The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

DIVERSITY in the Mobile area

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Missionary couple finds global outreach opportunities among seafarers, international students

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

The small strip of Alabama that touches the Gulf of Mexico is like a gateway to the world, according to Gerald Burch. Every year more than 500 ships pull up to it and drop their anchor for a day or so.

It's an open door to a lot of diversity — and it's a door that's only getting bigger. In September, Alabama lawmakers approved a project to make the Port of Mobile's shipping channel deeper and wider — something that will allow for more and bigger ships.

To Burch, who serves as director of international ministries for Mobile Baptist Association, that sounds like a massive opportunity.

"We're excited about the work the Lord has us in," said Burch, who began serving in this position in early October.

Before starting his work there, he and his wife, Brenda, served for 37 years as International Mission Board missionaries in Asia, so he said he knows how to relate to internationals.

But it's still a "sharp learning curve," he said. "I've never done seamen's ministry."

Ship outreach

He's surrounded by people who have though — Mobile Association isn't new to ship outreach. Their Seafarer's Ministry has been taking place since 1970 when they first opened the International Ministries Center.

The center offers internet access, fellowship, food, recreation and other services to seafarers. It also offers free Bibles and is staffed by volunteer chaplains who occasionally are invited aboard the ships to lead Bible studies.

"It used to be that the ships would come in for three to five days, but sometimes now they only stay a day," Burch said. "So we're looking for more

(*See 'Sharing,' page 11*)

Photo courtesy of Gerald Burch

"We're excited about the work the Lord has us in."

GERALD BURCH
director of international ministries
Mobile Baptist Association

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

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The crossword puzzle can be found on page 13.

Photo by Tracy Riggs

SCWC, TAB sponsor second annual Christian book expo in Birmingham

The second annual Southern Christian Book Expo was held Feb. 1 at Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham.

More than 70 authors from Alabama and surrounding states gathered to show off their books. Genres varied from crime, mystery and thriller to memoir, devotional and children's.

Photo by Tracy Riggs

This year featured the first-ever Southern Christian Notable Book Awards with more than 40 entries.

Four winners were chosen — one in each category: fiction, traditionally published — "Murder in the Family" by Ramona Richards; fiction, self-published — "The Girl I Left Behind" by Stephanie Bain; nonfiction, traditionally published — "The Ground Kisser" by Thanh Duong Boyer with Lisa Worthey Smith; and nonficition, self-published — "[Un]intentional" by Doug Smith.

The TAB News podcast also was represented at the book expo, which is sponsored by the Southern Christian Writers Conference (SCWC) and The Alabama Baptist/TAB Media.

Visit southernchristianwriters.com for more information about the SCWC and the book expo.

To view the full gallery of photos from the expo, visit www.tabonline.org/book-expo. (TAB)

Featured SYSK made it to 105

In 2013, Elizabeth Forehand was featured in TAB's Someone You Should Know (SYSK) column for her many years of ministry at Thomasville Baptist Church. On Jan. 17, Forehand died at the age of 105.

Forehand lived through WWI, WWII and the Great Depression. She even remembered the sinking of the Titanic.

FOREHAND

She served many years as a children's Sunday School teacher. She also sang in the choir and served as a deacon's wife.

She is survived by her daughter, Judith; four grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren; and one great-great-grandchild. She was preceded in death by her husband, James; daughter, Marcia; and grandson. (TAB)

TAB
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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OPINION

MY RASHIONALE

By Jennifer Davis Rash
President and Editor-in-Chief

jrash@thealabamabaptist.org
@RashionalThts

Love at its deepest level showcases sincere sacrifice

What's your personal sacrifice threshold for those you love?

Have you ever thought there might be a limit, or does the willingness to sacrifice what you prefer to what the other person wants or needs show no bounds?

And by sacrifice, I'm talking about healthy demonstrations of love, not allowances for destructive behaviors.

I'm also referring to sincere motives where the love and care for the other person are so deep that you are fulfilled by taking care of the other person in some way or by giving up something in order to bring happiness to him or her.

True sacrifice out of love is not rooted in unhealthy and selfish motives of trying to impress the other person to earn his or her attention in return.

It's really not about getting anything at all in return. It's about giving — giving of yourself in a way that enhances the other person.

But the reality is, it does hurt when our sacrifices are taken for granted or expected rather than fully appreciated.

In the moments when I find myself a little discouraged in this area, I only have to think of the ultimate sacrifice made for all of us by Jesus Christ when He died on Calvary's cross to make a way for us to know Him personally and spend eternity with Him in heaven.

Of course, we know He rose from the grave to ascend into heaven, but how sad it must make Him to experience us, on a daily basis, taking His sacrifice for granted and so often too busy to know Him better.

And how devastating it must be for His sacrifice to actually be rejected by some who decide they don't need Him.

Still, are those of us who believe, follow and call ourselves disciples of Jesus Christ doing everything we can each day to make sure the people in our lives understand the sacrifice and infinitely deep love of the Savior?

Do we sacrifice in any way for Him as we go about our daily lives? If we do, then what does that look like?

Is it time? Is it money? Is it possessions?

Maybe it means we give up something we prefer doing in order to be present for another.

Maybe it means digging in deep with a needed discipline that can truly be difficult.

Maybe it means prioritizing life a little better or even not doing something in order to remove unnecessary pressures.

Whatever it might be, we can only determine the true sacrifice needed from us by spending time with Jesus. He will make it clear if we take the time to listen.

And the same goes for the loved ones in our lives — all we need are hearing ears and a willing heart.

Truly getting to know the other person, listening to what he or she says and doesn't say, learning his or her heart at the deepest level, watching your loved one in action — these are the ways to know how to sacrifically love.

RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

Little nuggets of wisdom mentors and friends have taught me along the way (part 1)

EDITOR'S NOTE — Some of these nuggets of wisdom are original to the person who shared them and some are not. Some were even shared by different people at different times, but all of them helped me grow and develop personally and professionally. The ones listed are only a few of the many concepts I've learned from others through the years and am always looking for new areas of growth. I'd love for you to send me more (800-803-5201, jrash@thealabamabaptist.org or 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209).

▸ We all have a lot to do, but if we let ourselves fret about all that has to be done instead of finding a way to focus and work on the next thing, then we can easily become overwhelmed. So the key to surviving a busy schedule is to just do the next thing.

▸ Make the best of the good and the least of the bad.

▸ Wherever you are, be all there.

▸ Lack of planning on my part does not constitute an emergency on your part — so we shouldn't expect others to drop everything to help us when we didn't plan ahead.

▸ Sometimes we really do need a friend to bail us out of a bind without a lecture. Be that friend as often as you can and help share planning ahead tips at a later time.

▸ Saying "I told you so" rarely helps a situation or relationship.

▸ Use the full "2020" when writing the date and not just "20" because someone else could add another number to the end and make it some other year.

▸ Be the "even" personality in as many people's lives as possible — low maintenance, cooperative, flexible and drama-free. You'll give them a gift merely by bringing calmness, security and dependability to their daily lives.

▸ Avoid taking random decisions made by friends, family and coworkers personally. Trust that if it really is about you or because of you, then the other person will tell you. If it is but he or she chooses not to explain the full story, then that's on the other person, not you.

OPINION

Your Voice

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

Singleness a gracious gift from the father, not a cross to bear

By Thomas Smyly
Student, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

A friend approaches, face glowing with happiness, bearing good news about a new relationship.

Once again, the contradictory feelings of congratulations and self-pity combat within me. The former bears outward expression; the latter, inward concealment. The Christian thing to do is console myself by rehearsing the line, "You just need to wait for the 'right one.'" But what do I do in the meantime?

The temptation is to walk in the shadow of each possible future spouse, thinking that the path of singleness is a trek through the valley of the shadow of death. Yet could it be this feeling stems from a deep-seated idolatry that interprets singleness as a cross to bear instead of a gracious gift from the Father meant to be leveraged for the glory of God?

How is it that Christians can view singleness in such a negative light? Is it simply a result of friends, family and even fellow churchgoers asking well-intentioned questions concerning possible prospects for dating and marriage? Certainly this does not help, but it is not the full picture.

The desire for a spouse is a good desire. After all, God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Gen. 2:18). Also, consider the wisdom writer: "He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord" (Prov. 18:22). And who can forget Paul's exhortation for husbands to love their wives like Christ loved the Church (see Eph. 5:22–33)? Don't I need a wife in order to love her like Christ loved the Church?

The scriptural witness points to the goodness of marriage, so it is not difficult to see how a believer who is single might view a season of singleness with negativity and disdain.

How then does Scripture address singleness, and how might one walk faithfully in times of singleness?

One could easily jump to Paul's exhortation for believers to be like him, specifically in regard to his singleness, because it provides the opportunity for undivided devotion to the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 7:7, 32–35).

However, Paul is speaking to one's ability to withstand the assaults of temptation to sexual immorality, so this does not specifically speak to how believers should view singleness. The problem many single Christians face does not lie in avoiding sexual immorality but in finding satisfaction in the Lord Jesus that surpasses the thrill of finding oneself in a relationship. The problem is one of idolatry.

To properly view singleness, one must go to a source that does not directly deal with singleness at all.

Observe the words of Jesus: "If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me" (Luke 9:23). Those who follow the Lord Jesus must submit to His lordship in all things, laying all desires at the feet of Jesus, no matter how good and biblical some of those desires might be.

This means that the believer follows the Lord Jesus like a shadow follows a body, always imitating Him. Though this might sound anticlimactic, it carries with it fullness of joy.

The Lord Jesus would have believers pursuing His glory while He fills their joy (John 15:11; 16:24; 1 John 1:4). Out of this fullness of joy, He would have believers use all gifts, including singleness, for the sake of building His kingdom.

With the freedom of time afforded singles, the Lord Jesus would have them tenaciously make disciples who are able to observe the joy the Lord Jesus alone brings.

In this way, the believer would constantly walk as the shadow of Christ, ready to remain single for the glory of God or ready to pursue a spouse to the glory of God.

Our entire lives, including desires, are to remain under the lordship of Jesus, not under the sway of feelings of loneliness or dissatisfaction.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Thomas Smyly is a student at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and a graduate of University of Mobile. This blog post first appeared at umobile.edu/faith.

Letters to the Editor

Your article in the Jan. 16 issue about Bill Faircloth, pastor of Liberty Baptist Church, Thomasville, who preaches barefoot, reminded me of my husband, Randy Johnson, interim pastor of Grove Hill Baptist Church, who also removes his shoes before he gets in the pulpit.

He told me that more than 21 years ago he was studying the story of the prodigal son and was convicted that he was a son. But when he stands behind the pulpit, he is a servant.

The children in that story wore shoes, but the servants did not. So to this day, he removes his shoes to preach.

Janie Johnson
Grove Hill, Ala.

A few of the things I like about TAB Media:

TAB Media shares stories that are inspirational and encouraging.

TAB Media informs on issues impacting our communities, state, country and Christians around the world.

TAB Media tackles the difficult issues without an agenda.

Bill Gilmore
Director of sales, TAB

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

OPINION

> "Obviously I want to win every game, but I'm glorifying Him every single time I'm out there."
>
> PATRICK MAHOMES
> *Kansas City Chiefs' quarterback*

Was the [Super Bowl halftime] performance really a commentary on popular culture? After all, wasn't it just a show? Does a performance like this really influence how people think? ...

One way to answer this is imagining how the show might be seen through the eyes of young girls — like my granddaughters. It would be easy for them to draw these conclusions about what they saw the world celebrating — that's the kind of women men will watch, that's the kind of woman I need to be if men are going to notice me and that's the kind of behavior that will make me popular, particularly with men.

When viewed through the eyes of young girls, unfortunately the message communicated wasn't so confusing after all. Surely there are better ways to empower young women in all cultures than what we saw on [Super Bowl] Sunday.

Jeff Iorg, President
Gateway Seminary

When I got saved in 2007, God really dealt with me specifically about sharing the gospel with other people. And through the course of reading Scripture, of learning more about it, going out and making mistakes, trying to get better, having some good mentoring, I came in contact with a lot of other people [in Sports Fan Outreach International] who had a similar passion.

Paul Harvey
Capshaw Baptist Church
Madison, Ala.

To fully know agape love is to experience it, to live it, to embody it [as in the parable of the Good Samaritan]. ... Agape love knows no bounds or limits. It reflects the fullness of God's love for humanity, and the often aspirational ways we are invited to love one another.

Rev. Tim Schenck
Hingham, Mass.

As long as we surrender wholeheartedly to the cause of Christ, we will have a future in Kingdom work. It's not about me or you. It's not about WMU. It is about taking the gospel to those who have never heard.

Sandy Wisdom-Martin
Executive director
Woman's Missionary Union

Relationships are imperative in our gospel cooperation together, and I would encourage all Southern Baptists — leaders, pastors and church members — to approach one another in a spirit of gentleness, humility and understanding to work together for the advance of the gospel to every town, every city, every state and every nation.

Ronnie Floyd
President and CEO
SBC Executive Committee

Ministry is a constant juggling to keep the equilibrium of those who are out of spiritual balance one way or the other. The only way to do that is to keep yourself in balance. The only way you can keep yourself in balance is daily being in the Word and hourly [spending time] in prayer.

Pastor Mac Brunson
Valleydale Church
Birmingham, Ala.

Considering the importance and necessity of the new birth, we understand the old adage that holds being born is an eternal calamity unless a person is also born again.

Jerry Batson
Theology 101

We must reaffirm that biblically there is no distinction between embracing God's grace as a forgiven sinner and following Jesus as the primary shaping influence over our life. Christian and disciple are interchangeable as we read in Acts, "The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch" (Acts 11:26). Therefore, we must recalibrate where we set the bar of discipleship.

Greg Ogden
"Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ"

From the *Twitterverse*

@ThabitiAnyabwil

#MyDreamSuperBowlShow would be hosted in Atlanta and would feature music and singing from old school gospel to Christian hip hop. Voices would be on display, not bodies. Spirits would be lifted, not skirts and shirts. The entire family could watch the entire show.

@lukestamps

The notion that we have nothing to learn from ideas not birthed in the Christian worldview, that our only obligation is to learn about them in order to roundly critique them, is not in keeping with classical Christian thought.

@JennMGreenberg

Until American pop culture values women more for their intellect, creativity and integrity than for sex, the objectification and abuse of women and children will increase, divorce will rise, crime will rise and the family will degrade. This is entropy — a cycle of moral rot.

@jdgreear

"Never confuse leadership with popularity." — Winston Churchill (from Andrew Roberts' excellent biography)

@christomlin

Worship isn't limited to a church building. We can worship in the car on the way to work, out in nature on a hike or in our kitchens cooking dinner. #WorshipIsAJourney

@micahfries

The left can show little regard for the unborn child. The right can show little regard for the refugee child. Both can show little regard for the dignity and worth of every human life. Christians, we embrace a genuine commitment to life and advocate on behalf of all of the above.

@shadesmtn

Church isn't only about addressing the physical problems we can see and touch in our lives. First, it's about admitting our sin and pursuing right relationship with the One who created us.

@DustyMcLemore

Before God allowed Israel into the land flowing with milk and honey, He brought them through the discipline of life in the wilderness!

@alsbom

Pray for revival and renewal. #PrayingAlabama

Printing and promoting *books*

SonCoast Publishing provides forum for Christian books, authors to spread gospel

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Martine Bates Fairbanks has read a lot of books through the years. She's always been a voracious reader. And working as a book reviewer for *The Alabama Baptist* has brought even more books her way during the past several years.

"There have been hundreds," Fairbanks said.

And sometimes as she's held a book, she's had this thought: "I wish I could've gotten my hands on this book before it was published."

Sometimes that's because she feels like a keen editorial eye could have taken the story from good to great. Other times it's because she wishes the author had the benefit of a marketing team helping him or her get the word out.

And recently Fairbanks found a solution she thinks might be the answer to both of those needs. Back in June, she — along with business partner Alice Evans — bought a publishing company.

"I wasn't seeking it out; this one fell in our laps," Fairbanks said.

'Christian component'

Fairbanks and Evans had wanted to see a line of children's books — the Alabama Roots Biography Series — get in the hands of more children, so they approached the publisher, Seacoast Publishing, with some ideas. It's a popular series with educators, which is exactly Fairbanks' background, and both she and Evans had written several titles for the series.

They didn't expect Seacoast's owner to offer them the company — but they said yes, they'd take it.

"My intent from the very beginning was to add a Christian component," Fairbanks said.

Evans' publishing interests lay in other directions, so Fairbanks started talking to her former pastor, Rob Jackson, along with his daughter, Abigail — who works in marketing — and Jackson's longtime friend Max Croft, who once owned a large Christian bookstore and has a seminary background.

Fairbanks' son, Ben Bates, a pastor in North Alabama with degrees in theology and English, also joined them, and together they formed SonCoast Publishing, which they plan to operate as both a traditional publishing company and a resource for authors who want to self publish.

Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

Martine Bates Fairbanks (right), Rob Jackson (center) and Max Croft meet in TAB's community room to discuss the vision of SonCoast Publishing and how they want the company to serve as a gospel tool nationally and internationally.

"We want to provide a forum for Christian books as well as an avenue for people who want to write a book and need a little coaching and guidance," Fairbanks said.

Jackson, currently associate professor of Christian studies at University of Mobile, said the prospect of creating SonCoast was an answer to prayer for him — he had been praying for new ways to reach people with the truth of Christ. For him, SonCoast opened up the possibility not only to publish books but to be able to distribute materials globally to assist with pastor training. And that's the tip of the iceberg.

'Christ glorified'

"I would love to help people print and promote books that are going to change the world," Jackson said. "Can we help writers become authors who will change the world? Can we help market and promote Christian literature not only here but around the world so Christ can be glorified? Can we have more resources to give to further the kingdom of God? Those were the questions we have been asking."

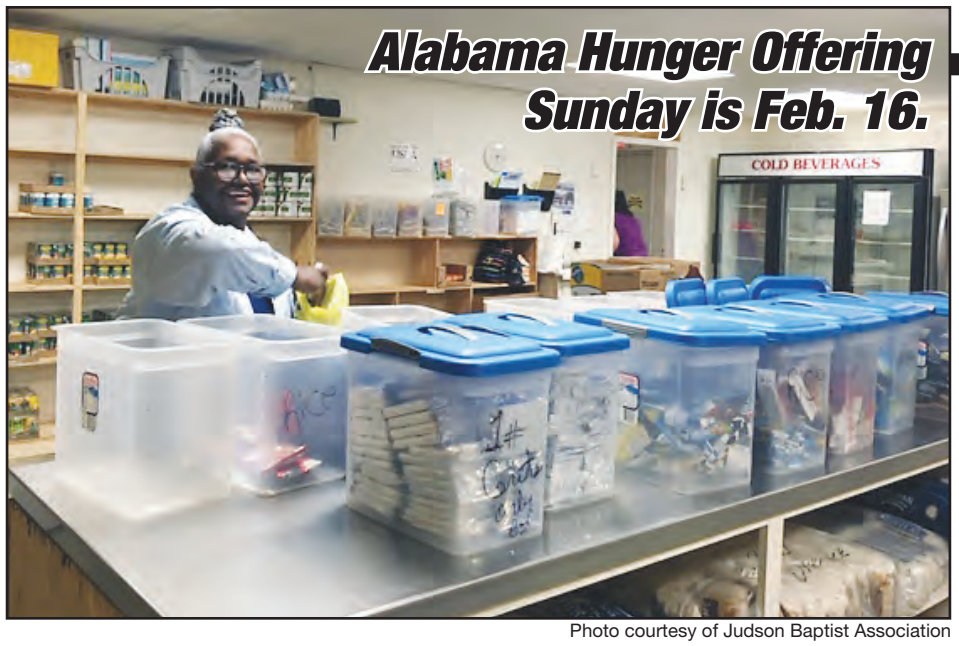
And it seems, he said, that the answer is yes.

soncoast PUBLISHING

For more information, visit soncoastpublishing.com or call 256-318-6635.

"I would love to help people print and promote books that are going to change the world."

Rob Jackson
associate professor of Christian studies, University of Mobile



Alabama Hunger Offering Sunday is Feb. 16.

Photo courtesy of Judson Baptist Association

Feeding *the* hungry

Associational food banks across state depend on offering to continue ministry

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Linda Sheppard said the couple had been all over Dothan trying to get help before they showed up at one of Judson Baptist Association's ministry centers.

"He had the end stages of terminal cancer, and they were out of everything," she said.

That's the kind of people who often walk through their doors — people who have fallen through the cracks because they don't qualify for other food and assistance programs, said Sheppard, who directs both of the association's centers.

In the case of this couple — and many others like them — it's because on paper they may have an income, but a large amount of their resources have gone toward cancer treatments, prescriptions and traveling to and from appointments.

"We consider that. We look at the whole situation, and we were able to help them," Sheppard said. "The wife later wrote us a letter and thanked us because we had helped them, and he had passed away. She was so thankful he had gotten to meet some people who really cared before he died. It's people like that we try to really work with and help them out."

'Share Jesus'

Judson Association's ministry centers feed hundreds of people each month, with volunteers listening to their stories and asking their needs.

"These volunteers are men and women from our association's churches, and they sit down with people who tell them things about their life that they don't tell anybody else," Sheppard said. "We get to pray with them, help them and share Jesus with them."

Of the state's 100 associational ministry centers, 53 received funds from the Alabama Hunger Offering for Global Hunger Relief last year. Because the centers and their volunteers — about 8,200 of them working statewide — are already in place, the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) is able to put the offering's funds directly toward food.

"We distribute every penny given," said Jim Swedenburg, director of the SBOM office of Cooperative Program and stewardship development. "Twenty-five percent of it is distributed in Alabama to these ministries."

The rest goes to the Global Hunger Fund, which distributes 80% of its funds through the International Mission Board and 20% through the North American Mission Board to feed the hungry in the U.S. and Canada.

The offering will be collected this year on Feb. 16, though churches and individuals are welcome to give to the cause year-round.

It's a big need, and in Alabama "we don't come near meeting all the need," Swedenburg said.

"We could feed more people if we had twice as much money come in through the offering."

For more information, visit tabonline.org/hunger.

In past years, giving to the offering has dropped significantly in Alabama Baptist churches. The 2019 offering brought in $387,086, less than half of the $863,227 received in 2011. That means the 25% of last year's offering allocated to helping hunger ministries in Alabama — just shy of $97,000 — only provided about 12 cents for each food insecure person in the state. In 2017, an estimated 795,760 Alabamians were food insecure, according to Feeding America.

Leroy Cole, who directs Covington Baptist Association's three service centers, said they feed about 800 families a month by using ministry funds to purchase USDA food. Every year, they distribute around 400,000 pounds of food.

"The need has always been there," he said. "We can't take care of their entire monthly need, but we can help supplement what they have to help feed their families."

'Show who He is'

Those who seek help are fed spiritually too. Across the state, associational service centers saw 359 people profess new faith in Christ in 2019 as volunteers shared the gospel with them. Sheppard said it's a wonderful thing to be a part of.

"We try to be Jesus to them, because so many of them are not in a church. They've never been to a church and they don't know anything about the gospel," she said. "We try to show them who He is through how we interact with them."

Ministry center makes changes, sees meaningful results

Melanie Deal said she's loved every day of the 16 years she's gotten to direct the ministry center at Southeast Alabama Baptist Association.

"You get to encounter people you never would otherwise and share Christ with them," she said.

But since the center has made some changes in the past five years, it's even more fun, Deal said. "We were averaging around 20–30 salvations a year, but since we've made some changes, we're seeing so many more. We had 66 in 2019."

Some of the changes they've made are geared toward building a long-term relationship with their clients, Deal said. For instance, two days a week, volunteers will inventory the pantry, provide the clients who visit with a list and allow them to choose their groceries rather than receiving a pre-made box of food.

'Developing a relationship'

"With that simple change, people began to realize we're not just throwing food at them but developing a relationship with them," she said.

The association also offers financial classes for long-term clients and refers all to a local church.

And more changes are still to come. The recent purchase of an adjacent building will allow a large enough pantry space for clients to go shopping on their own for food items. And in the future, they will be paired with a volunteer who will stay connected with them as they visit.

"We have made changes to make it more about relationship building with the individuals when they walk in these doors," Deal said. "It's been a blessing." (Grace Thornton)

Nurturing missions-minded children

Missions, ministry projects encourage spiritual growth, cultivate missions hearts into adulthood

By Carolyn Tomlin
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Workers in children's ministry teach children from many different home environments. Some are active in missions programs. Others are on the church roll but seldom attend.

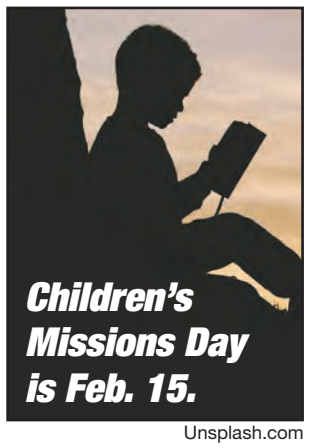
Teachers and leaders in children's ministry are challenged to:

- encourage families to be proactive in missions
- plan practical and upbeat activities children want to attend
- show that missions start in the local community
- implement projects leading to spiritual growth.

"It's important to help children find ways to help others," said Joye Smith, preschool consultant for Woman's Missionary Union. "The message is that God loves me, and God loves you. These experiences instill God's love with children."

Children's Missions Day, observed this year on Feb. 15, is a day to help children help others in Christ's name.

From feeding hungry people to visiting shut-ins, Children's Missions Day is a time for boys and girls to follow God's command to "put your love into action" (1 John 3:18) and share the gospel through words and actions.



Unsplash.com

Children can be missionaries in their own community by sharing about Jesus.

Ideas appropriate for elementary-aged children include:

- Make fleece scarves for a homeless shelter.
- Play games with pennies (estimate how many inches 100 pennies will be, how many pennies it takes to outline a child, etc.). Collect pennies to buy individual frozen pizzas for a homeless center for women and children.
- Volunteer to maintain a community garden site. Display a sign that identifies your children's missions group. Talk with people who walk by and tell them God loves them.
- Collect small bottles of shampoo, lotion and toothpaste. Deliver them to a homeless shelter along with a newsletter from your church.
- Schedule a time to visit an assisted living center. Sing favorite hymns and invite residents to sing along.
- Collect money to provide *The Alabama Baptist* for someone on a fixed income or provide copies for a senior center.
- Gather seasonal clothing to donate to a local Christian service center. Write Scripture verses about God's love on slips of paper and place them in the pockets of the clothes.

Missions and ministry are closely connected, so talk to children about how each project is missions because it provides opportunities to share the gospel.

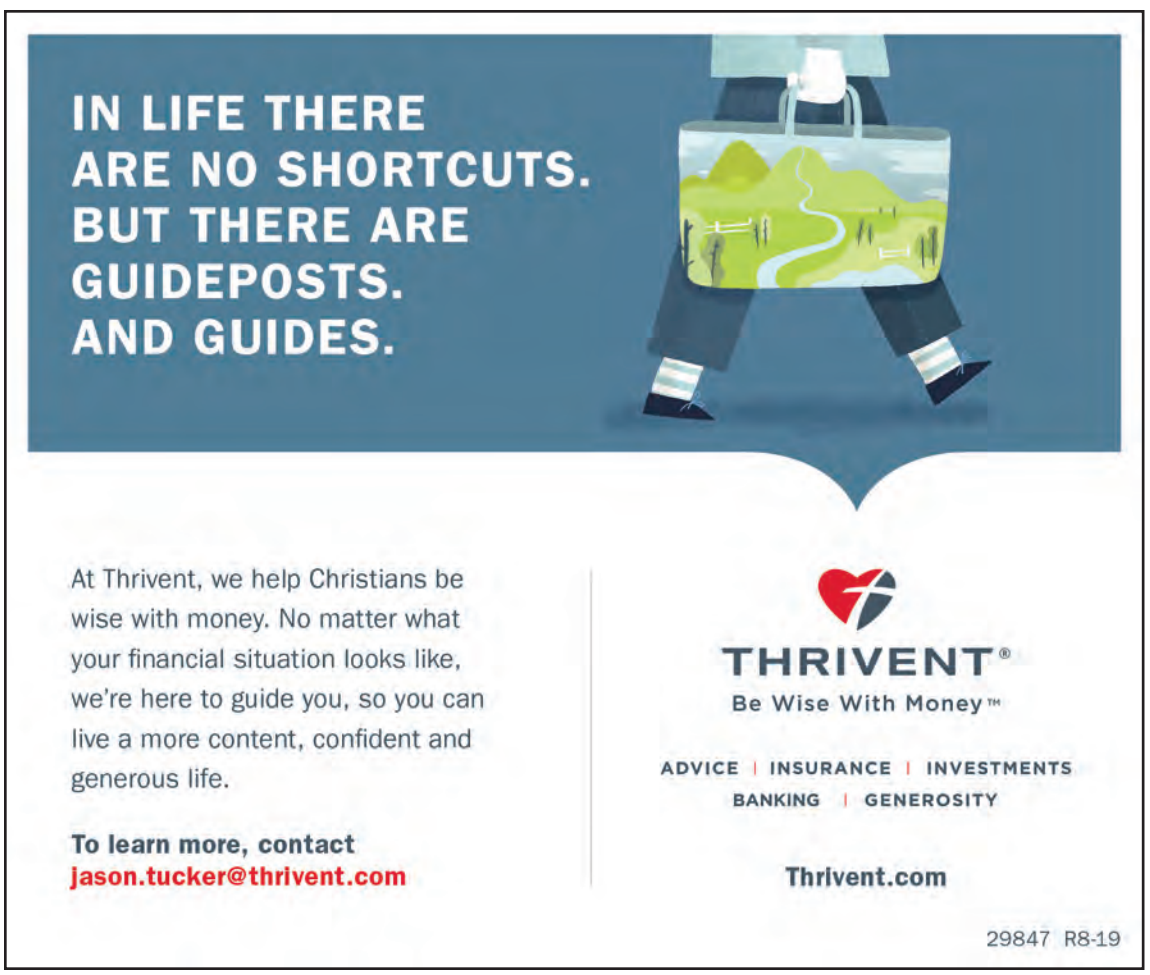
And if the second Saturday of February doesn't work with your church calendar, Smith suggests choosing another day. Any day can be a missions day as long as the purpose is to help children "get outside the church and help others," she said.

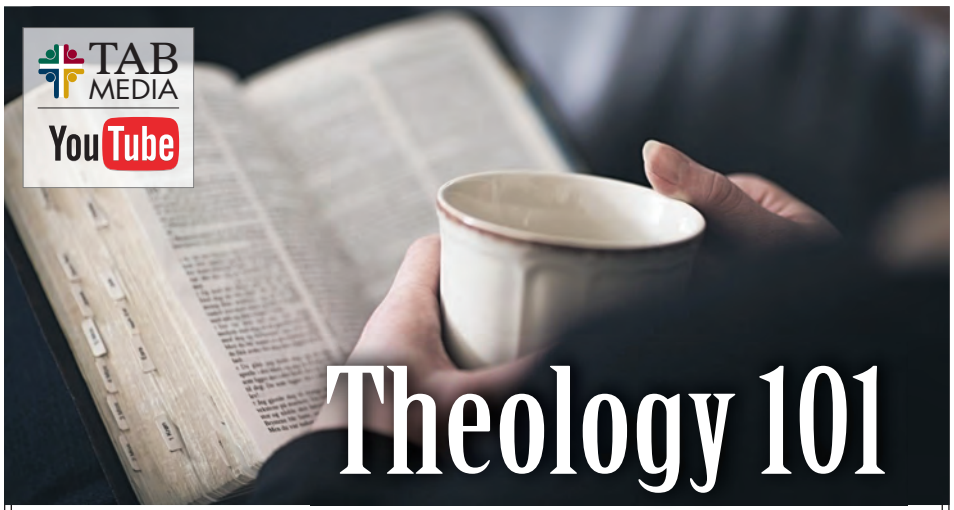
Aside from following Jesus' example of service to others, other reasons exist to engage children in community service and missions projects. Many school organizations recognize community service, and many colleges consider community service in the application and scholarship granting process.

'As they grow'

Another bonus — children who are involved in missions early in life are more likely to continue this work when older.

And when children work together they learn to solve problems, make decisions and discover ways to contribute to their church and community. This serves them for the present and as they grow into Christ-centered adults.





BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

What's New

A New Heart

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

Continuing to give thought to some of the new things God makes possible, Theology 101 turns this week to the biblical truth about the new heart God gives those who come to saving faith in His Son.

Rooted in the Old Testament's promise of a new covenant was the prophetic anticipation of God giving His people new hearts.

Through Ezekiel, God promised this new heart for His people in these words: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you" (Ezek. 36:26–27).

Understanding that God had in mind something other than the blood-pumping organ in a person's chest, biblically we think of the heart having reference to the inward nature or essential core of a person's life.

When speaking about the human heart in this way, believers often have broken down the idea of a person's heart in terms of mental capacity, emotional nature and volitional freedom. In simple expression, the new heart God provides His people has to do with a new way of thinking, feeling and choosing.

As for the new way of thinking, we commonly make reference to our minds as the wellspring of our thoughts. This capacity is so central to the persons we are that the Bible declares of a person, "As he thinks in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7). Even more to the point about a new mind is the admonition of Philippians 2:5: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

The idea of newness of heart includes new ways or standards of thinking.

In addition, the idea of a new heart encompasses new ways of feeling. That which stirs the emotions of a Christian is to be different from what may stir the emotions of a nonbeliever. The Bible admonishes, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you" (Eph. 4:32). Romans 12:15 puts it like this: "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep."

Furthermore, this new heart introduces into a believer's life new standards or guidelines for the choices we make. This new heart learns to ask of God, "Not my will but Yours be done." What the Lord wants becomes more and more what we choose.

A life with a new heart characterized by the mind of Christ, the compassion of Christ and the will of Christ is indeed an abundant life.

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.

Gospel songs part of faith heritage for worshippers

Kris Herron said he believes it's important for the church to "remember where we've been and where we come from."

That's why Olive Branch Baptist Church, Ashland — where Herron serves as music minister — held an "old timey day" a few months back.

"We wore overalls, bonnets and long skirts," he said. "Some guys in the church whose hobby is old cars brought them and had them sitting outside the old sanctuary, and we had 'dinner on the grounds.' "

In past generations, people worked hard and didn't always have much, but they knew where their wealth came from, Herron said.

"They've left us a legacy of faith, and I think it's important for us to remember those old saints that laid the foundations that we are still building on today in God's kingdom."

So to remember those truths, after lunch they returned to the old sanctuary and sang from the "old short books," with people calling out the numbers of their favorites, songs like "Victory in Jesus" and "I'll Fly Away."

"I'm 51, and I still love that kind of music, the old stuff — I grew up on it," Herron said.

Jeff Helton said in his neck of the woods, people still love the old stuff too.

Mount View Baptist Church, Hayden, where he serves as pastor, is one of several churches in Sulphur Springs Baptist Association that regularly hosts a fifth Sunday red book singing. Everyone in the association is invited, and the singing usually draws a pretty big crowd.

"I think it's about the memories, leading the songs our people grew up singing," Helton said. "This is the same hymnal that my home church had when I was a child, and the songs are comfortable to a lot of people."

Not only that, they have deep spiritual ties for them, he said. "Music is such an important part of worship, and the spiritual content of the hymns ties it all together for them."

The fellowship is good too, Helton said. "Our association is made up of very small churches, and it's great to get to just be together and sing and worship together." (Grace Thornton)

Photo courtesy of Kris Herron

Vickie Herron and Betty Kaye Wheeles attend an 'old timey day' at Olive Branch Baptist Church, Ashland.

Photo courtesy of Kris Herron

Members of Olive Branch Baptist Church, Ashland, gather next to a 1948 Chevrolet owned by Tommy Hicks (in car). The car was part of Olive Branch Baptist's old timey day as they 'remembered where we come from.'

Alabama Baptist
STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS

WMU ALABAMA

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

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

FEBRUARY

- 15 **Children's Missions Day**, Trish Jackson, ext. 224
- 16 **Hunger Sunday**, Jim Swedenburg, ext. 283
- 18 **Minister's Tax Conference**, Mobile Baptist Association, 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 Pastors and Leaders (Hispanic)**, Heritage Baptist Church, 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

MARCH

- 1-8 **Week of Prayer for North American Missions and Annie Armstrong Easter Offering**, Laura Glass, ext. 226
- 5-6 **Ministry Evangelism Retreat**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Kristy Kennedy, ext. 311
- 5-6 **Uplink on the Road**, State Board of Missions, Prattville, Scooter Kellum, ext. 280
- 6-7 **Complete...A gathering for teen girls**, Eastern Hills Baptist Church, Montgomery, Kathryn Helms, ext. 325
- 7 **Central Alabama Spring Library Workshop**, Shoal Creek Baptist Church, Deatsville, Marty Woodall, 334-569-3854
- 8-11 **Alabama Association of Baptist Secretaries Conference**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Lee Wright, ext. 241
- 12 **2020 Singin'**, Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile, Eileen Mitchell, ext. 221
- 12 **Who's Your One District Training**, Stapleton Baptist Church, Stapleton, Bailee Dixon, ext. 258
- 14 **State Disaster Relief Admin Training**, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Mark Wakefield, ext. 267
- 15 **OneVoice Honor Choir Tour**, Southside Baptist Church, Greenville, April Brewer, ext. 279
- 19 **Who's Your One District Training**, Mobile Baptist Association, Mobile, Bailee Dixon, ext. 258
- 19 **The Basics of Church Security**, State Board of Missions, Prattville, Mark Wakefield, ext. 267
- 20-21 **Adventure Weekend**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Monica Thompson, ext. 227
- 20-21 **Hispanic Worship Retreat/Taller de Adoration**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Annel Robayna, ext. 270
- 21 **State Disaster Relief Child Care Training**, Disaster Relief Center, Mark Wakefield, ext. 367
- 22 **Substance Abuse Prevention Sunday**, Keith Hinson, ext. 289
- 26 **Who's Your One District Training**, Millry Baptist Church, Millry, Bailee Dixon, ext. 258
- 28 **State Disaster Relief Communications Training**, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Mark Wakefield, ext. 267
- 28 **State Disaster Relief Shower & Laundry Unit Training**, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Mark Wakefield, ext. 267
- 30 **Who's Your One District Training**, New Vision Baptist Church, Prattville, Lori McGough, ext. 245

APRIL

- 2 **Who's Your One District Training**, FBC Dadeville, Dadeville, Lori McGough, ext. 245
- 2-4 **State Disaster Relief Training (Chaplaincy)**, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Mark Wakefield, ext. 267
- 3 **Themanchurch.com Training with Rick Burgess**, Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery, Larry Hyche, ext. 268
- 3-4 **Mom & Me Spring Fling**, WorldSong, Amanda Armstrong, ext. 223
- 3-4 **State Disaster Relief (Mass Feeding, Cleanup/Recovery, Chainsaw) Training**, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Mark Wakefield, ext. 267
- 6 **Who's Your One District Training**, Fayette Baptist Association, Fayette, Lori McGough, ext. 245

SHARING

Christ across cultures

Photo courtesy of Kim Wilson

Paula Padilla (right) teaches an advanced English class during Reading Club at the International Language School.

All of Alabama ripe for international ministry

(*continued from page 1*)
volunteer chaplains to help us reach out to more."

Thomas Wright, executive director of missions for Mobile Association, said with all these opportunities to reach internationals, it's never been easier for Christians to be obedient to Acts 1:8. He believes one reason God brought the nations to Mobile's doorstep is to stretch churches and individuals outside of their normal comforts and conveniences.

"Every believer in every church now has an opportunity to share Christ across cultures," he said. "Each congregation can engage members to step out of their comfort zone to make an eternal difference."

'Bridge to the lost'

Wright said 73 language-culture groups make their home in Mobile County and more than 100 language groups are studying on the city's university campuses.

"Thankfully many believers here are asking how to communicate across cultures," he said. "They find the New Testament demonstrates many ways to build a bridge to the lost so they can hear about Jesus. The outreach begins with making a new friend."

That can sometimes be difficult in tight-knit communities, but Mobile Baptists are trying to find ways to reach out. They have an International Language School to teach English skills to internationals, and local Baptist Campus Ministries are working to reach international students with the gospel.

Mobile Association also has Korean, Laotian and Vietnamese churches now — and is hoping to start more among different language groups.

"We are starting churches and Bible studies so every person can hear, understand and respond to biblical truth," Wright said. "Each of these opportunities are more effective when churches make the effort to work together."

'Many opportunities'

Kristy Kennedy, an associate in the office of associational missions and church planting for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said English as a Second Language ministry is thriving in Mobile.

"Mobile is slightly more diverse (than the rest of Alabama) due to the number of refugees that move there and because it is a port city," she said. "That provides many opportunities for ministry."

But the entire state has international ministry possibilities, Kennedy said. "Alabama is ever growing due to our universities. Many internationals come here to get an education. We as Alabama Baptists should take advantage of our opportunities to share the good news with the many visitors to our state who have never heard."

Missions inspiration underscores WMU board meeting in Birmingham

By Julie Walters
National Woman's Missionary Union

From Alaska and Hawaii to Maine and Florida, Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) board members and state leaders from across the U.S. gathered Jan. 11–13 at national WMU in Birmingham for its biannual board meeting. More than 200 were in attendance, including representatives from the International Mission Board (IMB) and North American Mission Board, to share inspiring stories and hear updates of God at work around the world.

Gordon Fort, senior ambassador for the IMB president, thanked WMU for its support and partnership for the cause of missions before introducing his daughter, Lizzy, who served as a journeyman in Central Asia.

COOPER

While there, Lizzy shared about meeting Mary who told her she had dreamed about Jesus. The two became friends and began studying the book of Luke in Kurdish. However, Lizzy said Mary began to worry she would be persecuted if she accepted Christ and decided it was too risky, so she quit coming.

'Lost be found'

"I prayed for her," Lizzy said, "and Mary came back one day and said she felt so lost. We began studying the Bible again. When we read Romans 10:9 about confessing with your mouth that you believe in Jesus, she prayed to receive Christ ... the lost need to be found."

WMU President Linda Cooper said 2019 was a banner year for international missions efforts at WMU.

"We are a national company with a global reach," Cooper said. "Through Pure Water, Pure Love, we provide all IMB missionaries with water filters and funded water projects in 12 different countries including Cuba, India and Liberia — providing clean drinking water for people in need and the opportunity to experience the Living Water.

WISDOM-MARTIN

"More than 1,800 impoverished artisans in 22 countries earned a sustainable wage and found real hope through WorldCrafts," Cooper continued. "In addition to nearly 200 Christian Women's and Men's Job Corps sites in the United States, there are Christian Women's Job Corps sites in Mexico, West Africa, South Africa, and soon to be Thailand with IMB personnel."

Shifting to WMU's online leadership development opportunities, Cooper shared, "Women from around the world — including Afghanistan, Japan, Taiwan, Thailand and Ukraine — take WMU's Christian Women's Leadership Center classes, and a second international student just finished all nine courses representing 150 hours of coursework," Sandy Wisdom-Martin, executive director of national WMU, said. While ministry is not always easy, it is evident God is at work.

"We need to all commit daily to serve humbly and lead courageously," she said.

Total surrender

"As long as we surrender wholeheartedly to the cause of Christ," she said, "we will have a future in Kingdom work. It's not about me or you. It's not about WMU. It is about taking the gospel to those who have never heard. I just happen to believe engaging Christ followers in missions discipleship is critical to the Great Commission. And we are Great Commission people."

WMU's next board meeting will be June 6–7 in Orlando, Florida. To read the full report, visit www.tabonline.org/WMU.

Covington Baptist Association is sponsoring the third annual

"REFRESH" Retreat

A RETREAT FOR MINISTERS WIVES AND STAFF WIVES

Date: Friday night and Saturday, March 6–7

Location: Blue Lake Camp in Andalusia, Ala.

Speakers: *Shirley Flowers* (pastor's wife at Southside Baptist Church, Andalusia) and *Diane Nix*. Diane is the director and founder of Contagious Joy 4 Him. She is a pastor's/professor's wife. Her life bears the scars of addiction, abuse, loss and dysfunction. She also is a contributing author to LifeWay's Ministry to Women blog, Broadman and Holman's Daily Devotional for Women and The Psalms and Proverbs Devotional for Women. She is an author, speaker, vlogger and blogger.

Shirley Flowers

Diane Nix

TO MAKE RESERVATIONS

Contact Covington Baptist Association at 334-222-3009.
For additional information, contact Shirley Flowers at 205-239-1263 or sflow1011@gmail.com.

Space is limited. Reservation deadline is February 24.

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR
Fairhope Avenue Baptist Church is seeking a full-time pastor. Send resumés to: Fairhope Avenue Baptist Church, 8717 Fairhope Ave., Fairhope, AL 36532, or email to: fabc@att.net.

PASTOR
Community Baptist Church, Maylene, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking a pastor. Please submit a resumé that will include references, a call to ministry statement and a ministry objective to: Secretary@communitybaptistmaylene.com.

MINISTER OF MUSIC & EDUCATION
First Baptist Church, Clanton, is seeking a full-time minister of music and education. Send resumés to: First Baptist Church, 210 Sixth St. North, Clanton, AL 35045 or email resumés to: office@clantonfirstbaptist.org.

MUSIC, YOUTH, CHILDREN & PRESCHOOL
Fern Creek Baptist Church is seeking full-time and part-time ministerial staff in the following areas: music, youth, children and preschool. According to the applicant's gifts and skills, two of these areas will be combined for a full-time position. Applicants must exemplify a growing relationship with God, spiritual maturity, responsible authority, fervent evangelism, sound theology and effective communication skills with all age groups. Applicants should have experience and education in ministry. Anyone seeking the music position must be an excellent musician, worship leader and educator. Send resumés to: Fern Creek Baptist Church, ATTN: Personnel Committee, 5920 Bardstown Road, Louisville, KY 40291, or email to: linda@ferncreekbaptist.org. Resumés will be received through March 18. Questions? Call 239-0316, ext. 103 (Linda Barnes Popham).

MINISTER OF MUSIC/ YOUTH
First Baptist Church, Leeds, Alabama, is seeking full-time congregational minister of music/youth minister with other ministerial duties as assigned by senior pastor. Email resumé to: rbras699@aol.com.

BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH PASTOR
New Beginnings Baptist, Graysville, Alabama, searching for a bivocational youth pastor. Please send resumés to: nbccbaptist@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH DIRECTOR
First Baptist Church, Union Grove, is seeking a bivocational youth director. Send resumés to: FBCUG, P.O. Box 125, Union Grove, AL 35175.

OTHER POSITIONS

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

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MISCELLANEOUS

CHOIR ROBES/SHELVES
We have 50 choir robes and shelves with rod hangers and music book holders built in the shelves to give away. Please contact Barton's First Baptist Church, Cherokee, Ala., for more information. Our phone number is 256-370-7574.

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Register now for first Alabama Baptist Discipleship Conference

Looking for something practical to help you lead people to follow Jesus? The first-ever Alabama Baptist Discipleship Conference will offer conversations to help pastors and other church staff members live lifestyles of discipleship and start a culture of discipleship.

The conference — set for April 27–28 at Fultondale First Baptist Church — will go from 1:30 to 8:15 p.m. on Monday and 8:30 a.m. to noon on Tuesday.

Natural follow-up

Robert Mullins, pastor of Crossroads Community Church, Elmore, said he and others on the leadership team hope it will be a natural follow up to the state's evangelism conference, coming up Feb. 23–24.

But, he noted, it will be different from the evangelism conference setup in a couple of significant ways. First, though there will be speakers, the conference will be oriented toward the roundtable discussions the speakers will lead after their talks. With that in mind, the crowd size will be capped at 200.

"That will give us the intimacy we want to have," Mullins said. "If it's our mandate to love God, to love people and to make disciples, we should go forth and do it. Part of our goal through the conference would be that you would want to see a culture changed in your church where we're not just program driven but trying to make disciples."

Featured speakers will be:

- Daniel Im, author of "No Silver Bullets" and senior associate pastor of Beulah Alliance Church, Edmonton, Canada
- Ken Adams, lead pastor of Crossroads Church, Newnan, Georgia, and founder and director of Impact Disciples
- Scott Kindig, pastor of Kingdom Initiatives at Community Bible Fellowship, San Antonio, Texas
- Robert Coleman, author of "Master Plan of Evangelism"

FOR MORE INFORMATION

or to register and save your seat, visit aldiscipleshipconference.com.

'Help you start'

"If you're struggling with the 'same old same old' and not getting the results you want, and you want to see people come to the Lord and be discipled, this is something that will help you get started," Mullins said.

The conference is sponsored by Disciple-Making Ministries of Alabama in partnership with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. (Grace Thornton)

Christian Crossword

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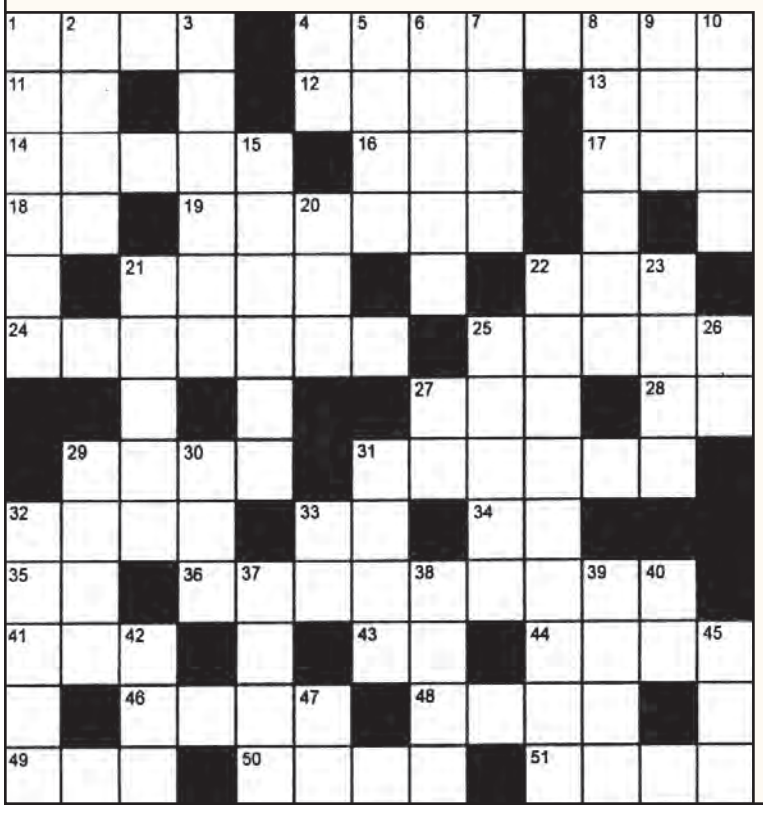

Across

1. Mary's relation to Joseph.
4. magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name ___. (Ps. 34:3)
11. Trust ___ the Lord, and do good. (Ps. 37:3)
12. Appliance used for baking bread.
13. Nickname for Sarah's husband.
14. Thy rod and thy ___ they comfort me. (Ps. 23:4)
16. Ask, ___ it shall be given you. (Matt. 7:7)
17. Small Business Administration. (abbr.)
18. They toil not, neither ___ they spin. (Matt. 6:28)
19. They shall mount up with the winds as ___. (Isa. 40:31)
21. Wile E. Coyote's mail order company.
22. What Jesus did for the 5,000 followers.
24. To refer to briefly or incidentally.
25. Shades of color.
27. ___ we walk by faith, not by sight. (2 Cor. 5:7)
28. Mr. ___.
29. Depend.
31. The glory of this ___ house shall be greater. (Hag. 2:9)
32. "O ___ Night."
33. Southeast. (abbr.)
34. I will be ___ enemy unto thine enemies. (Ex. 23:22)
35. Receive the kingdom of God ___ a little child. (Mark 10:15)
36. He taketh away the first, that he may ___ the second. (Heb. 10:9)
41. Pollen-loving insect.
43. ___, Fi, Fo, Fum.
44. Be ___ in the Lord. (Ps. 32:11)
46. The one and ___.
48. Is to hearing as a mirror is to seeing.
49. Parable of the ___ Talents. (Matt. 25:14)
50. For the Son of Man is come to save that which was ___. (Matt. 18:11)
51. One Bobbsey sibling.

Down

1. For the Lord giveth ___. (Prov. 2:6)
2. "Come ___ My Heart, Lord Jesus."
3. Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without ___? (Rom. 3:3)
4. Glory ___ God in the highest. (Luke 2:14)
5. Egg shaped.
6. Parts of a chromosome that influence characteristics.
7. From the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ___ of it. (Ps. 19:6)
8. Let him make speed, and ___ his work. (Isa. 5:19)
9. ___ and flow.
10. Harvest.
15. Of whom the whole ___ in heaven and earth is named. (Eph. 3:15)
20. Geography. (abbr.)
21. Heavenly being.
22. Two weeks.
23. Buck or doe.
25. Complete.
26. South Dakota. (abbr.)
27. Do, Re, Mi, ___.
29. Cain ___ up against Abel his brother. (Gen. 4:8)
30. Granny Clampett's homemade ___ soap.
31. Removable piece of table top.
32. Convent attire.
33. Street. (abbr.)
37. What Jacob's sons did to Joseph. (Gen. 37:27)
38. Edible red root.
39. Snail's pace.
40. Laughter.
42. Long period of time.
45. Daniel's temporary dwelling.
47. ___-yo.

NEWS

3 stories you should know

LifeWay photo

Vacation Bible School (VBS) leaders are gearing up for summer. More than 4,000 VBS workers have attended one of several LifeWay preview events held across the United States and globally for this year's 'Concrete and Cranes' themed material. Lisa Sessions (above), a special education teacher and VBS volunteer from Texas, leads a session on 'Special Friends,' an adaptation of VBS curriculum to better serve children, students and adults with special needs. (BP)

GuideStone releases ministers' tax guide

GuideStone has released its most popular annual publication, the 2020 Ministers' Tax Guide for 2019 Returns.

The tax guide includes tax highlights for 2019, including changes based on the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 and the current status of the minister's housing allowance after the recent 2019 litigation.

The guide also includes step-by-step filing instructions for ministers' personal taxes and comprehensive examples and sample forms.

GuideStone participants also can receive the Federal Reporting Requirements for Churches resource. Both free resources are available for download at GuideStone.org/TaxGuide. Participants can request a free printed copy of the tax guide by calling 888-984-8433 (printed copies are limited). (BP)

Immigrant help based on 'beliefs,' judge rules

An Arizona federal judge has reversed the convictions of four faith-based volunteers who were fined and put on probation for aiding migrants at the border, saying the activists were simply exercising their "sincerely held religious beliefs."

The ruling in U.S. v. Hoffman, announced Feb. 3, overturned a lower court decision that found the activists guilty of breaking federal law by leaving out water and food for migrants crossing the U.S.–Mexico border in Arizona's Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge.

Activists argued they were acting on their religious beliefs to save immigrant lives and their prosecution was a violation of the 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which bars the government from placing a "substantial burden" on the free exercise of religion. (RNS)

— NEWSBRIEFS —

Alabama's TAB 1 of 4 of its kind left after Arkansas paper dissolves board

The Arkansas Baptist News (ABN) has dissolved its autonomous board of directors and become a convention-run publication, according to an Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC) press release Feb. 4.

Screengrab

The ABN is the most recent of the traditional state Baptist newspapers to make this move. *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB) is one of only four remaining papers with a hybrid structure — an autonomous board but a relationship with the convention through board member approval and some funding. TAB remains the largest circulated among the remaining four.

TAB's board of directors chairman Rob Jackson, said, "An autonomous board ensures TAB is unbiased while we work synergistically with all our state partners."

And vice chairman Gary Fenton said, "*The Alabama Baptist* has the best of both worlds. The autonomous board allows the state paper to be free from any denominational control, but our great cooperative relationship with the Alabama Baptist Convention provides us the opportunity to give Baptists news from the denomination."

Jennifer Davis Rash, TAB's president and editor-in-chief, said the hybrid structure will allow TAB to successfully navigate the current changing trends in the communications industry as a whole.

"We have morphed into a media group rather than just being print or online," she said. "We are trying to cover all the bases with our content so that there's something for everyone, regardless of how you prefer to get your news and information.

"We also work closely with all of our state convention partners and ministries and have a solid relationship with Alabama Baptist churches," she said. "The people know us personally and understand our calling to serve in this area. They know our hearts and the importance of credible news and information from an unbiased source, as well as the need to have access to trusted resources for personal growth and discipleship." To read the full article, go to tabonline.org/ABN. (TAB)

California abortion mandate violates federal law, jeopardizes funding

The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) put California on notice Jan. 24 for the state's universal abortion coverage mandates.

The HHS notice of violation said California's mandate that all insurance companies cover abortions is illegal because it violates a federal law that shields health care providers from discrimination if they choose not to provide coverage for abortions.

Two religious groups challenged the rule on the grounds their beliefs preclude them from helping to pay for insurance coverage for elective abortions. An OCR investigation determined the rule violates the Weldon Amendment, a 2009 federal provision that prohibits discrimination to an institution or individ-

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NEWS

News near you

BALDWIN ASSOCIATION

▸ **First Baptist Church, Silverhill,** will host the Royal Ambassadors Boys Pinewood Derby on Feb. 29. Registration will begin at 9:30 a.m. with the race following at 10 a.m. Lunch will be provided. There is an open division for girls and adults to enter the race. RSVP to Brent Pugh at jbrentpugh@gmail.com.

BARBOUR ASSOCIATION

▸ **Cross Baptist Church, Eufaula,** will host the Barbour Baptist Annual Evangelism Rally on Feb. 23 at 6 p.m. Chuck Kelley, president emeritus and professor at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, will be the guest speaker. Don Hatcher is director of missions of Barbour Baptist Association, and Matt Helms is pastor of Cross Baptist.

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

▸ **Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham,** will host the Grandparenting Matters! Conference, Feb. 28–29. The Friday sessions will begin at 6:30 p.m. and Saturday's conference will begin at 8 a.m. Find inspiration, ideas and tools to help you grandparent in a meaningful way. Larry Fowler, founder of Legacy Coalition, will be the guest speaker. For more information and to register, visit dawsonchurch.org/ItMatters. David Eldridge is pastor. ▸ **Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover,** will host the Hunter Street Orchestra Festival on Feb. 22 from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Register for the event at hunterstreetworship.org/register. Richard Kingsmore will be the clinician. A concert at the Riverchase Galleria is planned for 4:30 p.m. For more information email gayp@hsbc.org. Buddy Gray is pastor.

CHILTON ASSOCIATION

▸ **Tyler Eiland** is the new director of missions for **Chilton Baptist Association.** He was born and raised in Chilton County, coming to know Christ through First Baptist Church, Clanton. He previously served as pastor of Verbena Baptist Church. He also served as a church planter in Missouri, pastored a church in Tennessee and served with the International Mission Board in the Democratic Republic of Congo. He holds degrees from Samford University and was part of a seminary cohort program through Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Lakeview Baptist Church, Auburn. He and his wife, Jennifer, have three children.

EILAND

ESCAMBIA ASSOCIATION

▸ **First Baptist Church, Brewton,** will host its 29th annual outdoor outreach Feb. 22. Archery and cast throwing will be held at 3 p.m. with the meal at 5 p.m. and program at 6 p.m. Johnny Morgan, from Obedience 2 Death Ministries — a ministry that uses duck dogs to share the gospel — will be the guest speaker. Cavin Cawthon is pastor.

ETOWAH ASSOCIATION

▸ **Union No. 3 Baptist Church, Gadsden,** will sponsor a men's ministry event at The Venue in Gadsden featuring Tony Evans, pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas. "Becoming a Kingdom Man" will be held March 6 at 6:45 p.m. To purchase tickets or for more information call 256-494-9180. Tickets also are available for purchase at Union No. 3 Baptist, Smith Cleaners in Anniston and Tile Liquidators in Albertville. Joey Hanner is pastor.

FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION

▸ **First Baptist Church, Remlap,** will host the association-wide music festival Feb. 23 at 6 p.m. Everyone is invited for a night of worship and fellowship. Ernie Carroll is director of missions, and Mark Smith is pastor.

MORGAN ASSOCIATION

▸ **Mahlon LeCroix** is the new pastor of Shoal Creek Baptist Church, Decatur. After coming out of a life of addiction and rehab, LeCroix was ordained in 2011. Since then he has pastored three churches in Alabama and Florida. He holds a degree from Baptist College of Florida in Graceville and is currently pursuing a master's degree from Luther Rice Seminary. He and his wife, Ashley, have two children.

LECROIX

— NEWSBRIEFS —

ual health care entity on the basis of refusing to provide, pay for, provide coverage of or refer for abortions. The notice says California must come into compliance with federal law or risk federal funds. (TAB)

Attack on Christians in northern India devastates families, church

Before Pastor Jai Singh appeared before a judge in northern India and was jailed on false charges of luring people to convert, Hindu extremists had dragged him from house worship to a school where groups of six beat him in turns, he said.

freevectormaps.com

The radical Hindus had assaulted him and other house church worshippers after an attempt to attack their mother church in nearby Siwanka over Christmas was thwarted, sources said. On the first Sunday of 2020, the assailants showed up at the Bichpari village house church and attacked Pastor Singh, homeowner Naresh Singh and his relatives. The pastor, who struggles to provide for his family as a day laborer, is still unable to walk due to the severity of the beatings, they said. Naresh Singh said his store was forced to close following the attacks.

"After the Jan. 5 attack on our home church, the owner of the shop called and told me to vacate the premises immediately," Naresh Singh said.

India is ranked 10th on Christian support organization Open Doors' 2020 World Watch List of the countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian. The country was 31st in 2013, but its position has grown worse each year after Narendra Modi of the Bharatiya Janata Party came to power in 2014. (MS)

Former missionary, global missions innovator Bill O'Brien dies at age 86

Bill O'Brien, a former Southern Baptist music missionary and leading expert in 21st century global missions, died Feb. 2. He was 86.

O'Brien and his wife of 56 years, Dellanna, served 12 years as missionaries in Indonesia before he joined the administrative staff of the Foreign Mission Board (now the International Mission Board) in 1976. For 15 years, including nine years as executive vice president, he was responsible for implementing goals of Bold Mission Thrust, an international missions strategy to evangelize unreached people groups.

O'BRIEN

When Dellanna was named executive director of national Woman's Missionary Union in 1989, the O'Briens moved to Birmingham, and in 1991 Bill O'Brien became founding director of the Global Center at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School.

He also taught missions at Beeson Divinity School before his retirement in 2000.

O'Brien continued to teach and serve following his retirement.

O'Brien was preceded in death by Dellanna. Survivors include his wife, Charmaine, three children, six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. (BNG, TAB)

< Sharing *hope* > 1 Peter 3:15

2020 STATE EVANGELISM CONFERENCE

February 23-24

Heritage Baptist Church
1849 Perry Hill Rd., MONTGOMERY

EVENING SESSION SPEAKERS:
Michael Catt & Don Wilton

SPECIAL MUSIC:
Andrew Peterson
Singer/Songwriter/Novelist
"Is He Worthy?"

SPEAKERS

Michael Catt
Pastor
Sherwood Baptist Church
Albany, Ga.

Vance Pitman
Pastor
Hope Church
Las Vegas, Nev.

Brett Kunkle
Founder/CEO
Maven
Tustin, Calif.

Robert Smith, Jr.
Preaching Professor
Beeson Divinity School
Birmingham

Sean McDowell
Apologetics Speaker and Author
San Juan Capistrano, Calif.

Don Wilton
Pastor
First Baptist Church Spartanburg
Spartanburg, S.C.

Related Events
(registration required)

Feb 23: Disciple Making Ministries Dinner

Feb 24: Reaching Gen Z Conference
Ministers' Wives Luncheon
Sharing Hope Conference for Hispanic Pastors and Leaders

MUSICIANS

Andrew Peterson
Vocalist
Nashville, Tenn.

Daniel Crews
Vocalist
Daniel Crews Ministries
Starke, Fla.

Kenneth Loomis
Worship Leader
Heritage Baptist Church
Montgomery

Frank Jones
Pianist
Frank Jones Ministries
Birmingham

Evangelism Everybody.

For a complete schedule and to register for related events, visit evangelizeAL.org

Rick Lance
Executive Director
Alabama Baptist
State Board of Missions
Prattville

Sammy Gilbreath
Director, Evangelism
Alabama Baptist
State Board of Missions
Prattville

Daniel Wilson
Co-Director, Evangelism
Alabama Baptist
State Board of Missions
Prattville

This event is made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.

District trainings for Who's Your One? to be offered throughout 2020

Ev

Evangelism

Everybody.

WHO'S YOUR ONE? is an effort to encourage each believer to identify one lost person with whom they can intentionally seek to share the Gospel. Can you imagine what would happen if every believer was praying by name for their one lost person and then seeking opportunities to share Christ with that person?

THE TRAINING WILL CONSIST OF THE FOLLOWING:

- ▸ Who's Your One? evangelism
- ▸ The Best News evangelism training
- ▸ Interceding on behalf of the lost
- ▸ Giving an evangelistic invitation
- ▸ Planning a special Baptism Sunday
- ▸ Articulating a Christian worldview

THE TRAINING IS FREE!

Lunch will be provided and other evangelism resources will be given away. The training will last two hours and we will also cover the cost of lunch for all who are in attendance.

TRAINING WILL BE HELD FROM **10 A.M. TO 12:30 P.M.** AT EACH LOCATION UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.

March 12, Stapleton Baptist Church, Stapleton
March 19, Mobile Association Office, Mobile
March 26, Millry Baptist Church, Millry
March 30, New Vision Baptist Church, Prattville
April 2, FBC Dadeville, Dadeville
Noon-2:30
5:30-7:30
April 6, Fayette Baptist Association, Fayette
April 7, Valleydale Baptist Church, Birmingham
April 9, Calhoun Association Office, Anniston
April 13, Parkview Baptist Church, Tuscumbia
April 14, Mt. Calvary Baptist Church, Albertville
April 16, FBC Huntsville, Huntsville

August 17, FBC Athens, Athens
August 18, New Prospect Baptist Church, Haleyville
August 20, James Memorial Baptist Church, Gadsden

September 14, Campground Baptist Church, Ozark
September 15, Central Baptist Church, Opelika
September 17, Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery

For more info, please visit alsbom.org/whosyourone

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For February 16

Explore the Bible

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

CHOSEN
Deuteronomy 30:1–10, 19–20

With each generation, spiritual leaders call the people of God to live what they profess. Moses called Israel to make a serious choice, one with tremendous consequences (see Deut. 28). Joshua's final message was to call the new settlers of the promised land to choose whom they would serve (Josh. 24:15). Elijah confronted the people of the northern kingdom, who were guilty of syncretism, mixing worship of Yahweh with pagan fertility rites under Baal and Asherah. The prophet confronted their idolatry and called them to make a choice (1 Kings 18:21).

Restored People (1–5)

Moses warned Israel of the future consequences of spiritual adultery through idolatry. God would judge them, and they would be scattered among the nations. As a demonstration of His grace, He also promised to restore them to the land when "you come to your senses while you are in all the nations where the Lord your God has driven you, and you and your children return to the Lord your God and obey him with all your heart and all your soul."

Following the Babylonian exile nearly a millennium later, Nehemiah would echo these words in a humble prayer of personal and national repentance.

Renewed Hearts (6–10)

For a grown man or a teenage boy, circumcision is a painful process with several days needed for healing (see Gen. 34:24–25). For boys circumcised on their eighth day of life, the procedure is less traumatic. Such is the case with the circumcision of the heart.

For adults and teenagers, attentions and affections not directed toward God are painful to cut away. Those who are born into a family of faith have a "hedge of protection" in a sense, with the opportunity to experience a circumcised heart (metaphorically) from an early age.

Israelite men and their families who would repent of their sins and trust in Yahweh would receive His blessings. According to the passage, the blessings would be three-fold: fruitful wives, fruitful livestock and fruitful land. The very blessings which they would seek by practicing the fertility rituals of the Canaanites had been promised to them from the One who had set them free from Egyptian bondage and would provide for them the promised land.

Righteous Choice (19–20)

The editors of the Christian Standard Bible did well to attach the heading "Choose Life" to verses 11–20. Moses was inviting the people to hear and heed a message of life. This was not the first time they had heard it; in fact, they were very familiar with it. Moses wrote: "The message is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, so that you may follow it" (v. 14). If this sounds familiar to you, it is because the Apostle Paul echoed these words in Romans 10:8.

The Scripture is clear — rebellion against God's authority leads to death. Eating forbidden fruit brings death (Gen. 2:17). Murdering other humans brings a death sentence (Gen. 9:5–6). Disobedience to God's holiness code under His theocracy brought death (Lev. 20). False prophets were put to death (Deut. 13:5; 18:20). The soul that sins will die (Ezek. 18:4). The paycheck for sin is death (Rom. 6:23). Temptation leads to sin, and sin ends in death (James 1:15).

God's intent for humanity was life. He created human life to bear His image. He called Israel out from among the nations to reflect His holiness to the surrounding nations (Exod. 19:6; Lev. 11:44). Jesus came that believers will have abundant life (John 10:10). Jesus is the Bread of Life. Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life.

Even today, we call sinners to repentance, inviting them to choose life by trusting Jesus. We cite Romans 10:9–10, calling them to turn from their sin and confess Jesus as Lord.

Bible Studies for Life

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

WHERE DOES COMFORT COME FROM?
2 Corinthians 1:3–11

God is the source of comfort. (3–4a)

Paul knew suffering and the discouragement and despair that can accompany it. In verse 8, he acknowledges that at a critical point he and his associates "despaired of life itself." Later, in this letter, Paul offers a resume of suffering he had endured: stoned, beaten, flogged, shipwrecked and left for dead.

Some scholars suggest that on occasion the apostle also struggled with internal issues of depression and anxiety. But Paul never gave in. He always triumphed over multitude setbacks. Why? In part this was due to the comfort he received from his brothers and sisters in Christ. But more significantly, it was due to the comfort he received from Christ Himself.

Paul uses forms of the word "comfort" 10 times in verses 3–10, and 14 times in the remainder of the letter. "Comfort" in the Bible has more to do with strengthening than soothing. It is not so much like the pacifying effect of comfort food. In the New Testament, comfort does not just relieve our pain, it stiffens our resolve.

Even the English word supports this meaning. The latter part of the word comes from the Latin root from where we get words like forte, fortress and fortitude. Put simply, comfort is not about feeling better; it is about feeling stronger.

We are called to be channels of God's comfort. (4b–7)

The second part of verse 4 offers one of the blessings of God's comfort towards us: "so that." God has comforted us so that we might comfort others. The great preacher and expositor John Henry Jowett once noted that "God does not comfort us to make us comfortable, but to make us comforters." Of course, the challenge is for us to get beyond ourselves and recognize the needs of others who are suffering.

Someone has said when we focus on ourselves, we become cisterns instead of channels. The God of comfort desires that we follow His way of being channels of grace and comfort for those who are weak or hurting. Because God has encouraged us, we can encourage them.

Verse 5 assures us that as we suffer because of our witness for Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. Just as where sin abounds, grace abounds the more (Rom. 5:20), when our suffering for Jesus abounds, the more we are strengthened and empowered.

What powerful witnesses we can be when our struggles give us greater capacity to comfort others. Henri Nouwen described this blessing as our becoming "wounded healers" for those who need comfort.

The prayers of God's people help those who suffer. (8–11)

Paul mentions an "affliction" that he and his associates experienced in Asia, which likely included being imprisoned and the possibility of being condemned to death. Here again, Paul is not reflecting on human suffering in general (bereavement, accident, family conflict), but suffering that comes because of one's commitment to Christ and Christian missions.

Paul goes on to his relying on the God "Who raises the dead." Paul had worried he might die a misunderstood condemned prisoner. But then he realized the meaning of God's act in raising Jesus — who had been killed as a misunderstood condemned prisoner. The resurrection gives hope to all who stand firm in their faith in the misunderstood Nazarene who died and rose so that whosoever believes in Him might have eternal life with Him.

Paul's trials and dangers are yet to be over, so he asks the Corinthians to help by praying for him. When those prayers are answered they will be able to share in a great thanksgiving. God can use us to strengthen one another, both for our benefit and to His own greater glory. May we realize the power of ministering as wounded healers for our brothers and sisters as together we press on in the pilgrimage of faith.

MUSIC

Media reviews

Matt Redman

Let There Be Wonder (Live)
Integrity Music

The latest release from the worship leader known for his Grammy-winning tune "10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord)," "Let There Be Wonder" includes the impressive single "The Same Jesus" and several songs that likely will make their way to church services. "King Jesus" is my favorite, but "All Praise" and "Upon Him" are also powerful. Redman once said, "Christian worship must contain both the cross and the crown" and "sing of majesty and sing of mercy." This album does both. It includes 14 tracks.

We The Kingdom

Live at the Wheelhouse (EP)
Sparrow Records

One of the best new projects from one of the best new bands, "We the Kingdom" features six songs, including the lyrically rich "Holy Water" ("I don't wanna abuse Your grace; God, I need it every day") and other toe-tapping fun songs such as "God So Loved" and "Sing Wherever I Go." Slower-tempo tunes like "SOS" allow lead singer Franni Rae Cash's voice to shine. It's excellent folk-style music that you'll love, especially if you enjoy mainstream folk bands like The Lumineers. (Michael Foust)

'Where would I be without Christ?'

Avalon reunites with new album, tour coming to FBC Alabaster

By Tracy Riggs
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

After a 10-year hiatus, Avalon is back with a new album and The Called 2020 Tour featuring Sarah Kelly, set to make a stop March 8 at First Baptist Church, Alabaster.

From 1995 until its hiatus, Avalon toured 30–40 cities each spring and fall, said Greg Long, an Avalon vocalist since 2003. But then Long and his wife Janna, an original Avalon vocalist, had a daughter starting school. They asked God if He had other plans.

An invitation came to be full-time worship leaders in Houston, Texas, and they accepted it.

"Avalon went into a pause-mode and didn't make any new music," said Long. "I think we played in Seoul, South Korea, maybe two or three times. Or Brazil. [We'd think] oh, that would be fun. Let's go and do that."

Then a good friend, Jay DeMarcus, decided to start a new record label and wanted new Avalon music. Long told DeMarcus he liked the idea but warned him the group couldn't tour like they had in the past because of their family and church responsibilities.

After many discussions, Long agreed to limited touring so the band would "still be able to make a new record and be excited about it."

Long called Jody McBrayer, an original vocalist who had been gone for 15 years, and offered a deal — "You don't have to commit your life to it like we used to," he said. "We're just going to make a new record and tour a few weekends."

Avalon

Photo courtesy of Avalon

McBrayer was in, along with a new singer, Dani Rocca.

"What that has done for us is given us new music which has brought new life inside of us," said Long. Playing only 14 cities, Avalon is going back to their roots.

"Our first love is being in cities like Alabaster, getting to share our music from the past 20 years and some of our new music," Long said. "[We] get to interact with people again, reminding ourselves what a great God we serve and how we are so honored to get to share His music."

A new tour means a new album — "Called," which releases Feb. 14 — and new preparation, Long said — like choosing which of Avalon's 22 No. 1 songs will be on the set list.

They decide through prayer, he said, wanting the Lord to be involved in every part of the tour.

A lot of things haven't changed in the past 10 years, McBrayer said, but one thing has — social media. Avalon is learning how to connect with fans on social media, but though the medium is different, the message is the same — Jesus saves.

'Honor and blessing'

"One of the songs from the new record, 'If Not for Jesus,' is one of my favorites ... [because] it's a reminder for us to look at our lives and say, 'Where would I be without Christ? Who would I be without Christ?' "

Like anything that involves multiple people, conflicts are inevitable.

"God has been faithful to work [them] out and come up with songs that glorify Christ, which is our goal," Long said. "He doesn't have to use us but He does, and that's truly an honor and blessing."

For ticket information go to avalonlive.org.

‘Doing what we can to help’

Strawberry pie leads to soap making, salvations, new business in Ecuador

IMB photos

Donna Maust’s soap-making classes were so successful the students formed a co-op and developed a brand — Nectar. The members of the Nectar business co-op have recently moved to a new facility for soapmaking. Their project was chosen by the United States Embassy to receive further business training which will include contacts in marketing and distribution fields.

By Melanie Clinton
International Mission Board

When International Mission Board (IMB) missionary Donna Maust relocated to a new town, she entered a strawberry cheese pie into a cooking contest as a way to get to know people.

She won second place, and a government leader asked her to start cooking classes in his house. The classes were a success and led to the start of a Bible study in the home, which is now a healthy church.

JOHNNY AND DONNA MAUST

Maust recognized gospel-sharing opportunities, so she kept her eyes open for more outlets to build relationships and share with people.

She learned to make soap using local ingredients like aloe vera, milk, oats and honey, and she started soap-making classes in five communities.

In one rural area, the class led to a Bible study group of 15–20 adults. In other areas, people made decisions to follow Jesus Christ or deepened their commitment to live for Him.

The classes were so successful that the students formed a co-op and developed a soap brand — Nectar.

They received an order from a hotel for 500 soaps and plan to start selling the soap in supermarkets soon.

The young woman who serves as president of the co-op was recently accepted in the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs, a program of the United States Embassy that was offered to 30 women in the Maust’s province.

“She attended weekly classes in business practices and marketing for three months,” Maust said. “At the end of the three months, the U.S. Embassy representatives chose one business to provide more help and support. The soap project won.”

Caring for people

The fledgling business, which now includes 12 women, will receive further training and contacts for marketing and distribution, Maust said. The classes surpassed Maust’s expectations both economically and spiritually. Communities now see that she and her husband are “not just standing on street corners preaching. ... We actually care about the people and are doing what we can to help,” she said.

And it all started with a strawberry pie.

EDITOR’S NOTE — Melanie Clinton (name changed) is an IMB worker.