



# The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

## INSIDE



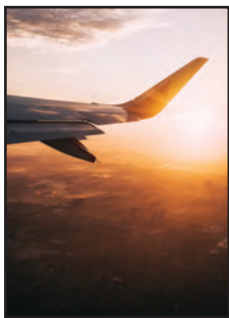
**Gilbreath shares about his 'greatest ride' as he hands over reins of evangelism office**

◆ Pages 6-7



**Theology 101 — New Mercies**

◆ Page 10



**Christian leaders respond to expanded US travel ban**

◆ Page 19



Photo courtesy of Beth Gardner

New international students at the University of South Alabama (USA) enjoy their first American meal at McAlister's Deli with USA's Baptist campus minister Beth Gardner (bottom, right) and Baptist campus ministries students. The USA BCM also is ministering to international students by providing them with pillows and blankets, inviting them to play games and bringing them medicine when they are sick.

# Simple request

## Alabama BCM students meet needs, connect with others on campus

**By Grace Thornton**  
The Alabama Baptist

**F**or a while now, Beth Gardner has been working on different ways to reach out to international students at the University of South Alabama (USA). She and others at USA's Baptist Campus Ministries (BCM) have tried some things but had trouble finding

an effective way to reach those students.

But this year God opened a door to build relationships that she would have never seen coming — emergency pillows. And it started with a simple request.

"The global office asked us if we could pick up a student from France at the airport," said Gardner, USA's Baptist

campus minister. "My husband and I picked up three students that night."

### Pillows and blankets

They realized as they were checking the students into their residence halls that the students had shown up with only one checked bag and a carry-on for a whole semester. That meant they had no room

for sheets, pillows, towels or anything like that.

"It was around 10 p.m., and we told them we would be back," Gardner said. She and her husband scrambled to round up some pillows and blankets from the BCM office and BCM students.

"What started out as 'I'll pick them up' has just opened (See 'Gather,' page 9)

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

Spotlight on



# CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

See pages 11-15

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Photo by Beth Gillem

Members of the TAB Media staff had a special opportunity recently to meet aspiring newspaper editor 10-year-old Ruby Reinhardt and her father Billy (center), pastor of Riverside Heights Baptist Church, Tallassee. TAB Media staff are (l to r around the Reinhardts) Jessica Ingram, Jennifer Davis Rash, James Hammack, Debbie Campbell and Carrie Brown McWhorter.

## 10-year-old inspires TAB staff with her creativity

A bit of boredom, several copies of *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB) newspaper, a pair of scissors and a touch of glue launched 10-year-old Ruby Reinhardt into much more than her original intent of finding something creative to do for a few minutes.

She's now on a schedule every few months to create a new edition of her customized cut-and-paste version of TAB, complete with original art.

Ruby, the daughter of Billy and Jessica Reinhardt, said she tries to wait on her dad to finish reading the papers before she cuts them up but sometimes she gets ahead of him.

So far, she has submitted two original copies to the TAB staff. (TAB)



Photo by Beth Gillem

10-year-old Ruby Reinhardt of Riverside Heights Baptist Church, Tallassee, shares details about the latest edition of her handmade, customized and condensed version of *The Alabama Baptist* with TAB editor-in-chief Jennifer Davis Rash.



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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Send old and new addresses, and name of church to:  
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### 'Nation's Top Regional Christian Newspaper'

1999, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018  
as judged by Associated Church Press, Baptist Communicators Association, Evangelical Press Association or Religion Communicators Council



The crossword puzzle can be found on page 19.



The Alabama Baptist  
newspaper

TAB Online  
website

TAB News  
podcast

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interactive content

# MY RASHIONALE

By Jennifer Davis Rash  
President and Editor-in-Chief

[jrash@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:jrash@thealabamabaptist.org)  
@RashionalThts



## Time to buckle down and research current complex topics

Legislation and constitutional amendments connected to the state of Alabama, resolutions and business decisions related to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) — all important topics to understand — but, wow, can they be complicated, complex and confusing.

As our reporting team dives in deep to sift through all the possible options to research, we need your help.

Help us by sharing what you would like to understand related to current legislation pending before the Alabama Senate or House of Representatives.

We've heard from a few who want to understand more about the Alabama Appointed Education Board Amendment (Amendment 1), which will be voted on in the March 3 referendum, and we hope to be able to provide some information on the amendment next week.

In the meantime, an option for a straight-forward explanation of Amendment 1 can be found at [Ballotpedia.org](http://Ballotpedia.org), which is sponsored by the Lucy Burns Institute, a nonpartisan and non-profit organization headquartered in Middleton, Wisconsin.

Once on the [ballotpedia.org](http://ballotpedia.org) website, search for "Alabama 2020" and click on the top option that appears in the lineup or go straight to the educational outline of the amendment at [tinyurl.com/sc64tuy](http://tinyurl.com/sc64tuy).

Another way to help is to let us know what topics related to the SBC we can work to better understand ourselves so we can then share resources, informa-

tion and explanations from what we discover.

I can't promise we can cover every request, but we will consider each one and then focus on the top requested topics.

For instance, several of you are asking us to provide more explanation on the 2019 SBC Resolution 9, On Critical Race Theory And Intersectionality because the topic could surface again at the upcoming SBC annual meeting in Orlando.

According to [britannica.com](http://britannica.com), "critical race theory is the view that race, instead of being bio-

logically grounded and natural, is socially constructed and that race, as a socially constructed concept, functions as a means to maintain the interests of the white population that constructed it."

The SBC resolution from 2019 on critical race theory can be found at [sbc.net/resolutions](http://sbc.net/resolutions) — once on that page, use the search prompt to type in "2019" and click on the search button.

And even more vital than sharing what items you would like us to research, we need your help in three significant ways as we do the research.

First, pray for discernment for our team to know which topics to prioritize and for wisdom, energy and clarity of mind while working on the research.

Second, be supportive of our role in these cases to inform and explain, not take a side and promote. Providing straight news will allow us to focus on and share the facts so you can then decide what you think.

Third, engage in the conversation with graciousness. Certainly stand strong but also be open to learning about other views for understanding — not necessarily agreement.✝

## RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

### Little nuggets of wisdom mentors and friends have taught me along the way (part 2)

*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 I am always looking for new areas of growth. I'd love for you to send me more (800-803-5201, [jrash@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:jrash@thealabamabaptist.org) or 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209).*

▶ Not knowing the answer to a question you are asked is OK, and being able to say you don't know when you really don't know is a mark of maturity.

▶ When feeling overwhelmed, pick out one item on your list of things to do and knock it out, then move to the next item.

▶ When feeling out of control, clean out a drawer or your car and organize it. This one step can reset your sense of control.

▶ Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do is get some sleep.

▶ One way to stay sharp and continuously learning is to keep working yourself out of your job.

▶ Decluttering the areas where you live and work will bring a sense of calm and focus you don't even realize you are missing.

▶ All things in moderation.

▶ Sometimes it is best to merely be present without trying to convince someone not to be sad or upset. Allow the person the freedom to work through his or her emotions in a safe space.

▶ When someone is hurting, a hug and kind word comforts better than endless chatter about random surface-level topics.

▶ Take a brief break and few minutes of rest for the body and mind in the middle of a busy day. It will rejuvenate you enough to finish strong.

▶ People process information differently, and sometimes their response is to lash out at the messenger. Remember they are upset at the situation, not you.✝

# Your Voice



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

## Local church home helps college students' spiritual growth

By **Maya Lewellyn**  
Student, University of Mobile

I never would have thought my college professor would become my pastor; however, that is exactly what happened. I found my church home because of my professor's invitation to visit Crawford Baptist Church.

Jay Robertson is a professor in the School of Christian Studies at University of Mobile (UM) and the pastor for preaching and vision at Crawford Baptist Church in Mobile, Alabama — not far from the university's campus.

He upholds UM's standard of excellence in all he does — including pastoring his church. He loves the Lord, handles the Word with gracious care, encourages community outreach and deeply cares for his congregation.

Under Dr. Robertson, I have learned so much more about God.

Once students get to college, it becomes easy for us to stop going to church. Family isn't there making sure we go to church, the thought of sleeping in is tempting and many times students have to

find a new church to become their church home.

University of Mobile encourages all students to be involved with a local church. They provide many opportunities for students to connect with different local churches through expos and by inviting local pastors to speak at chapel.

The local church benefits from having college students, and college students benefit from having a local church.

The local church allows college students to be known on a spiritual level. It offers godly wisdom, com-

munity and a place to serve.

College students offer a willingness to learn, a way to disciple the next generation and free time to serve.

Crawford Baptist Church's congregation has turned into my community. They depicted what hospitality looks like through various lunch invites, carpooling opportunities and spending quality time with people at their homes. I have formed friendships and found mentors at church.

Through my relationships, I have been encouraged and called out in love. I have learned what it looks like to be a disciple and how to disciple others. The congregation reflects what it means to love like Christ.

The church has given me a place to serve. I have been able to invest in my church by serving with their children's ministry. Serving has allowed me to use my spiritual gifts to build up the body of believers. It has given me valuable life skills, so I know how to better serve others for the remainder of my life.

With the university's help, I found a local church. I am thankful to attend a university that recognizes the importance of the local church and encourages students to get involved.

*EDITOR'S NOTE — Maya Lewellyn studies communication and intercultural studies at University of Mobile. She is a marketing intern for the university's office for marketing and public relations and serves with university ministries.*

## Remembering a TAB contributor and friend

I read *The Alabama Baptist* because it comprehensively reports Southern Baptist news. I read it because every issue informs me of persecuted Christians. I read it because ...

**James Leo Garrett Jr.**  
**Nacogdoches, Texas**

*EDITOR'S NOTE — Baptist theologian James Leo Garrett Jr. listed more reasons about why he reads TAB in his 2016 letter to the editor and then ended it with a simple, "I am indeed grateful." He was a friend of TAB's editor emeritus Bob Terry and served as a guest contributor for TAB from time to time. Garrett died Feb. 5 at the age of 94.*

James Leo Garrett Jr.'s reputation as a scholar and lecturer

was indeed well deserved. ... [But] while Leo Garrett was a scholar of the first order, he was also a man of deep and genuine piety, kind and considerate toward others, a faithful churchman and a devoted follower of Christ. He loved the gospel message and exemplified a confidence in the Scriptures, which he believed to be totally dependable, trustworthy, truthful and infallible.

He modeled for us what it meant to be an ecclesial theologian, one who understood that his first calling was to serve the church. ...

Garrett maintained an infectious commitment to and hope for the unity of the people of God. ... Always my teacher and mentor, he continued to challenge my thinking and offer corrections to my authored works, even into his 90s.

I am immensely grateful not

only for his imprint on my life, but for his vast influence on so many, many others. He was truly a Christian gentleman and a scholar.

I was saddened ... when I learned of his passing, but we rejoice today that Dr. Garrett, though absent from the body, is present with his Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:8). In this confident hope, we say thanks be to God for the life and legacy of James Leo Garrett Jr.

**David S. Dockery**  
**Southwestern Seminary**

*EDITOR'S NOTE — David S. Dockery is distinguished professor of theology and special consultant to the president at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.*

“Measure your wealth by what you’d have left if you lost all your money.”

H. JACKSON BROWN JR.

*“Highlighted in Yellow: A Short Course In Living Wisely And Choosing Well”*

Ready for a little more Lottie Moon celebrating? Back in December, you (members of First Baptist Church, Prattville [FBCP]) generously gave to this international missions offering. As of now, we have officially given over \$186,000, which means we are financially providing for at least THREE missionary units! Glory be to God! Thank you, FBCP, for helping advance the gospel!

**First Baptist Church, Prattville  
Facebook post**

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:43–45). Love your enemies! Now that is

thinking differently. It changed the world starting 2,000 years ago, and it is as subversive and counterintuitive today as it was then. ... Ask God to give you the strength to do this hard thing — to go against human nature, to follow Jesus’ teaching and love your enemies.

**Arthur Brooks**  
**Excerpt from 2020 National Prayer Breakfast address**

When there is a hill to climb, don’t think waiting will make it smaller.

**Anonymous**

The Bible has numerous accounts of salvation, a life made new through repentance and the forgiveness of sin. Once a sinner’s name is written in the book of life, it is a one-way

track toward the end. As citizens of heaven, our longing is for our new home, and our lives eagerly await the return of our Savior.

The tragedy is that millions of people have yet to hear this good news. Their lives continue toward the one-track way of destruction. ... Let’s continue to preach the eternal message: one way — Jesus!

**Paul Kim, Pastor emeritus**  
**Antioch Baptist Church**  
**Cambridge, Mass.**

The church has become a backbone for what we are trying to do in our community. It is a visible expression of Christ’s love.

**Patrick Schwartz**  
**IMB missionary**  
**Glasgow, Scotland**

## From the *Twitterverse*

### @StephenRummage

What if all SBC pastors and leaders just did this? Could it possibly hurt us, our churches or our witness? “Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor” (Rom. 12:10, ESV).

### @KSPrior

When the Apostle Paul told first-century Christians to be “kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil,” he was speaking to an early church facing death from an evil regime. Those were the enemies Christians were to love.

— @DavidAFrench

### @dandarling

I am distressed whenever there is

fresh news of scandal in ministry to see many Christians go online and use it as a catalyst for their leadership ideas and opinions. The Bible says, “take heed lest you fall” (1 Cor. 10:12). We should weep and pray in humility, not gloat tweet.

### @GoBGR

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins (1 Pet. 4:8).

### @jdgrear

While all Christians are called to evangelize, give, serve and pray (among other spiritual gifts), we are not all called to everything equally or gifted equally for them. Not everything that comes from heaven

has your name on it. But something does.

### @sPeytonHill

“God’s purpose for my life is that I have a passion for God’s glory and that I have a passion for my joy in that glory, and that these two are one passion.” — Jonathan Edwards

### @TuscaloosaUM

Don’t say something permanently painful just because you’re temporarily ticked off.

### @MichaelHyatt

Without problems, there aren’t opportunities. And without opportunities, you can’t grow.



Photo by Alabama WMU

Candace McIntosh is executive director of Alabama Woman’s Missionary Union (WMU).

## Complete for Teen Girls

Ask any girl who has attended Alabama WMU’s Complete what her favorite part of the teen-focused event is and you are likely to hear, “We love the breakouts.”

Why? Because these 45-minute breakout sessions that deal with subjects about life, missions and ministry are designed to speak to the heart of a teenage girl. They speak to her dreams, challenges and struggles. But this event is so much more.

It is important to us that a girl who attends this event sees herself reflected on the stage and in leadership.

Dynamic women provide leadership at all levels — Bible Study, worship, late night and breakouts. Girls who have served on mission or will be serving on mission are commissioned, and a young woman serving on the missions field will speak.

All these parts come together to provide an environment where a girl can grow spiritually and explore where God may be leading her to serve now and in her future.

Don’t let teen girls in your life miss this wonderful event.

Complete will take place March 6–7 at Eastern Hills Baptist Church, Montgomery. For details and to register, visit [AlabamaWMU.org/Complete](http://AlabamaWMU.org/Complete).

—Candace McIntosh

Share online or email [news@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:news@thealabamabaptist.org)

# ‘THE GREATEST RIDE OF MY LIFE’

## Sammy Gilbreath handing over reins of state evangelism office after 23 years

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

**S**ammy Gilbreath remembers the moment he realized the plan was going really, really wrong.

It was the moment he jumped out of the airplane.

In the days leading up to that jump, Gilbreath — director of evangelism for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) — had been working on plans for the Alabama Baptist Youth Evangelism Conference and trying to come up with something that would get people’s attention.

### ‘He was excited’

“In past years, I had ridden into events on my Harley or rappelled out of the ceiling in a ninja suit, and that year I thought how neat it would be to skydive in,” he said.

Sammy Gilbreath’s heart condition diagnosis hasn’t stopped him from riding motorcycles and horses and sharing the gospel. ‘I believe rather that He’s chosen to sustain me,’ he said.

It was 2004, and the Montgomery Biscuits baseball team had just opened its new Riverwalk Stadium. Gilbreath had been anticipating its opening. He thought it would be a great venue for a youth outreach event, and he was excited.

### Improvisation

But somebody else in his life hadn’t been quite as acutely aware of the Biscuits’ new home — somebody important.

The pilot.

“The pilot was just told we were going to jump over the baseball park. When we jumped out of the plane, I realized we were over the wrong baseball field,” Gilbreath said. “We had jumped over Pater-son Field in downtown Montgom-ery, and when I jumped out and popped my chute, I’m looking at an empty baseball stadium.”

So Gilbreath — on his first-ever skydive with just a few minutes of instructions and buckle-checking — did what he felt was the only option. He left the two professional parachutists who were supposed to



Photo by Doug Rogers

Sammy Gilbreath sticks the landing after a skydiving mishap as he was making his attention-drawing entrance to the 2004 Alabama Baptist Youth Evangelism Conference at Riverwalk Stadium in Montgomery.

drop straight down into the stadium with him. He pulled the air out of his parachute and shot like a torpedo in the direction of Riverwalk Stadium, more than a mile away.

### An ‘uh oh’ moment

“My wife, Carol, was the only one who saw us and knew something was wrong about where we had jumped,” Gilbreath said.

She sat in Riverwalk Sta-

dium and thought “uh oh” as she watched the small dots in the sky, her husband — the fastest dot of all. There he was tucked into a nosedive sailing over municipal buildings, hotels, Waffle House and Dreamland BBQ.

He dodged the huge light pole coming into centerfield as Tim McGraw’s “Live Like You Were Dying” played over the loudspeakers.

And he stuck the landing right on



Photo by Grace Thornton

**“Sammy Gilbreath has served Alabama Baptists in a stellar fashion for decades. His name is synonymous with evangelism among the Alabama Baptist family of faith. ... He has been a faithful servant of the Lord.”**

**Rick Lance**  
Executive director, SBOM

the “X” at second base — exactly as planned.

“Nobody else in the stadium knew anything had gone wrong — we didn’t say anything about it,” Gilbreath said. “It was just meant to be an opportunity to get people’s attention and share the gospel.”

They did share, and people did pay attention. Hundreds of students committed their lives to Christ that night — the night Gilbreath secretly got a little more adventure than he bargained for.

### Even bigger miracle

But that adventure wasn’t the end of his secrets — something else was going wrong in Gilbreath’s life that day.

His heart.

He was wearing a heart monitor the day he dove, though he joked that he unhooked it for the jump “so it wouldn’t go off and scramble hospital staff all over Montgomery.”

And a few months later, Gilbreath would discover God had begun to weave an even bigger miracle when it came to staying alive. He had hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, a heart condition only 12 people in the world had at the time, and only four of those 12 had survived the blood clot that comes with their condition.

“I was carrying the largest blood clot in medical history,” Gilbreath said.

He went to the only doctor in the world who had experience treating it, and he was told he would probably die, and die quickly. His family gathered around him — as did SBOM staff — and everyone felt he should let doctors do what they could, pray for God to keep him alive and then keep living life to the full every day.

In other words, live like he was dying.

So he did. And 16 years later, he’s still doing it.

“I often get asked, ‘Sammy, do you believe God’s going to heal you?’ and I say no,” Gilbreath said. “I believe rather that He’s chosen to sustain me. If He sustains me with this condition, no doctor can take the credit. He and only He can take credit for that.”

***“If He sustains me with this condition, no doctor can take the credit. He and only He can take credit for that.”***

**Sammy Gilbreath**

In the years since his diagnosis, Gilbreath has ridden his Harleys and horses and shared the gospel on the road and through events.

“They’re just tools — whether I was riding or fishing, I wanted to be able to reach that culture for Christ,” he said. “Jesus was a master at addressing people with an understanding of their lifestyle.” So as he’s gone about his life and work, Gilbreath has tried to follow Jesus’ methods. And he’s carried on the passion his dad taught him as a boy — a passion for talking to people about Jesus.

### ‘More caught than taught’

“My dad was an appliance salesman, and he was one of the greatest soul winners I’ve ever known,” Gilbreath said. “I would go on visits with him at 12 and 13, and I always knew when we went to the first house, I would entertain the dogs, cats or kids and let my dad share the gospel with the adults. And I always knew that at the second house,

it would be my turn to share.”

His dad taught him to share his faith, but he also put him in a position where he caught a passion for outreach, Gilbreath said.

“That’s what evangelism is — it’s more caught than taught.”

And that’s what his vision has been for Alabama — that pastors, Sunday School teachers, associational missions directors and everybody else would get equipped to share but most of all catch a passion for sharing.

“It’s been an incredible journey the past 23 years with the State Board — the greatest ride of my life,” Gilbreath said.

This year’s evangelism conference will be his last as director of evangelism. At the end of the conference, he will pass the baton to Daniel Wilson, whom he’s been mentoring during the past several months.

But he won’t be gone. In his new role, he will lead the state’s event evangelism, focusing on events that aim to share the gospel and equip people around the state to share their faith too.

For instance, he’ll be leading

efforts when the World Games come to Birmingham in 2021.

It’s a transition he’s excited about.

### ‘In great hands’

“I’m so thrilled about Daniel Wilson — the evangelism office will be in great hands,” Gilbreath said. “He’s a great preacher, he’s got great people skills and he’s a good organizer. I’m really excited about the future of evangelism.”

Rick Lance, SBOM executive director, said Gilbreath has built a strong legacy of evangelism work.

“Sammy Gilbreath has served Alabama Baptists in a stellar fashion for decades. His name is synonymous with evangelism among the Alabama Baptist family of faith,” Lance said. “Throughout Sammy’s entire ministry, he has been a faithful servant of the Lord. Despite serious health issues, Sammy has always kept the most positive attitude about his life and ministry. He has inspired countless numbers of ministers and other church leaders to do the work of an evangelist.”



Photo by Grace Thornton

State Baptist leaders gather around Sammy Gilbreath (third from right) to pray for his health at the 2007 Evangelism Conference after Gilbreath’s heart condition was deemed inoperable and he was removed from the heart transplant list two years after being diagnosed with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, an extremely rare heart condition.



WILSON

# Sharing Christ in Crisis



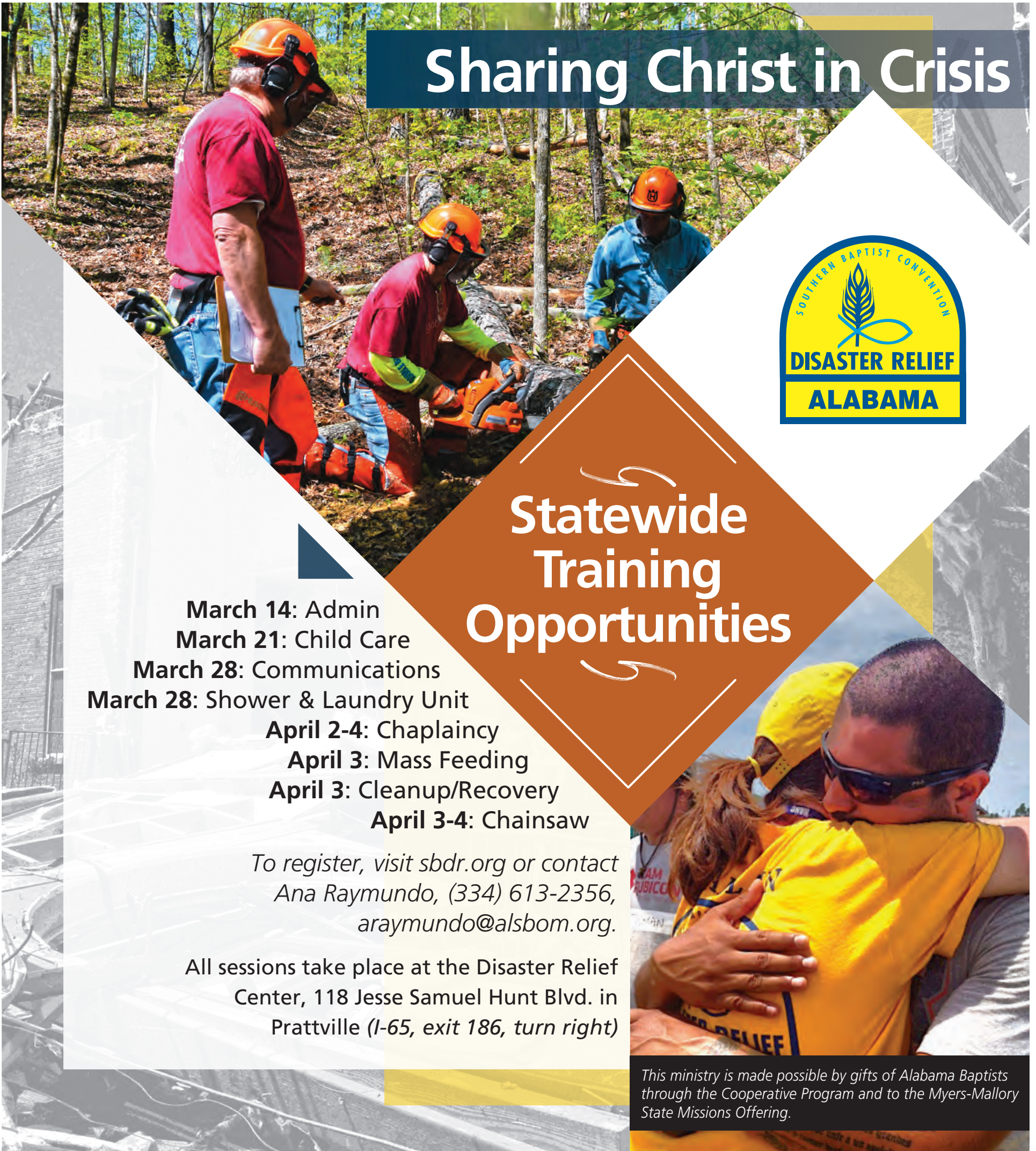
## Statewide Training Opportunities

- March 14:** Admin
- March 21:** Child Care
- March 28:** Communications
- March 28:** Shower & Laundry Unit
- April 2-4:** Chaplaincy
- April 3:** Mass Feeding
- April 3:** Cleanup/Recovery
- April 3-4:** Chainsaw

To register, visit [sbdr.org](http://sbdr.org) or contact Ana Raymundo, (334) 613-2356, [araymundo@alsbom.org](mailto:araymundo@alsbom.org).

All sessions take place at the Disaster Relief Center, 118 Jesse Samuel Hunt Blvd. in Prattville (I-65, exit 186, turn right)

This ministry is made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program and to the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering.



# ‘Gather together in praise’

BCMs serve to ‘train students’ as local missionaries, reach unsaved on campus

(continued from page 1)  
up many opportunities of connecting with them, Gardner said. “We were able to meet a need and establish a friendship.”

In the weeks that followed, Gardner and several BCM students took the students out for meals, invited them to play games like Frisbee and brought them medicine when they got sick. Gardner also invited them over for a meal and game night at her house so they could experience what it was like to be in an American home.

And the BCM has a plan for the fall semester — they’ve partnered with churches, organizations and others to prepare welcome packages of food, bedding, fleece blankets and pillows for international students.

“It’s not a project, it’s peo-

ple — it’s our BCM students incorporating these new friendships into their lives and planting seeds,” Gardner said. “Meeting a need in their life is a huge connecting point for us, and I just love seeing how our students have taken hold of this.”

Chris Mills, student missions strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), said that sort of ministry is happening through BCM on campuses all over the state.

“That’s why BCM exists, and it looks different on

every campus and in every context,” he said.

BCM groups hold weekly worship meetings, something that is “vital” and “provides an opportunity for students to come together to praise the Lord for who He is and what He’s do-



Photo courtesy of Gary Brittain  
Nursing students involved in Baptist campus ministries at Jacksonville State University organize an outreach luncheon as a way to minister to fellow nursing students.

ing,” Mills said. But it also involves students actively discipling others, being involved in outreach and going on missions.

“BCM seeks to train students to see their campus as their missions field as they’re in classes,” he said. “We want to open their eyes to the opportunities all across the world and take advantage of the season of life that is college.”

Mills has watched that

happening for years in his SBOM role, but he’s getting an even closer look this year as he serves as interim Baptist campus minister at Auburn University at Montgomery.

## ‘Live out missions’

“At one of our meetings with the student leadership team, one of the students said, ‘I’m just a missionary disguised as a nursing student.’ It was amazing to hear how God was challeng-

ing them to live out missions right where they are,” he said.

Gary Brittain, Baptist campus minister at Jacksonville State University (JSU), said he’s seen that kind of outreach happening on his campus as well — and the nursing students are a big part of it there too.

At the beginning of the spring semester, BCM decided to host a monthly lunch just for nursing students.

“We decided rather than having a lunch for whoever may come, we would try to do some things to intentionally reach specific segments of the student population,” he said. “A couple of nursing students in the BCM helped me pick the day and the time to make it convenient for them and their peers.”

And it was successful. At the very first one, 29 nursing students showed up.

“We have also been trying something like this with the JSU football team, and we want to just keep going,” Brittain said. ✠

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 Space is limited. Reservation deadline is February 24.

# ASU campus minister seeing fruit in first year

It started with just one. Zach Beasley had shared his testimony with a few dozen guys at one of the dorms. Fifteen had given him their names and said they were interested in meeting up for Bible study.

But only one came.

“For some reason, I wasn’t discouraged. I was like, ‘God, this means you’re about to do something amazing,’” said Beasley, Baptist campus minister for Alabama State University (ASU).

A few minutes later, the student told him he’d texted a friend and told him he should come too. He did.

“So I was just talking to the two of them and trying to get to know them, and as other people they knew walked by, they said, ‘Hey, we’re having Bible study, you should join us,’” Beasley said.

And they did.

“By the end of this session, I look up and there are 10 freshman guys in front of me,” Beasley said. “I asked them if they would like to do it again next week, and they said, ‘Yeah, let’s do it.’”

And 10 grew to 20, all by word of mouth. That’s the way Beasley’s first semester — fall 2019 — started at ASU. And through the months that followed, God continued to do amazing things, he said.

He’s seen students grow in their

faith through Bible study. He’s seen students engage with their Bibles, profess Christ for the first time and reach out to their friends. Many had never heard of “missions,” and now they’re participating in spring break and summer missions in other cities and states.

And in the summer, students will return for a leadership training project they affectionately call “Bible boot camp” — they’ll dig deep into how to read the Bible, pray and share their faith.

“The goal is for each one to be ready to make disciples,” Beasley said.



BEASLEY

Mike Nuss, director of the office of collegiate and student ministries for the Alabama Baptist State Board of

Missions, said Beasley “has joined the Alabama Baptist campus ministry team at a critical time in our efforts to reach every student on college and university campuses across the state.”

## ‘In the days ahead’

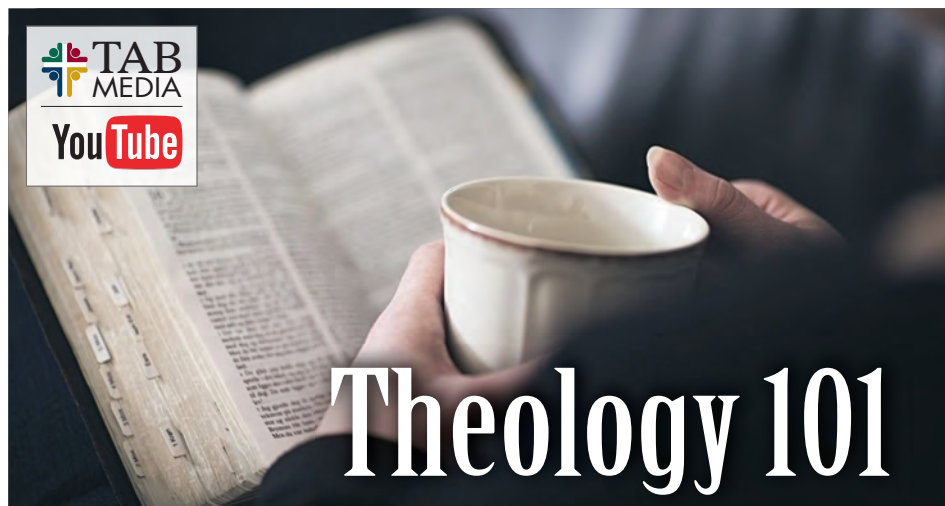
The eventual plan is for him to start similar ministries on the campus of Tuskegee University.

“He has already made an important impact on the Alabama State campus and we are excited about what the Lord will do through him on the ASU as well as the Tuskegee University campuses in the days ahead,” Nuss said. (Grace Thornton)



Photo courtesy of Zach Beasley

In a breakout session during a Bible study on relationships at Alabama State University, a group of young men talk about what it looks like to pursue a spouse in Christ and what the Lord calls men to do as leaders.



# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## What's New?

# New Mercies

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

Having responded to our question, “What’s New?” with such wide, sweeping replies as a new covenant, a new commandment and a new creation, as well as a new birth and a new heart for Christians, this week the response to our theme question is very personal. It is deeply rooted in the Old Testament book of Lamentations in an observation drawn from human experience with God, which testifies, “Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning” (3:22–23).

On this very personal level of daily experience, new covenant believers can attest to the truth that God’s mercies are renewed daily. A day never dawns in which divine mercy is not available for whatever life may be holding for us at the time.

Divine mercy may be thought of as God’s love withholding from His children what we rightly deserve for our sinful thoughts, attitudes and actions. The Apostle Paul, in reflecting on his pre-conversion manner of life that included persecution of Christians, was moved to the thanksgiving he expressed in 1 Timothy 1:12–13: “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.” He obvi-

ously felt that divine mercy had withheld from him what he rightly deserved for this earlier behavior.

Although we often interchange references to God’s mercy with references to His grace, we might find it helpful to distinguish between mercy and grace. We can do this by thinking of grace as God’s love bestowing on us what we do not deserve. Hence, God’s perfect love often manifests itself by withholding the bad we rightly deserve, as well as bestowing generously the good we have no claims to deserve.

Returning our thoughts to the beginning of this session, we are reminded that God’s mercies are not only offered in divine plurality but also are made new every day. A good recollection upon awakening each day is the truth that it is because of God’s compassion and love that His mercies are renewed day by day even in the face of our imperfections and failures that cannot earn and do not deserve such a manifestation of His love.

In light of God’s mercies new each day, we can do no less than what the psalmist admonished: “Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever” (Ps. 118:1).✠

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.



## SPOTLIGHT ON CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

# ‘Building BRIDGES’

## Study abroad experiences prepare students for gospel ministry across cultural barriers

It wasn't Alex Wolf's first time to travel, but it was definitely her first time to call herself a resident of somewhere else on the globe, even if just for a little while.

While she was a student at Samford University, she completed a Jan term (held during the month of January) in London, and she says she got hooked on the world — its people, food, music, nature and art.

“Studying abroad in college allowed me to experience just how attainable and accessible international living — not just vacationing — could be,” said Wolf, whose father, Jay, is pas-

tor of First Baptist Church, Montgomery.

It was a realization that led to even more purposeful things — after graduation, she moved back to England to work for two years with a nonprofit organization based there.

### ‘Opportunity to learn’

“Living within lots of different contexts and among many different kinds of people helped me understand that there are many beautiful, useful and valid ways to live,” Wolf said. “New people have so much to teach me, and I don't want to miss an opportunity to learn.”

During this year's Jan

While a student at Samford University, Alex Wolf spent a month in London and returned after graduation to work for two years with a nonprofit organization based there.

term, more Samford students obtained the opportunity to learn from the world too, studying in locations from Europe and the Middle East to Australia and the Caribbean island of Saba.

They're part of the roughly 280 students who participate in the university's 50-plus international study programs running all throughout the year.

Samford's flagship pro-



Photo courtesy of Alex Wolf

gram is its London program, where students like Wolf live and study at the Daniel House, a Samford-owned five-story home in the central part of the city.

For many students, it is life changing — like it was for Jonathan Robinson, who changed career paths and started his own company as a result of the experience.

“Not only do you experience a melting pot of cultures and meet new people, but studying abroad breaks down your pride and self-importance,” he said. “You begin to figure out what makes you unique and what you were created for.”

Doug Wilson, who serves as director of University of Mobile's (UM) Global Engagement Office, said study abroad programs offer an opportunity to prepare for a future calling.

### ‘Well-equipped’

“Students who graduate with immersive cross-cultural training and experiences are well-equipped for the task of building bridges across cultural barriers for the sake of the gospel,” he said. “This prepares them for the growing diversity in the local and global marketplace, and it provides them the tools to engage

(See ‘Studying,’ page 12)

*“Not only do you experience a melting pot of cultures and meet new people, but studying abroad breaks down your pride and self-importance.”*

Jonathan Robinson



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**Studying overseas  
shapes lives, careers**

*(continued from page 11)* effectively in marketplace ministry.”

At UM, students can participate in short-term trips or semester-long programs in locations around the world. They are offered the possibility of exchanges, study abroad, international recruiting, faculty-led study trips and international service opportunities.

**‘Represent Christ’**

Wilson said UM is committed to the Great Commandments, the Great Commission and a love for God and humanity. That love, he said, is “borne out by equipping Christian students to become Kingdom professionals serving within local churches and wherever God calls them to serve.”

Studying abroad prepares

them for that, he said. And not only that — through intercultural coursework and experiential learning, students receive an immersive experience and “represent Christ and the university through music ensemble ministry, language-immersion travel, evangelistic missions, academic training and semester-abroad studies.”

Jessica Spafford, director of study abroad programs at Judson College, said she also sees study abroad opportunities as an occasion to grapple with real-world questions and discover new things in order to become more well-rounded people.

“Judson College is a small but vibrant community that embraces these ideals and works hard to offer



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## SPOTLIGHT ON CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

opportunities to students through faculty-led programs and collaborations with outside partners, such as CAPA [The Global Education Network] or CCCU [Council for Christian Colleges and Universities],” she said.

### ‘Create community’

This year, 24 Judson students will participate in the interdisciplinary study of art, music and religion while in Italy for two weeks. In the past, Judson students have studied in Thailand, Australia, England and several countries where Spanish is the national language.

Larissa Clachar, assistant professor of Spanish and head of Judson’s Spanish department, said language students especially benefit from

study abroad programs.

“Finding themselves in a foreign country and being able to find their way around and live every day using another language is incredibly empowering,” Clachar said. “Study abroad allows them to be immersed not only in the language but also in the culture. That is such an enriching experience, and it helps them create connections and community.”

But all college students benefit from a study abroad experience, she said.

“Study abroad is a fabulous opportunity for all students because it is fun and exciting and stimulating,” Clachar said. “Study abroad changes their worldview and helps them get perspective.” (TAB)

**“Study abroad changes [college students’] worldview and helps them get perspective.”**

Larissa Clachar, assistant professor of Spanish and head of the Spanish department, Judson College

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## SPOTLIGHT ON CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION



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## SPOTLIGHT ON CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

# A look at online EDUCATION

## Is online education right for you? 5 questions about virtual learning answered

By Vanessa Dennen  
Florida State University

**1. Is online education as easy and convenient as it seems?**

Online learning may give students a choice about when and where to study, but this flexibility should not be confused with being easy or fast. Learning is a process and it takes time. By studying online, you might be able to eliminate commute time and the dreaded hunt for parking on campus, but you still have to put in the time and effort to learn.

**2. Aren't there drawbacks to reading online versus physical books?**

Research has shown that reading on paper is marginally better than online read-

ing in terms of understanding what you read and metacognition — that is, awareness of one's own thoughts. However, it would be wrong to assume that online courses involve only reading on screens. Traditional colleges and universities regularly assign online readings. Conversely, online instructors assign physical books. When books come in both paper and digital versions, students can choose which format they want to purchase, rent or borrow. If readings are offered digitally, students can opt to print them out. In the end, this tends to be a matter of preference.

**3. Why does online education sometimes cost more than regular classes?**

When additional fees apply to an online course, it usually reflects an actual expense associated with running the degree program.

When traditional brick-and-mortar universities first began offering online degree programs, they found that it wasn't as simple as just hiring more instructors. Courses needed to be converted to online formats, and instructional designers were often hired to assist with course development. Existing faculty needed training to prepare to teach online. In some institutions, additional teach-

ing assistants were hired to ensure students had ample human contact. Student services, such as library access and advising, also need to be provided for online learners. All of these activities have costs associated with them that were not part of the institution's historical operating budget.



Pixabay.com

**4. A new study found if your prospective employer learns you got an online degree you're less likely to get a callback. Should students be worried?**

Bias against online degrees is a concern, but I think it will continue to diminish over time as more individuals with online degrees enter the job market and as hiring managers increasingly have their own experiences with online learning.

**5. Will students get the same quality learning online as they would on campus?**

The National Research Center for Distance Education and Technological Advancement maintains a compilation of studies comparing student outcomes across different types of courses. The majority of comparison studies — at least in this database — show that there are no significant differences between online and face-to-face courses. In other words, learning occurs equally well no matter how a course is delivered so long as the course itself is designed well.

*EDITOR'S NOTE — This article originally appeared at The Conversation and is republished under a Creative Commons license. Read the original article here: [www.tabonline.org/online-edu](http://www.tabonline.org/online-edu).*

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# 3 stories you should know



Photo by Focus Creative

Tim Tebow made a surprise appearance at Oak Mountain Presbyterian Church in Birmingham on Feb. 7 during this year's Night to Shine event. Seven Alabama Baptist churches and 10 other sites around the state also hosted an event, joining 721 churches in 50 states and 34 countries. Tebow created Night to Shine six years ago as a prom-style celebration centered on God's love for people with special needs. See more photos at [www.tabonline.org/NTS](http://www.tabonline.org/NTS). (TAB)

## Pakistani Christians acquitted of murders

After spending five years in prison, 39 Christians in Pakistan who were accused of killing two Muslims reached an agreement to pay victim families in exchange for acquittal, sources said.

The Christians maintained their innocence in the killings that took place after Taliban suicide bombers attacked two churches in March 2015, killing at least 15 civilians and two policemen and wounding more than 70 others in Lahore.

Media reports said a prosecutor in the case offered the accused freedom if they converted to Islam. One of the acquitted said the case had reinforced his faith in Christ.

Pakistan ranks No. 5 on Christian support organization Open Doors' 2020 World Watch list of the 50 countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian. (MS)

## SBC Pastors Conference 2020 lineup announced

The preliminary lineup of speakers for the 2020 Southern Baptist Convention Pastors Conference was announced Feb. 10 by conference president David Uth.

"Beloved," based on 1 John 4:11, is the theme of the conference set for June 7–8 at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando. Speakers include Wayne Cordeiro, author and pastor; David Platt, former Alabama Baptist pastor and former International Mission Board president; Jim Cymbala, pastor of The Brooklyn Tabernacle in Brooklyn, New York; Vance Pitman, pastor of Hope Church in Las Vegas; and several other speakers and pastors.

The lineup was met with some criticism following its release because some of the speakers are not Southern Baptists. To view the lineup, go to [sbcpc.net](http://sbcpc.net). (TAB)

## — NEWSBRIEFS —

### Lamar Duke, SBOM church planting strategist, dies at 69



Lamar Duke, church planting strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), died Feb. 11. He was 69.

Duke, who joined the SBOM staff in 2013, was known for his effective leadership in training and mobilizing church planters around the state. Before that, he served the Baptist Convention of New York, guiding their church planting ministry efforts.

He also spent six years as a church planter, 10 years as a North American Mission Board missionary and 25 years as pastor of a number of churches across Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and New Jersey.

"Lamar Duke was a treasured friend and missions colleague," said Rick Lance, SBOM executive director. "His positive spirit was contagious and appreciated by so many who knew him.

"Lamar brought Alabama Baptist church plant-



DUKE

ing strategy to a new level of effectiveness for the Kingdom," Lance said. "[His] impact for the Lord in Alabama and beyond will endure for the furtherance of the gospel for many years to come."

Duke earned a bachelor's degree from University of Mobile and a master of divinity from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

He is survived by his wife, Dolly; son, Tommy; daughter, Cheri; six grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren. (TAB)

### Shades Mountain to host 'The Word Alive with Lysa' conference



Best-selling author and speaker Lysa Terkeurst is coming to Birmingham with LifeWay Women Events' "The Word Alive with Lysa."

The conference will be held April 3–4 at Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Birmingham. Christian recording artist Ellie Holcomb will lead worship. The conference will run from



TERKEURST

7 to 9:30 p.m. on Friday and 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Saturday.

The event will help women see, taste, hear and touch the Holy Land without ever leaving the country.

Discounts for early bird registration and groups of 10 or more are available. To register, visit [LifeWay.com/WordAlive](http://LifeWay.com/WordAlive) or call 800-254-2022. (LifeWay, TAB)

### Acts 29 Network removes CEO after allegations of 'abusive leadership'



The board of the Acts 29 Network has ousted CEO Steve Timmis after investigating accusations about his "abusive leadership" style.

The board said in a statement that an investigation of claims describing manipulation, intimidation and spiritual abuse provided evidence that Timmis should be removed immediately.

Launched in 1998, Acts 29 is a global network of nearly 800 churches. The Acts 29 website lists 10 Alabama churches as part of the network. (BP, TAB)

# News near you

## BALDWIN ASSOCIATION

► **Friendship Baptist Church, Bon Secour**, will host a concert featuring Deliverance 5, a Southern gospel group from University of Mobile, Feb. 29 at 6 p.m. Charles Inman is pastor. ► **Styx River Baptist Church, Robertsdale**, will host a plate and homemade cake fundraiser event. Styx River will be taking lunch plate orders and homemade cake orders for delivery or pickup March 20. Available cakes include red velvet, German chocolate and cream cheese, lemon or buttermilk pound cake. Cornbread cake and sopapilla cheesecake also are available for a small upcharge. Take-out plates include three soft chicken tacos with cheese, jalapenos, lettuce, sour cream and taco sauce with a corn and black bean dish on the side. It also includes sopapilla cheesecake. Email [stxyriverbaptistchurch@gmail.com](mailto:stxyriverbaptistchurch@gmail.com) for more information and for an order sheet. Randy Sirmon is pastor.

## BETHEL ASSOCIATION

► **Providence Baptist Church, Gallion**, will host its spring revival March 1–4. Robert Smith, director of missions for Muscle Shoals Baptist Association will be the guest

speaker. Worship will be led by Mark Davis, worship pastor at Prattmont Baptist Church, Prattville. Services will be held Sunday at 6 p.m. and Monday through Wednesday at 7 p.m. Everyone is invited to attend. David Stidham is pastor.

## ELMORE ASSOCIATION



KELLUM

► **Chelsea Kellum** is the new preschool and children's pastor at **Crossroads Community Church, Elmore**. Kellum holds degrees from Mississippi State University in Starkville. Kellum and her husband, Scooter — who serves as the youth ministry strategist with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions — have three children. Robert Mullins is pastor.

## LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN ASSOCIATION

► **Lookout Mountain Baptist Association's** youth ministry will host a "Youth with Christ" rally at Welcome Hill Baptist Church, Fort Payne, Feb. 29 from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. The emphasis will be on challenges facing youth, Bible study and music. Lloyd Borden is director of missions, and Jerome Manley is associational youth director for Lookout Mountain Association. James Maples is pastor of Welcome Hill Baptist.



COBB

## MOBILE ASSOCIATION

► **Kevin Cobb** is the new pastor of **West Mobile Baptist Church**. He previously served as the church's worship and college pastor for more than five years. He also has served at Southside Baptist Church, Dothan. Cobb holds degrees from Troy University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He and his wife, April, have two children.

► **Henry Link** is the new lead teaching pastor at **Smoke Rise Baptist Church, Warrior**. He previously served as youth minister at Smoke Rise Baptist. Link holds a bachelor's degree from Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, and is currently pursuing his master of divinity at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. He and his wife, Kayla, have two children. ► **Chris Weide** is the new pastor of **Beechwood Baptist Church, Mount Olive**. He previously served in various positions at First Baptist Church, Opp, and Northside Baptist Church, Jasper. Weide holds degrees from Brewton-Parker College in Mount Vernon, Georgia, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He and his wife, Lynn, have two children.

## NORTH JEFFERSON ASSOCIATION

► **Kevin Cobb** is the new pastor of **West Mobile Baptist Church**. He previously served as the church's worship and college pastor for more than five years. He also has served at Southside Baptist Church, Dothan. Cobb holds degrees from Troy University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He and his wife, April, have two children.

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LINK



WEIDE

## — NEWSBRIEFS —

### IMB selects Alabama counselor Nowak for abuse prevention role



The International Mission Board (IMB) has selected Somer Nowak to fill the newly created position of prevention and response administrator.

Nowak will oversee and manage prevention and response efforts for child abuse (physical and sexual), sexual harassment (including sexual assault) and domestic violence. IMB is the first Southern Baptist entity to create a position for this purpose.

Nowak previously worked as a counselor with the Cherokee County Board of Education in Centre and as a forensic interviewer, forensic counselor and educational consultant for Children's Advocacy of Cherokee County.

Nowak holds a bachelor's degree in sociology and psychology, a master's degree in com-



IMB photo

munity agency counseling and an educational specialist degree in school counseling from Jacksonville State University. (BP)

### Retired FBC Springville pastor, wife die in car accident



Retired pastor Edward "Ed" Massey and his wife, Helen "June," died in a car accident Feb. 4.

He was 85, and she was 83 at the time of their deaths.

In his 50-plus years of pastoral ministry, Massey served as pastor of First Baptist Church, Springville, twice. He also served at other churches, including Lynn Baptist; First Baptist, Addison; First Baptist, Fultondale; and First Baptist, Chalkville.

The couple, who were married 65 years, were preceded in death by their son, Timothy Edward. They are survived by their daughter,



MASSEYS

Cheryll; five grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren. (Grace Thornton)

### National WMU invites public to Week of Prayer Observance in Birmingham



National WMU will host an observance of the Week of Prayer for North American Missions at its headquarters in Birmingham, March 5 at 10 a.m.

"Through earnest intercession, we have the privilege to join God at work in North America," said Sandy Wisdom-Martin, executive director of national WMU.

The event will include focused prayer experiences for North American Mission Board missionaries in Seattle, Toronto, Cincinnati and Puerto Rico with prayer prompts for each of these areas.

Following the observance, opportunities will be available for audio tours of the WMU building and artifacts, shopping the latest fair-trade items from WorldCrafts and light refreshments.

The prayer event is presented by national WMU, Alabama WMU and WMU Foundation. Visit [wmu.com/sendinghope](http://wmu.com/sendinghope) for more information and a schedule of events. (WMU)

# Religious freedom alliance launches

The U.S. State Department announced Feb. 5 that 27 countries have joined the new International Religious Freedom Alliance that seeks to reduce religious persecution across the globe.

David Curry, president and CEO of Open Doors USA, an organization that advocates on behalf of those who are persecuted for their Christian faith, said he welcomes the increased focus and attention on religious liberty.

“This initiative highlights the growing restrictions on individual freedom to practice the faith of one’s own choosing, or to not have a faith,” Curry said. “The alliance can help show societies how to create systems and practices that allow people freedom of conscience.”

The alliance’s first meeting fell on the eve of the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, which brought more than 4,000

political and faith leaders together in the nation’s capital.

Founding countries of the International Religious Freedom Alliance include the U.S., Poland, Brazil, Greece, Israel, Ukraine and United Kingdom.

Curry called the initial alliance countries a “good first step.”

“Hopefully, we will see countries from each region and cultural framework affirm the core principles of religious freedom, at minimum, and over time join the alliance,” he said.

The State Department issued a list of principles for the alliance that include a commitment to “the right to hold any faith or belief, or none at all, and the freedom to change faith.”

The new organization’s priorities include challenging blasphemy laws and advocating for people who are imprisoned or otherwise persecuted due to their religion or beliefs. (RNS, TAB)

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#### PASTOR

Fairhope Avenue Baptist Church is seeking a full-time pastor. Send resumé to: Fairhope Avenue Baptist Church, 8717 Fairhope Ave., Fairhope, AL 36532, or email to: [fabc@att.net](mailto: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](mailto:Secretary@communitybaptistmaylene.com).

#### MINISTER OF MUSIC & EDUCATION

First Baptist Church, Clanton, is seeking a full-time minister of music and education. Send resumé to: First Baptist Church, 210 Sixth St. North, Clanton, AL 35045 or email resumé to: [office@clantonfirstbaptist.org](mailto:office@clantonfirstbaptist.org).

#### 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](mailto:rbras699@aol.com).

#### MINISTER OF STUDENTS & RECREATION

First Baptist Church of Portland, Tennessee, is seeking a full-time candidate for minister of students and recreation. This position will include the overseeing of student ministry, grades 7–12, as well as, being ministry leader for our Family Recreation Center. All applicants must have answered the call to full-time Christian service and have faithfully served the Lord in ministry. All applicants must support the Baptist Faith & Message 2000. First Baptist, Portland, will receive resumé through the end of April 2020. All interested

applicants may learn more about our church at [fbcportland.org](http://fbcportland.org). Resumé should be sent to: First Baptist Church, 106 N Broadway, Portland, TN 37148 or [yps@fbcportland.org](mailto:yps@fbcportland.org); ATTN: Student & Rec Search Team.

#### BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH PASTOR

New Beginnings Baptist, Graysville, Alabama, searching for a bivocational youth pastor. Please send resumé to: [nbccbaptist@gmail.com](mailto:nbccbaptist@gmail.com).

#### BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH DIRECTOR

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

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Sulphur Springs Baptist Association consisting of 20 churches accepting resumé for bivocational director of missions. Send to: DOM Search Committee, 4501 Greathouse Road, Dora, AL 35062, or email to: [SS-BAoffice@gmail.com](mailto:SS-BAoffice@gmail.com).

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# Christian leaders respond to expanded US travel ban

By **Margaret Colson**  
The Alabama Baptist

A recently expanded U.S. travel ban has elicited vocal response from several Christian leaders.

The travel ban, issued Jan. 31 and set to go into effect Feb. 22, will bar permanent immigration from Nigeria, Eritrea, Myanmar and Kyrgyzstan and will stop giving certain visas to citizens from Sudan and Tanzania.

## ‘Eager to minister’

In addition to these six countries, a January 2017 presidential executive order bars entry of some citizens of Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria, Yemen, Venezuela and North Korea. Chad was on the original list but has since been removed.

Each of the six additional countries, the White House reported, has deficiencies in sharing terrorist, criminal or identity information with the United States.

Six of the 13 countries now included in the travel bans are on Open Doors’

2020 World Watch List Top 10 for religious persecution: Somalia, Libya, Eritrea, Sudan, Yemen and Iran. Nigeria ranks No. 12 on the list.

Several Christian organizations have expressed concern about the travel bans because of the religious persecution experienced by Christians in these countries.

“The churches of our convention are among the most committed people in the country in terms of ministering to those fleeing persecution,” said Travis Wussow, vice president of public policy and general counsel for the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) of the Southern Baptist Convention. “[Our churches] recognize that all of those escaping tyranny are made in the image of God, and many of them are our brothers and sisters in Christ. That’s why, from the beginning, the ERLC has asked our government to do everything possible to provide security without turning away from those in danger and need.

“International religious freedom is a priority of this



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administration, and a policy that closes the door to refugees undercuts that priority. Many of our churches are eager to minister to these men, women and families. There’s a need for security and compassion, but a country as strong as the United States can and ought to balance both,” Wussow said.

Scott Arbeiter, president of World Relief, a global Christian humanitarian organization, called the policy “overly broad” and said it “unfairly targets individuals of particular nationalities in Africa and Asia.”

Arbeiter also expressed concern that the expanded

travel ban will stymie legal immigration to the U.S. that leads to family reunification.

Responding to criticism that the ban unfairly targets countries with large Muslim populations, David Curry, president and CEO of Open Doors, said, “There is an important discussion on how to best deal with terrorists who are present dangers to free societies, [but] we must never restrict based on religious identification.”

## ‘Exemplify freedom’

“It’s up to us to exemplify religious tolerance and freedom on a daily basis,” Curry said. “To the degree we have

failed in the past, let’s never fail to fix the wrong and to keep raising the level of freedom.”

While not speaking directly to the recently expanded travel ban, Jeff Palmer, CEO of Baptist Global Response (BGR), urged Christians to pray for Christians in countries where religious persecution is on the rise.

“It is hard to see anybody attacked, driven out or even worse — have their lives taken — because of their faith,” Palmer said. “And we as the body of Christ are commanded to care for the dispossessed and disenfranchised, especially those of the household of faith.

“Please pray for those affected by religious persecution. Pray for their safety and their physical, spiritual and emotional needs to be met. Pray for those who are responding to their needs to have wisdom and knowledge to best help them. Pray also for safe havens and places for them to go to so that they can live their lives in dignity, freedom and to the fullness that God desires for them.”

## Christian Crossword

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### Across

- \_\_\_ them that are rich in this world. (1 Tim. 6:17)
- Gurgle.
- Electrically charged atom.
- Pungent scent.
- Expend.
- Temporary dwelling. (Ex. 33:10)
- Happily.
- Transit Authority. (abbr.)
- They went into the \_\_\_ of swine. (Matt. 8:32)
- What Eve does to the fruit. (Gen. 3:13)
- Earnest enthusiasm.
- Ye see how \_\_\_ a letter I have written unto you. (Gal. 6:11)
- The Lord my God will \_\_\_ my darkness. (Ps. 18:28)
- Do not \_\_\_, my beloved brethren. (James 1:16)
- Thou shalt have \_\_\_ other gods before Me. (Ex. 20:3)
- Spoke.
- Leah’s relationship to Rachel.
- Whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day \_\_\_ the seventh day. (Ex. 12:15)
- Nocturnal bird of prey.
- Bachelor of Arts. (abbr.)

- Long \_\_\_ and far away.
- Tender loving care. (abbr.)
- Rebuke not an \_\_\_, but intreat him as a father. (1 Tim. 5:1)
- Unfreeze.
- And the world passeth away, and the lust \_\_\_. (1 John 2:17)
- Heavenly headpiece.
- For anger resteth in the bosom \_\_\_ fools. (Eccles. 7:9)
- Snoopy.
- Rocking \_\_\_.
- Emergency Room. (abbr.)
- Refrigerator.

### Down

- And he went and joined himself to a \_\_\_ of that country. (Luke 15:15)
- Weeder.
- Yearly.
- Let my people \_\_\_. (Ex. 5:1)
- He do not whet the \_\_\_. (Eccles. 10:10)
- Harness for guiding a horse.
- Let not the \_\_\_ rejoice, nor the seller mourn. (Ezek. 7:12)
- Bachelor of Science. (abbr.)
- Serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the \_\_\_. (Rom. 7:6)
- Paddle.
- But as many \_\_\_ received Him, to them gave He power. (John 1:12)
- “Rock of \_\_\_, Cleft for Me.”
- Lest there be not \_\_\_ for us. (Matt. 25:9)
- Itemize.
- A soft \_\_\_ turneth away wrath. (Prov. 15:1)
- The stride of a horse.
- A small mountain peak.
- Touchdown. (abbr.)
- To raise a child.
- Against the lay.
- Belonging to the world’s most famous boat builder.
- \_\_\_ the mountains were brought forth. (Ps. 90:2)
- Pay the penalty.
- Chapter. (abbr.)
- Who by him \_\_\_ believe in God. (1 Pet. 1:21)
- I am the \_\_\_, the truth and the life. (John 14:6)
- Every one.
- \_\_\_ what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matt. 16:26)
- Greeting.
- Illinois. (abbr.)

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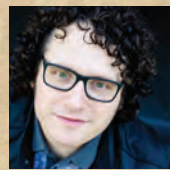


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**FEBRUARY**

- 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 **Hispanic Evangelism Conference and Dinner**, 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 Association Office, 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 Chaplaincy Training**, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Mark Wakefield, ext. 267
- 3 **Themchurch.com Training with Rick Burgess**, Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery, Larry Hyche, ext. 268
- 3 **State Disaster Relief Mass Feeding Training**, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Mark Wakefield, ext. 267
- 3 **State Disaster Relief Cleanup/Recovery Training**, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Mark Wakefield, ext. 267
- 3-4 **Mom & Me Spring Fling**, WorldSong, Amanda Armstrong, ext. 223
- 3-4 **State Disaster Relief Chainsaw Training**, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Mark Wakefield, ext. 267
- 6 **Who's Your One District Training**, Fayette Association Office, Fayette, Lori McGough, ext. 245
- 7 **Ministry Safe Workshop**, FBC Decatur, Lee Wright, ext. 241
- 7 **Who's Your One District Training**, Valleydale Baptist Church, Birmingham, Bailee Dixon, ext. 258
- 9 **Who's Your One District Training**, Calhoun Association Office, Anniston, Bailee Dixon, ext. 258
- 13 **Who's Your One District Training**, Parkview Baptist Church, Tuscumbia, Lori McGough, ext. 245

Famous Christians from previous centuries

# Heroes of the Faith

By Joanne Sloan

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



## 2020 marks 200th anniversary of missionary's trip to Sierra Leone

**D**aniel Coker (1780–1846) was an African American who helped found the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. He immigrated to Sierra Leone, where he became the first Methodist missionary from the United States. This year is the 200th anniversary of his going to Sierra Leone as a missionary.

Coker (born Isaac Wright) was born in Maryland in 1780 to Susan Coker, a white indentured servant, and Edward Wright, a slave.

As a teenager, he fled to New York to escape slave hunters. He took the name of Daniel Coker and joined the Methodist Episcopal

Church. In 1802, Francis Asbury, the British founding bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, ordained Coker as a Methodist minister.

Coker returned to the Baltimore area. After four freedmen purchased his freedom, he began to attack the institution of slavery.

In 1810, he published the pamphlet "Dialogue between a Virginian and an African minister."

While at Sharp Street Church where he worked, he advocated for black Methodists to start their own church. He founded the African

Bethel Church, which became the Bethel AME Church.

In 1816, Coker went to Philadelphia and collaborated with Richard Allen and others in organizing the national AME Church.

In early 1820, he left the U.S. aboard the *Elizabeth* with three other AME missionaries and sailed to Sierra Leone, West Africa.

Ten days into the journey he organized the first foreign group of the AME Church.

They landed on Sherbro Island off the coast of Sierra Leone in March 1820. The colonists soon

became ill. Many of the newcomers died, including the three other AME missionaries.

Coker was appointed the administrator of the colony. He led the group to the mainland where they settled in Hastings, Sierra Leone, a new village about 15 miles from Freetown.

His wife and children joined him in 1821. His son, Daniel Coker Jr., became a leader in Freetown.

Coker remained as spiritual leader as well as a government administrator until his death in 1846. His descendants still live in Freetown and are among the prominent Creole families. ✝



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# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For February 23

## Explore the Bible

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



### PROMISED Deuteronomy 32:48–52; 34:4–8

Death is a foregone conclusion. With the exception of Enoch and Elijah, every human being recorded in Scripture has faced death. The writer of Hebrews reminds believers that death is certain: “It is appointed for people to die once” (Heb. 9:27).

Moses was forbidden to enter the promised land for his disobedience in Numbers 20:12. He had outlived his siblings, Miriam (20:1) and Aaron (20:28). In his psalm, Moses mentioned that the men of his time lived 70 or 80 years (Ps. 90:9–10). By contrast, God had granted him 120 years (Deut. 34:7).

#### Our Sin Realized (32:48–52)

This narrative, which follows Moses’ last song (31:30–32:43), reminds the reader that the paycheck for sin is death. From Adam and Eve until now, death has accompanied disobedience to God. For some the sentence is immediate, while for others the anticipated end lingers. After 40 years of faithful service, Moses received a reminder that his days were short.

The reader may recall the Lord indicted and sentenced Moses and Aaron for their lack of faith in the book of Numbers, with Aaron’s death occurring shortly thereafter (20:12, 22–29). God repeats the sentence but with a caveat: “Although from a distance you will view the land that I am giving the Israelites, you will not go there” (32:52). God extends grace to Moses, allowing him to look from the mountains of Moab across the Jordan rift valley into the land of Canaan.

#### God’s Presence Assured (34:4)

Chapter 34 continues where chapter 32 leaves off, with the fulfillment of God’s promise to allow Moses to see the promised land. Verses 1–3 provide a geographical setting for the reader. A review of maps in the back of a good Bible provides a context, as the narration describes Moses’ panoramic view of the promised land from north to south.

Grace and mercy are characteristics of God, yet no one has the

right to presuppose or assume that Moses merits them or God owes either to him. Moses made no presumptions. He welcomed the words from the Lord: “This is the land I promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, ‘I will give it to your descendants [literally, seed].’ I have let you see it with your own eyes, but you will not cross over into it.”

#### God’s Mercy Discovered (34:5–8)

Moses was at full strength and had good eyesight when his appointment with death came. His exact burial place is unknown, though Jude offers insights not provided in this passage (Jude 9).

For 30 days, the people of Israel mourned and wept over the death of their leader. Moses had been faithful to God and led the people well. He had met with God, confronted a Pharaoh, witnessed the mighty hand of God over humanity and His creation, eaten manna, seen bitter water become sweet, received the commandments, endured 40 years of complaining, watched a stiff-necked generation die in the wilderness and instructed the next generation on God’s expectations when they entered the promised land. What a testimony! What a eulogy! And yet the greater prophet, the promised Messiah, was yet to come.

As I type this article and meditate on this passage, the lyrics of “Sweet Hour of Prayer” overwhelm me with emotion: “Till, from Mount Pisgah’s lofty height/ I view my home and take my flight/ This robe of flesh I’ll drop and rise/ To seize the everlasting prize/ And shout, while passing through the air/ ‘Farewell, farewell, sweet hour of prayer’” (William Walford, 1845).

Nowhere is God’s mercy more evident than through His salvation from eternal torment through the death and resurrection of Christ.

Meditate on these words as we close our study: “He saved us — not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to His mercy” (Titus 3:5).✠

## Bible Studies for Life

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



### HOW CAN I HONOR GOD IN MY SUFFERING? 2 Corinthians 4:7–18

#### Let Jesus be displayed in your life, even when you suffer. (7–11)

Paul contrasts the perceived weakness of his own ministry (when measured by the standards of secular culture) with the high-and-mighty ways of his opponents in Corinth who claim to be superior apostles. He likens himself and all authentic Christians as “earthen vessels.” The image here is cheap pottery lamps that carry Christ’s light to the world. The same Greek word is used of Paul at his conversion when he was appointed a “vessel” to carry the name of Jesus to others (see Acts 9:15). Though the human containers of Christ’s revelation appear to be frail, the truth is they magnify God’s power.

One New Testament paraphrase of the contrasts in verses 8 and 9 reads: “Hemmed in, but not hamstrung; not knowing what to do, but never bereft of all hope; hunted by men, but never abandoned by God; often felled, but never finished.” Indeed, the end of our own resources are not the end of God’s. With His power, we might find ourselves down, but we are never out!

The phrase “always being given up to death” in verse 11 is not referring to martyrdom, though Paul had already faced this threat. The apostle is referring to the daily sacrificing of one’s life in the service of others to glorify Christ. A more literal translation of “for Jesus’ sake” is “on account of Jesus.”

The trials Paul recites are not the ordinary human troubles like illness, bereavement or vocational disappointments. Instead, Paul is referring to abuses suffered in the service of Christ.

#### Use your situation as an opportunity for thanksgiving and praise to God. (12–15)

Paul is well aware that though he could die in one of many ways, he would stand up for Christ. In the face of that constant possibility, the apostle declares his faith by a quote from the Old Testament. Paul states

verbatim the Greek translation of Psalm 116:10, “I believed and so I spoke.” Paul goes on to remind his readers that even if death should come, the resurrection of Jesus guarantees the resurrection of all Christ followers. In one short sentence Paul scans from the past (4:14a) to the future (4:14b), affirming that God will raise His people. Elsewhere, Paul appropriately describes this resurrecting God as the Creator who brings into existence the things that do not exist and who brings life out of death (see Romans 4:17).

Paul includes the Corinthians with himself as being destined to be “presented” before God. So death will not separate Paul either from Jesus or from the Corinthians. This gift of grace is a great reason for gratitude and praise, and as “more and more people” come to know what the living Christ is doing in and through Paul’s ministry, so more will have reason for “thanksgiving.” Such jubilant doxology will increase the glorification of almighty God.

#### Stand strong because a far greater glory awaits you. (16–18)

Because of God’s grace and the hope founded upon it, Paul reaffirms that he does not “lose heart,” and he assures his readers that they need not do so either. All of our sufferings take their physical toll. As Paul acknowledges, our outer nature is “wasting away.” But the toll on our outer nature cannot touch our inner nature where the Holy Spirit dwells.

No doubt Paul’s troubles and sufferings were intense and unending. But from the eternal standpoint, the apostle deemed them as light and “momentary” compared to the “eternal weight of glory.”

Paul’s afflictions and their physical effects are plain to all who observe him. But no worries, replies the apostle, for they are only transient. Paul is grounded in the truth of eternal life, and he is therefore occupied with the unseen and eternal.✠

## TOP 10

best-selling Christian books

## NONFICTION

1. **The 5 Love Languages**  
By Gary Chapman (Moody)
2. **Total Money Makeover**  
By Dave Ramsey (Thomas Nelson)
3. **Girl, Wash Your Face**  
By Rachel Hollis (Thomas Nelson)
4. **It's Not Supposed to Be This Way**  
By Lysa Terkeurst (Thomas Nelson)
5. **Jesus Calling**  
By Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
6. **Live in Grace, Walk in Love**  
By Bob Goff (Thomas Nelson)
7. **The Road Back to You**  
By Ian Morgan Cron and Suzanne Stabile (Intervarsity)
8. **Get Out of Your Head**  
By Jennie Allen (Waterbrook)
9. **New Morning Mercies**  
By Paul David Tripp (Crossway)
10. **Boundaries**  
By Henry Cloud (Zondervan)

Source: Christian Book Expo at press time



## Media reviews

**Beyond Betrayal**

Phil Waldrep. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2020. 223 pp. (Paperback).

If you are familiar with Phil Waldrep's ministry at all, you are probably as eager to get your hands on this book as I was. If so, no need to read the rest of this review — just go get it. It's every bit as good as you expect.

Still here? Then let's talk about it. I knew from the advance publicity that Waldrep was writing from first-hand knowledge, but what I didn't expect was his level of transparency. He writes, "My hope is that, in these pages, I can meet you where you are. I have walked through betrayal and come out on the other side of pain." No covering up. No "evangelists-don't-have-these-feelings." Just "I've been there. Let's talk."

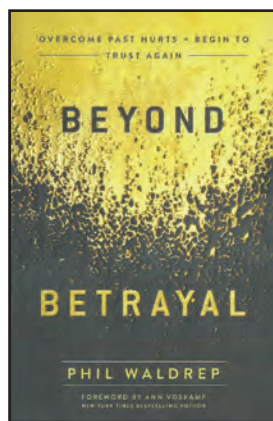
The rest of the book is as encouraging and helpful as the opening words. In typical Phil Waldrep fashion, he displays a keen understanding of what has happened and leads the readers down a biblical path to healing. No matter what kind of betrayal you have experienced, or how long ago, "Beyond Betrayal" will be a valuable resource for you.

**Moments with God**

Rob Jackson. Oceanside, CA: Living Word Publishing, 2019. 47 pp. (Paperback).

When my children were young, I did what most of us Alabama Baptists do: I took them to church, tried to lead by example and taught them biblical truths. I would have loved a guide like "Moments with God" to help me.

This book contains six weeks of daily devotions designed for parents to use in a devotional setting with their children. Each week has a theme, such as "God's Word — The Bible," "God Cares for You" and "God Has a Plan for You," and each week has a memory verse. Each day has a short devotion to be read to the child, followed by an opportunity to engage in a response time, with questions to ask your child, a prayer starter and a simple learning activity.



The author, Rob Jackson (my former pastor and now business partner), offers advice for the parent who uses the devotions: "Spend time with your child in the Word. Pray specifically for your child. Make sure your time with your child impacts him or her for the glory of God!"

Jackson is an associate professor of Christian studies at University of Mobile.

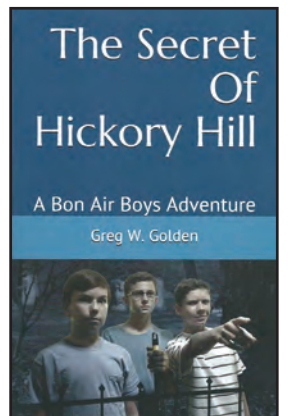
**The Secret of Hickory Hill**

Greg W. Golden. Mobile, AL: Carson/Knight Publishing, 2019. 91 pp. (Paperback).

My first thought when I began reading this book was that it read much like the Hardy Boys books of my childhood. I got excited but then realized that my childhood was a long time ago, and I don't know if kids even enjoy books like this anymore.

You have probably already guessed what I did. I enlisted my 10-year-old grandson, Cameron. He loves to read, but he's not crazy about reviewing books; he just knows what he likes. I didn't get a lot of details from him, but he liked the book a lot. He felt the story was believable and it kept him engaged. As a grandparent, I worry about elements that have crept into children's literature that we do not want our children exposed to. This is one book you will want your grandchild to read, both for the uplifting message and the Bible truths woven into the story. You might just enjoy it yourself!

The author is a minister serving on the staff at Cottage Hill Baptist in Mobile. 🙏

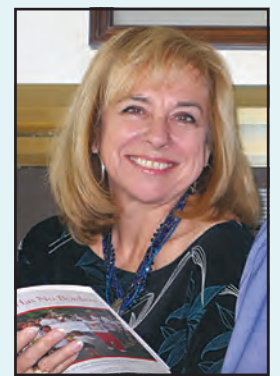


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**Meet the reviewer**

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



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# 'Needed to go back'

## God's call to missions leads Katie Wood back to New England to share the hope of Christ

By **Trennis Henderson**  
WMU National Correspondent

**S**ometimes accepting God's call to missions means being willing to pack up your family and head back home. At least that was the case for Katie Upton Wood.

Katie and her husband, Brandon, along with their three daughters, Corley Hannah, Rose and Callann, relocated from Georgia to Maine a few years ago to help reach New England with the hope of Christ.

The visible fruit of their missions calling is Hope Church, a growing congregation launched in 2017 in Brunswick, Maine.

### 'Preparing her heart'

Amid the ups and downs of planting a new church in coastal Maine, anyone "would have to be crazy to do what we do unless you are called to do it," Brandon said.

He quickly added that long before he and Katie met, "God was laying a foundation" that would "prepare her heart for what we're doing today."

Katie credits much of that foundation to her childhood years actively involved in Southern Baptist missions organizations.

"If it hadn't been for GAs [Girls in Action] and Acteens and Mission

Friends, I don't think that I would have the mindset that I do and the heart for other people that God has given me," she said.

As a Mission Friend and GA, she remembers "reading the stories and praying for these missionaries and seeing their pictures. It wasn't just somebody that you hear of in a different country. These were people who had names and they had a face and a story, and they really literally moved their whole entire family to go tell people about Jesus."

Those early lessons stayed with Katie throughout high school and college. She studied sports medicine in college and planned to become an orthopedic surgeon, but in her heart, she knew she "needed to be doing something else."

She ended up attending Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, to prepare for missions ministry.

That's where the New England native met her future husband, a fellow seminary student who grew up on a peanut farm in rural Georgia.

"We really didn't have very much in common," Katie said, "but I just saw his heart for Jesus and how much he loved people and how that passion for the gospel burned in him."



WMU photo by Pam Henderson  
Katie Wood (top, center) joins in a children's music activity as part of a Sunday morning Bible study where she teaches the children about God and encourages them to tell their family, friends and neighbors about Him.

After they married, they moved to Florida where Brandon served as youth pastor for a large congregation near Orlando.

While they had "just the perfect, quintessential life" with a great ministry position, a house and their first baby, Katie said, "I just had this stirring that this is not where we were supposed to be. ... I knew we needed to be back in New England."

They contacted the Baptist Convention of New England and were invited to visit the region and explore ministry opportunities.

After they flew in and were driving from New Hampshire to Vermont, Katie recalled driving past beautiful calendar-type scenes of little white churches in pristine, snow-covered settings. Upon closer inspection, they realized many of the church buildings were now bars or dollar stores or tourist stops.

Her heart sank she said, and she immediately thought, "I have to do something about this."

When the opportunity came to plant a church in Maine, they had grown to a family of five. All three daughters said yes to the idea of moving from Georgia to New England and making the transition from "shrimp and grits to lobster chow-

der," Katie said. "We came up here, and it has been a doozy of a ride."

After starting a Bible study in their home, their core group gradually grew large enough to launch Hope Church a little more than two years ago.

The church now averages about 125 people in attendance, with active children's and youth ministries and several home-based small groups. As those doors have opened, "God is bringing adults to faith in Him," Brandon said.

"The church is growing. It's exciting to see what He's doing," said Brandon, citing recent baptisms of people ranging in age from their 20s and 30s to their 70s and 80s.

### 'Why we're here'

Brandon said it could be easy to become satisfied with the church's size and current makeup. But that's not what the Woods want to happen.

"We don't want to become comfortable. We want to always be thinking about the next person and how we reach them," Brandon said.

For Katie, helping meet those pressing spiritual needs meant coming back home to New England. "It's what we were meant to do," she concluded. "It's why we're here." 🙏



WMU photo by Pam Henderson  
Brandon Wood (center), lead pastor of Hope Church in Brunswick, Maine, speaks to the congregation during a Sunday morning worship service. He and his wife, Katie, launched the new congregation in 2017.