a few blocks from New Orleans’ famed French Quarter since 1947.

“Over the years, the different ministries have kind of changed at Friendship House to meet the needs that are the greatest in our city,” Bennett said. “That’s kept it alive and vibrant as it has changed.”

As Baptist Friendship House marked its 75th anniversary this year, current ministries include aiding the homeless with such basic necessities as food, showers and clothing; transitional housing for women, including mothers with their children; and day programs such as literacy, English as a Second Language, job readiness training and a community Bible study.

Staff members also offer practical assistance to human trafficking survivors, ranging from providing temporary housing or connecting survivors with a safe house to arranging for involvement in long-term treatment programs or transportation back home.

Friendship House also partners with National Woman’s Missionary Union (WMU) to provide Christian Women’s Job Corps and World-Crafts ministries, and with the North American Mission Board in providing thousands of backpacks filled with a variety of items for schoolchildren, the homeless and



WMU photo by Pam Henderson

Kendall Wolz, assistant director of Baptist Friendship House, helps serve a meal in conjunction with the ministry center’s weekly community Bible study.

those escaping human trafficking.

The ministry’s impact comes from introducing women to Jesus, Bennett said.

“You can see someone that is at the bottom that may be addicted and homeless and on the street, and you realize when they come through the door that you can’t change that person but you do know that Jesus can work in their lives,” she said. “He can melt their hearts and bring healing and you can see them just totally turn their lives around and change. It is so fulfilling to watch how He works and changes them.

“It’s just really cool to me to be able to be in a setting that has been here for so long because it’s like a lighthouse in the city,” she said. “New Orleans is known as the city that care forgot, but here at Friendship House, we try to put a little bit of concern and care and help and hope back in our people.”

Friendship House’s various ministries focus on clients’ physical,

emotional and spiritual needs, and the center invites volunteers to come and help.

Volunteer opportunities range from helping pack hygiene kits and snack packs or preparing meals for Bible studies to donating food and clothing or helping staff with annual events such as the Back to School Bash and Fall Festival.

‘We don’t judge people’

Bennett said Baptist Friendship House’s influence and impact continue because of the love staff and volunteers show each person who comes through the door.

“I’m just thankful that here at Friendship House, we don’t judge people. It doesn’t matter where you’ve been, what you’ve done,” Bennett said. “We’re to be Jesus to others and treat them with respect and treat them like Jesus treats all of us. He loves us no matter what.”

To learn more about Baptist Friendship House, call 504-949-4469 or email bhfjobs@aol.com.



WMU photo by Pam Henderson

Peggy Day (center, back), one of Baptist Friendship House’s ministry volunteers, leads a weekly community Bible study for area residents. ‘The ladies are so receptive,’ she said. ‘They just are so hungry for the Word.’