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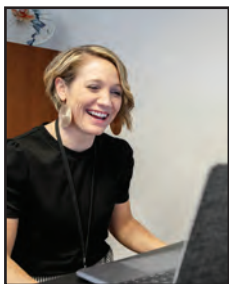
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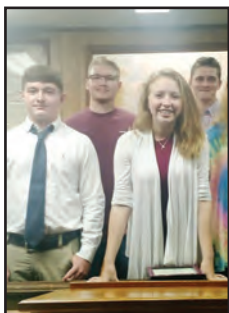
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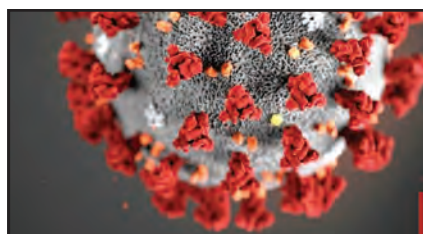
**"O DEATH,
WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY?
O DEATH,
WHERE IS YOUR STING?"**

**The sting of death is sin, and the power
of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives
us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

1 CORINTHIANS 15:55-57

CELEBRATE THE SAVIOR THIS EASTER, APRIL 12.

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



COVID-19

See pages 6-9 for information and updates

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Leverage your local edition space in creative ways

If there's one thing we all have in common right now, it's this — our calendars have been wiped clean. And if you're a church or association that normally publishes events on your back page of *The Alabama Baptist*, this means you've got some space to work with.

But that's not a bad thing. Though we'll all be ready to gather together for events again one day when COVID-19 is a memory, right now you have an opportunity to leverage your local edition space in some creative ways.

Consider these ideas:

- ▶ **Use the space to tell a story.** Stories are powerful, and everyone in your church has one, if not more. Recruit different church members to write a story about what God has done in their lives, what He is teaching them during the coronavirus outbreak or what they are doing to help their neighbors at this time.

- ▶ **Share the needs of members.** Some church members may have new and specific needs because of COVID-19. Others may have ongoing needs that are harder to fill for right now. Use your page as a bulletin board to share (appropriately of course) the needs in your church and ways to (safely) meet them.

- ▶ **Highlight encouraging Scripture passages.** The Baptist Church at McAdory, McCalla, is calling on a

different deacon each week to share his favorite Bible verse. And First Baptist Church, Birmingham, and others are sharing daily devotionals.

Another option is to utilize simple, free graphic design websites — like canva.com — to create visually appealing graphics with Bible verses or words of encouragement.

- ▶ **Explain how your church handles online giving.** Right now, in-person giving isn't an option for churches. If online giving is new to your church, or if every member isn't familiar with using it, use the space one week as an opportunity to explain the process of online giving.

- ▶ **Direct your church toward helpful resources.** You could use the space as a place to provide websites with reliable information about COVID-19 — websites

like cdc.gov, alsbom.org or namb.net. (And thealabamabaptist.org, which is constantly being updated with coronavirus-related information.) You could also list the contact information of crisis counselors.

- ▶ **Create a prayer calendar.** If you don't want to throw out your calendar format altogether, you could compile a prayer calendar with ways people can pray each day — for your church, for other churches in your association, for people affected by the virus and for any other needs your church members may have. (Grace Thornton)



lifeway.com/coronavirus

7-Day Coronavirus Prayer Guide



The crossword puzzle can be found on page 15.

TAB Media

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

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MY RASHIONALE

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

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One of those moments when God shows up subtly but powerfully

I woke up last Sunday morning thinking about the family in crisis. I went to sleep praying for them and pleading with God to bring them out of the seemingly hopeless situation in which they find themselves.

The crisis isn't new to this particular family. Several of us have been praying for and trying to help them for years. But the intensity of the crisis spiraled out of control about the time the coronavirus hit the U.S.

Resources are limited, opportunities to seek the specific help needed are restricted and new obstacles seem to emerge at every corner.

The weight has become nearly unbearable for those closest to the situation, and the energy of those continually tossing life lines to the ones at ground zero is near depletion.

Desperation has set in, and it seems no one can help and no one knows what to do.

As I've prayed and sought the Lord's guidance the past few weeks, He has reminded me to reach out to other believers to assist in the prayer effort — to allow others the blessing of being part of the process.

He helped me accept the fact that I must step back rather than try to force others to do what I think is the right thing in the situation. Definite steps need to be taken, but in this particular situation, those steps must be taken by those working at ground zero.

The Lord also is allowing me to see His hand at work and reminding me that by seeking the

mind of Christ and looking for Him in everyday moments, we will find Him.

When I woke up last Sunday, the idea of suggesting to the family to watch the online service from my church — North-Park Baptist Church, Trussville — popped in my mind. The service is airing online in various formats like many church services right now.

I felt impressed that I should send them a link to the service and ask them to watch, but then I convinced myself that I had sent them plenty of texts the day before with Scripture, links

to worship songs and messages of encouragement. That was enough for now, I convinced myself, fearful I was coming on too strong.

Still, I couldn't get away from the feeling that I should send them a link to that morning's service before it started, even as Jason and I settled in to watch the service, but I didn't do it.

About two minutes into the sermon focusing on 2 Corinthians 10:3–5, Jason looked over at me (not knowing of my earlier impression to send them the link) and said, "I sure wish [they] could hear this message.

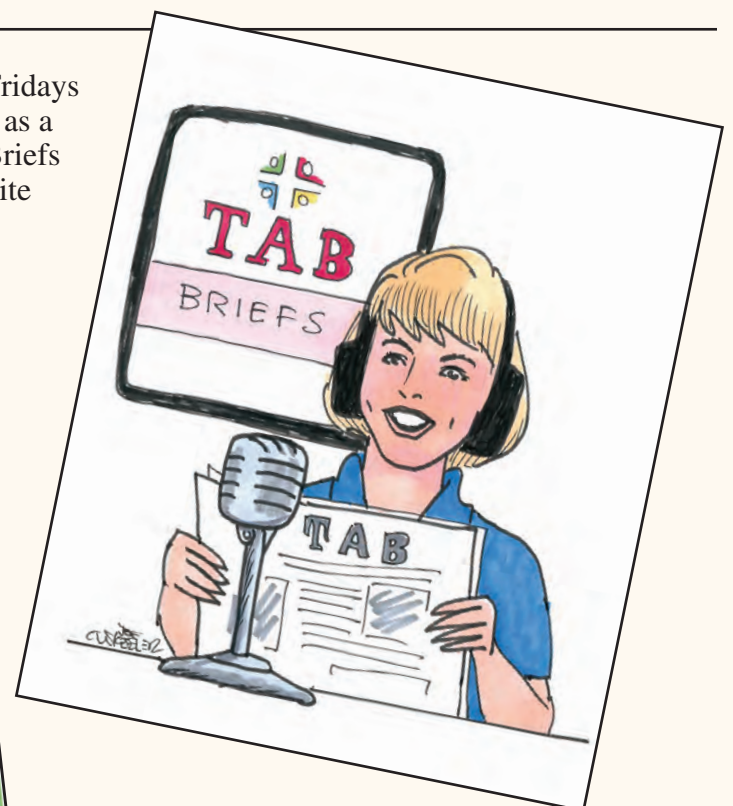
I think it is exactly what they need to hear right now."

Wow, had God really spoken to both of us separately but about the exact same thing? How could our pastor know exactly what this family he does not know needed to hear at this exact moment? Did I send the link to the family as soon as I grasped what was happening? You know I did.

But I also thanked God for reminding me so concretely to trust the leadings of the Holy Spirit and to always look expectantly to see how He is working in all our situations.✝

CHECK OUT TAB BRIEFS

One of our new features — **TAB Briefs** — airs Fridays at 8:45 a.m. on Facebook Live and then is released as a podcast at noon that same day. You can find TAB Briefs on Facebook @thealabamabaptist and on our website at tabonline.org/explore/podcasts.



TAB's content editor Carrie Brown McWhorter researches, writes and hosts the 10-minute TAB Briefs program each week. In both video and audio formats, McWhorter shares about three current faith-based news and culture stories.

Your Voice



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

Being peacemakers during an unusual Easter season

By James Hammack
The Alabama Baptist

We are at a unique crisis point. A pandemic has affected almost every way of life, including the gathering of the body. As if adding insult to injury, one of the most celebrated Sundays of the liturgical year also is affected.

What will Easter look like in the throes of COVID-19?

As Alabama Baptists, we have been issued an order from the state government that prohibits nonessential businesses from operating and places restrictions on gathering in numbers greater than 10.

But surely churches aren't to be seen as nonessential, are they?

What if we are looking at this the wrong way? What if we aren't asking the right question?

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matt. 5:9).

The world is missing out, and we have a wonderful opportunity to bring peace into an otherwise chaotic daily existence where fear and uncertainty abound.

Did COVID-19 surprise God? Of course not. Quite the opposite is true. God is in control, delivering peace to and through His people.

If there is a time for God's people

to choose the road of peace and tranquility, this is it.

Let us not be like the disciples worried about the storm. Instead, let us show that we know Who is in the boat with us — the One through whom all creation bows: Jesus.

Sometimes He calms the wind and waves for His people. Other times, He gives us strength to weather the shipwreck like He did for Paul.

So, what now?

We have instruction from the Word to live peaceably with all men, if possible. We have been commanded to love our neighbors. We have been given imperatives to submit to governing authorities as long as we obey God's law first and foremost. These are our dictating truths.

This is the tough spot where it's very easy for defensive walls to rise. Let me encourage you before we continue. Jesus said the Church will prevail and the gates of hell cannot prevail against us. The coronavirus has no chance.

The government has viewed churches as small, nonprofit businesses for years. This means the building most likely qualifies as nonessential.

As we know, this does not mean church is nonessential, it just means that this particular method of meeting is nonessential in the view of our world.

And this isn't aimed to persecute the church. Other organizations where extended gathering and contact is normative also are deemed

nonessential. We know we can expect persecution according to Jesus' words. But I don't think we can describe this particular move as persecution.

While the pull to be physically present in some manner is strong, especially at Easter, this time of distance ought to be producing a longing for the gathered worship. We ought to miss the gathered Communion, baptisms, greetings, singing, preaching and works of the Spirit.

The online version of church is a poor substitute for the gathered body. Yes, our homebound members can be blessed when we provide ways for them to join in through online methods, but the routine when possible ought to be that physical gathering.

Continue longing for the day when we can return to the building and worship in person. Speak about it out loud to one another and post it on social media.

But in an effort to show the world the peace of God and be properly submissive to our governing authorities, we can work to make the most of Easter from afar.

We can bemoan our afar-ness in positive, Christ exalting ways that build up instead of tear down. And we can throw the biggest block parties when we weather this storm and come out on the other side.

Let's usher in peace, by living out the peace that God has given us through Christ our Savior.

EDITOR'S NOTE — James Hammack is TAB's digital services manager and serves on the pastoral team and in worship leadership at HisWay Community Church, Prattville.

Letters to the Editor

I am unable to go to church right now (81 years old and have had surgery), but you are doing a fantastic job with *The Alabama Baptist* newspaper. I have been taking the paper for years but enjoy it more than ever. Thanks for all you do.

Gerri Basic
Pelham, Ala.

Thank you for including the article, "Coronavirus Christianity," in the March 26 issue of TAB. This article provided us with three specific ways Christians may involve themselves to serve in a crisis environment. I encour-

age you to continue such timely articles by prominent authors.

My other favorite part of the paper is Theology 101. Baptist believers need to be strengthened in both doctrinal truths as well as current information relevant to living out our Christian faith.

Thank you for TAB.
JoAnn McKay
Headland, Ala.

Praying for you guys as God continues to give us new ways to communicate hope to fellow believers!

Caris Snider
Cullman, Ala.

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“What if God has placed us in our homes and away from our churches, our work, our schools and our relationships in order to open our eyes to His love toward us?”

KEVIN BLACKWELL

Disciplemaking and teaching pastor at The Station Church, Birmingham

It is startling that Jesus did not go to the temple to present Himself alive from the dead. Instead, Jesus chose unremarkable places to show up: a common garden path, a quiet hillside, breaking bread at a dinner table and eating breakfast in a home.

We only really know the resurrected presence of Jesus if we find Him in the daily places and moments of life. If Jesus is only real to us when gathered in a hushed worship center with grand music and words from Scripture, then we may be more in love with thoughts about Jesus than with Jesus Himself.

Bob Adams
Retired pastor

I would like all of God's people to come together at 7 a.m. and 7

p.m. each day to pray for the healing of our country and to rid us of this virus.

Harold Whitt
Tuscaloosa, Ala.

If you are really angry, consider taking a break from social media and TV news. Walk down a country road; see the new blooms that represent spring, a season of renewal and hope. Go fishing. Watch a “Three Stooges” episode or a cat video on YouTube. Sometimes adults just need to be silly and laugh. We are losing that ability.

These times are hard for many. Loss of work and layoffs are already hitting people hard. But these days will pass.

Our character is determined by

how we handle the challenging times. Consider kindness, empathy and compassion this week. Yes, I sure need to hear that and maybe you do too.

James Spann
via Facebook

In times of chaos, it is more important than ever to stop for a moment to say thanks.

So thanks, first of all to all health care professionals, many of them Samford graduates, nearby and far-away giving and giving and giving at their own personal risk. A thousand thanks to millions of people. We will always remember you and always, always with thanks.

President Andrew Westmoreland
Samford University



WMU photo

Sandy Wisdom-Martin is executive director of national Woman's Missionary Union.

Help others during crisis

As committed Christ followers, we can use our influence to make a positive impact on the Kingdom during this crisis.

Here are five practical ways we can be the hands and feet of Jesus. Christ will do the miraculous in our midst if we allow Him to use us for His glory.

1. Share God's peace. Be people of peace sharing the love of Christ everywhere in your community as you are able to get out and about safely.

2. Minister to the elderly. Create a system to reach out by phone daily to make sure they are okay and have what they need.

3. Consider creating a community prayer line. Offer to pray for [neighbors and friends] and to pray with them.

4. Know where to find assistance in your community. Reach out to a helping professional — a social worker, nurse or teacher, for example. Ask them about needs in your community and services offered so you can help and encourage others. Be familiar with the resources in your community.

5. Tell of God's transforming power. Take every opportunity to share the gospel so people may come to saving faith in Christ.

—Sandy Wisdom-Martin

From the *Twitterverse*

@philpnation

Don't just invite a neighbor to an Easter service. Invite them into a lifelong friendship.

@alsbom

Need someone to talk to or pray with? Call 1-877-4-AL-PRAY (1-877-425-7729) and an Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief chaplain or state missionary will be there for you.

@LifeWay

“Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. Outdo one another in showing honor.”

— Romans 12:10 @CSBible

@JimGandy5

It would be so easy in times like these to look at the storm around us

and like Peter start to sink. In times when we are spiritually called on to walk on water, our only chance is not to take our eyes off Jesus.

@bcmlink

Praise Report! An international student at the University of Alabama at Huntsville has accepted Christ and is working through how to share this news with their family. Please be in prayer for this student and others who desire to share this life-changing decision.
#ReachEveryStudent

@HayleyCatt

Kids are not being placed in #fostercare because social worker visits are not happening and teachers are not able to report abuse. Pray for God to protect and provide for kids in dangerous and neglect-

ful situations who don't see a light at the end of the tunnel.

@EdLitton

The image of Himself that Jesus left with His disciples was the image of Him risen, ascended, seated in glory, ruling sovereign, reigning in power and glory forever and ever. All images bow to this one.

@BethMooreLPM

Let's not assume every ask is an attack. ... Let's take it a little easier on one another. The meanness on Twitter takes a legit toll on the soul.

@LeadwithJames

I am reminded this morning that #COVID-19 is giving us an opportunity to reset, relearn and renew our lives. I will not waste the moment. #Momentmatter

CRISIS IN CRISIS

Rise of domestic violence during pandemic

Domestic violence increasing globally as families forced to quarantine together

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Three and a half minutes. That's how much of Matt Mason's 45-minute sermon addressed domestic violence.

But after he preached that Sunday in July 2019, his inbox was full.

"No three and a half minutes in my four years of preaching here regularly has generated more emails, more painful stories than that segment," said Mason, pastor of The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham.

And it didn't stop there. The next day, he shared an article on Facebook addressing the topic, and he got a private message from a church member letting him know that she personally knew of some women who didn't "like" or comment on his post because they were afraid they might face backlash from abusers.

"You look at the statistics and even if you go conservative ... we



123rf photo

would be naive to think there's not deep pain in our church family," Mason said.

Domestic violence — when one spouse or partner tries to dominate the other with controlling and punishing behaviors — is an ever-

present issue, according to the numbers. Most victims are women. And though not all abuse is physical, on average nearly 20 people per minute are physically abused by an intimate partner in the U.S., according to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

Experts say that reality is only escalating with the isolation caused by the coronavirus. In China, domestic violence cases have risen dramatically as people there have been quarantined, according to news reports. And France saw something similar happen — the government has begun putting domestic violence victims in hotels and opening pop-up counseling shelters after a 32% rise in incident reports the first week of lockdown.

Concerning trends

The U.S. is already seeing the signs of a similar trend. KLFY, a Louisiana news station, reported that the population in domestic violence safe houses in Shreveport was on the rise and nearing capacity in late March. Crisis Services of North Alabama reported a 25% increase in domestic-related calls in recent days.

Darby Strickland, an instructor and counselor with the Christian Counseling & Educational Foundation, said the current reality is a perfect storm for abuse victims.

The COVID-19 crisis is amplifying stress for everyone, and for people in domestic abuse situations, "suddenly you're interacting with your abuser all day," she said. "It just sets up a really difficult environment."

Unique challenges

Strickland — who was part of the team who developed Southern Baptists' Caring Well study and Church Cares curriculum — said the current climate has a lot of unique challenges. Many shelters are full, and many victims who might choose to flee to an aging parent's house are unable to do so for fear of infecting them with the coronavirus.

If victims "need a break or have to leave, their usual resources aren't always available," Strickland said. "And they are often not free to speak in their homes, as they tend to be monitored, so they can't reach out for help as regularly or talk to their support people as easily."

For people who have friends or neighbors in a potentially dangerous home situation, Strickland recommends staying in touch with them even if they can't answer questions about their well-being. That helps them feel loved and valued, which is vital, she said. (See story, page 7.)

She also recommends that churches help in the short term when possible by providing hotel rooms for victims if needed.

Church leaders also can invest in long-term ministry to victims by spending some of their quarantine time going through the Church Cares curriculum online.

The curriculum, offered free at churchcares.com, is made up of 12 20-minute lessons on how to respond to abuse. A companion hand-

If you are a victim in a dangerous situation:

▶ Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799-7233 or thehotline.org.

▶ If you aren't ready to leave yet, make a safety plan. Figure out the safest room in your house (for example, not the kitchen — there are knives — and not the garage — there are makeshift weapons), and if there is an argument, try to move it to that room. This should be a room with two exits, if possible. Remember in an argument to also move away from your children, not toward them.

▶ Train your children to know

a safe room where they can go if there's an argument. Phrase it that way, not "where you can go if Daddy explodes." Children are truth tellers and might repeat that to the abuser. Make sure your children know your address and how to call 911 if there is an emergency.

▶ Make time for self-care when you can. Take a 10-minute-longer shower, take time to read or play worship music in the background. Invest in things that give you space and spiritual fortitude. And stay connected to people, even if it's not safe to talk about your situation.

Source: Darby Strickland

book, “Becoming a Church that Cares Well for the Abused,” also addresses the question of how caring for abuse victims is a gospel issue.

Both resources were developed as part of the Caring Well challenge issued to churches following the report of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Sexual Abuse Advisory Group at the SBC annual meeting in June 2019.

J.D. Greear, SBC president, said the challenge is designed by the advisory group and the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission to “walk with church leaders step by step toward becoming a church that is safe for survivors and safe from abuse.”

It’s designed to “provide churches with a pathway to start engaging the problem of abuse,” he said.

The process guides them through building a Caring Well team, explaining the effort to their church, developing policies to address the issue of abuse and preparing to care well for victims.

Mason said it’s been an important process for his church staff and members to walk through.

“Why are we committed to protect the vulnerable from sexual predators and violent abusers? Because we are called to display to the world the character of God, and God rescues the oppressed,” he said.

That can start simply by being a listening ear when a friend or neighbor confides in us, Mason said, noting that even when you don’t know what to say, starting with responses like “I’m sorry this happened to you” or “It wasn’t your fault” can go a long way.

“We want to move toward others and listen well,” he said.

Strickland said walking with a domestic abuse victim can be a long process, but churches must be committed.

‘Bringing truth and hope’

“Just like freeing a tree from brambles, disentangling an oppressed wife from an abuser will take time, will be painful and will need tending to over and over again,” she said. “Never tire of bringing her truth and hope.”

Strickland — who also wrote the booklets “Domestic Abuse: Recognize, Respond and Rescue” and “Domestic Abuse: Help for the Sufferer” — said it’s important to offer help but move at the victim’s pace. The goals are twofold, she said.

“The first is to protect her from

further abuse while you comfort her and draw her out of the shadows,” Strickland said. “The second goal is to help her understand Jesus’ heart for her. We want her to experience that the Lord is both near and active in her suffering and rescue.”

More information

For more information about how to help victims and survivors of domestic violence, visit caringwell.com. To access the Church Cares curriculum, visit churchcares.com.

If you yourself are in a dangerous home situation or know someone who is, contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799-7233 or thehotline.org.



Unsplash.com

Be a friend:

CHECK-IN, PRAY, ENCOURAGE

How to help victims of domestic abuse during COVID-19

On a normal day, it can be difficult to know how to help victims of domestic abuse. But what about in the middle of coronavirus self-isolation? During this time, victims are often trapped with their abuser all day long and unable to reach out for help.

Helping friends

Darby Strickland, an instructor and counselor with the Christian Counseling & Educational Foundation, offers these ways to help friends and neighbors who you believe may be in a dangerous home environment:

1. Pray.

Start with prayer first, asking God to protect your friends and neighbors and give them — and you — wisdom.

“We can be in prayer for people when we know or suspect that their home is not safe,” Strickland said. “We cannot underestimate what God is doing. When we find ourselves powerless, His mercy is on display.”

2. Check on victims regularly.

In COVID-19 isolation, domestic abuse victims may be

cut off from their support systems. Check in on them. You may not be able to help them, but you can keep the communication open, Strickland said.

“Keep them connected to someone who values them — that’s hugely important. And when you call, stay on safe topics,” she said, noting that often the abusive partner is monitoring their phone calls and messages.

Just showing them that they are loved can make a big difference, Strickland said. “When somebody experiences true love, it’s orienting and helpful. They won’t feel alone in the world.”

You can also cue them to call you at a safer time by saying something like, “Next time you go for a walk or a grocery store run, why don’t you give me a call?” That might give them an open door to call you at a time when they can talk more privately.

Visual communication

Another way to get a read on how they are is to suggest a FaceTime or Zoom call. Even if you can’t talk about their situation, you can get a sense of how they’re doing and

see if they might have visible bruises or other signs of abuse, Strickland said.

3. If needed, provide a hotel room.

As shelter-in-place orders continue, shelters for domestic abuse victims are filling up, and victims may not want to flee to an aging parent’s house if they are afraid of giving them the virus.

‘Creative resources’

But churches can step in and offer a safe place to stay by providing a hotel room if needed, Strickland said. “Churches have the creativity and ability to provide resources that victims may not have.”

4. Contact the domestic violence hotline.

It’s possible that during coronavirus, your friend or neighbor might not be able to safely call the National Domestic Violence Hotline (NDVH). If you are worried that someone you know might be in a dangerous situation, contact the NDVH at 800-799-7233 or thehotline.org. (Grace Thornton)

PRESSING ON

through the crisis

Do not neglect physical, emotional, spiritual well-being while social distancing

By Margaret Colson
The Alabama Baptist

How can I maintain a healthy and balanced lifestyle during the COVID-19 crisis? How can I keep up with the latest news without letting it invade my every thought? How can I love my neighbor while practicing social distancing?

With the COVID-19 pandemic dominating headlines and creating significant lifestyle changes, these and other questions are on the minds of many. Lisa Keane, clinical director at Pathways Professional Counseling, offers perspective and practical tips to help us all press on through this unprecedented time.

Isolated but not alone

“Social isolation, while necessary at this time, can also cause people significant anxiety or cause feelings of depression to set in quickly,” said Keane. She encourages people “to be proactive in staying connected during social isolation. Talk to neighbors from a safe distance; sit outside and talk to those passing by; connect on video calls and join virtual prayer meetings at your church. Try to engage in online events. Pick up the phone and call people too. Don’t be afraid to reach out if you are feeling lonely.”

Even those who do not have access to technology, such as some senior adults, can find opportunities to connect during the time of social isolation. Writing, she said, “is a very healthy form of processing what is going on.” Writing letters, especially encouraging ones, opens the door for relationships in the midst of the crisis.

“Write to those whom you feel safe sharing how you feel and be open about any struggles you might be experiencing. You will feel less alone knowing someone will read them,” she suggested.

Social distancing doesn’t have to mean that Christians can’t love



Pixabay

their neighbors, she believes. Keeping a safe distance “doesn’t mean that your words cannot reach them and offer high levels of compassion. Send texts, notes, letters or emails to those you feel could use an extra word of encouragement.”

Other ideas include offering to run groceries or food to those who really do not need to be out, she said.

“You can drop things at their door to brighten their day without having contact. And of course, you can be praying for people, which can always be done at a safe distance,” she said.

Biblical guidance

One biblical passage in particular offers three steps for individuals struggling with anxiety or stress related to the pandemic, Keane believes. “This is the time to read and meditate on Philippians 4:4–9,” she said. “Look at these three steps: rejoice, pray and think on things that are true, lovely and pure.”

1. The passage calls on Christians to rejoice. “Think of this time as a mental reset where you now have time to write a gratitude journal and to focus on the goodness of the Lord. Write out promises you hold on to that remind you to rejoice in

the Lord each day,” Keane explained.

2. The passage reminds believers to pray. “Start a prayer journal where you can specifically write out anxieties you are experiencing, prayer requests and promises from His word that you would like to hide in your heart. Actively engage in your faith so that you can experience that ‘peace that surpasses all understanding,’” she said.

3. The passage encourages Christians to “think on these things.” Keane advised, “Set limits on the information that causes you stress, and increase your intake of God’s word. ... Add reminders to your phone to have Scriptures pop up on your screen, and share promises you are meditating on with others.”

Keane believes people should set limits on the amount and type of news they are absorbing. “If all you are doing is constantly flipping through social media feeds, news feeds and commentators on today’s issues, you will find yourself mentally exhausted and anxious,” she said. “While I enjoy knowing what is going on, I also need to make sure I am leaving space for uplifting, encouraging information too. Am I reading God’s word daily and feeding my soul with Bible study? Am I

offering up time in prayer more than I am reading feeds on my phone?” She suggests setting certain times during the day for news updates and also certain times to turn those updates off.

“Make sure,” she said, “you do not just feed your mind news and updates but rather feed it with things that bring you joy and encouragement.”

Healthy lifestyle

With constant reminders to care for our physical health through preventative measures such as handwashing and social distancing, Keane also suggests going further to maintain physical health. “Your physical well-being will greatly impact your ability to regulate your emotions during this time,” she said.

Even with life looking differently than it did even a few days ago, especially with more time being spent at home, physical health can be maintained.

“While at home, establish a routine for yourself where you get up and go to bed at the same times. Increase your physical activity through walking outside if able; do an online exercise class (several are free right now) or just move more around your house. Make sure you are feeding yourself healthy foods. ... Also, don’t forget to eat lunch. ... Eating will help keep your energy levels up,” she said.

The “unknown” of how long the crisis will last or when life might return to “normal” creates stress, Keane acknowledges. In many ways it is difficult to even “wrap our minds around” all that is occurring, she said. Navigating through the crisis requires intention and commitment.

“God made us to be integrated creatures where we have to take care of ourselves physically, emotionally and spiritually. Make sure you are doing something for yourself in each one of these categories each day as you walk through this stressful time,” she said. 🌈

*Helpful tips for***SELF-CARE****Balanced, healthy lifestyle important to maintain during COVID-19 outbreak**

You're at home — and so is everybody else. So what do you do with all that time? Consider these ways you can make the most of this season of self-isolation and social distancing.

▶ **Invest in your spiritual life.**

We've all been there — that moment where you say, "I wish I had more time to spend reading the Bible and praying." Now most of us have nothing but time. Leverage it to set or strengthen a habit of Bible study, prayer or journaling.

▶ **Limit your screen time.**

One of the easiest things to do during our self-quarantine is scroll through social media, binge watch television or constantly check the news. Though it's good to be

informed and stay connected, consider setting yourself a limit for how much time you spend staring at a screen every day. You might find you can get some productive things done — and that you are less anxious.

New skills and hobbies

▶ **Plant a garden.**

In a lot of ways, it could be a blessing that we are all self-isolating in spring. It's a perfect opportunity to work on a garden. Most hardware stores are still open, or you can buy seeds and tools online.

▶ **Learn a new skill or stretch your mind.**

It's possible you've had days where you said, "I wish I had time to learn another language," or "I'd love to learn to knit."

Now's your time. Download an app like Duolingo to start learning some words in Spanish, Arabic or another language, or look up some YouTube videos on how to knit or crochet. Or check out some free online courses being offered during COVID-19. For instance, Sylacauga artist Abby Little Jessup is offering free online watercolor classes at www.abbylittlejessup.com. And Ivy League schools are offering a

whole range of free courses at www.classcentral.com/collection/ivy-league-moocs.

▶ **Learn to cook.**

With extra time and without restaurants to fall back on, it's the perfect time to explore new recipes and try new foods. Find some new recipes online

or look up some "how-to" videos on YouTube.

▶ **Get in shape.**

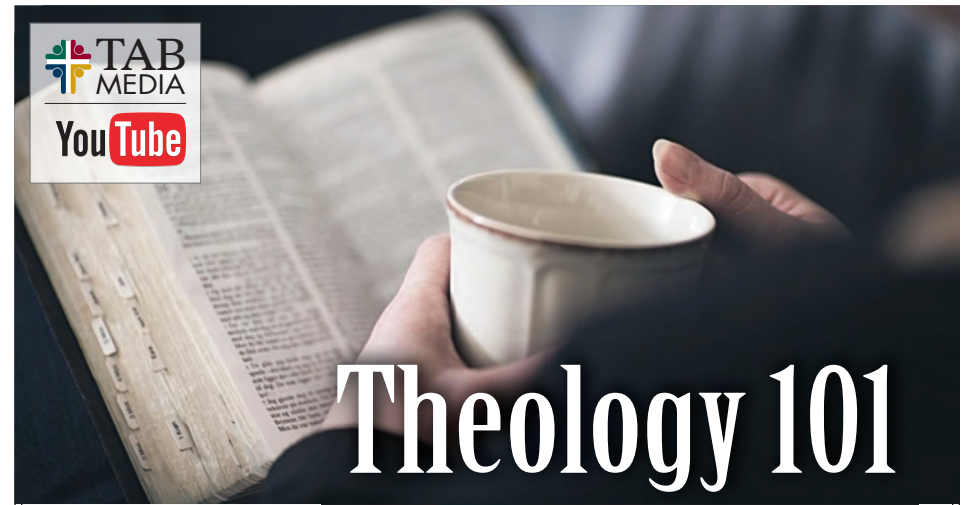
One of the few things most of us are still allowed to do outside the house is exercise. Use this opportunity as time for a mental break and go for a walk or run (while still practicing safe social distancing). It's also a chance to set a habit that might last past COVID-19.

▶ **Start journaling.**

While everything might seem mundane right now, in the months and years to come, it will be fascinating to look back on this historical time and read what we were doing, thinking and feeling. Even if it's just a sentence or two, try to write down a few thoughts each day in a journal. (Grace Thornton)



Unsplash.com

**Theology 101**

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

The Doctrine of God**God Is Love**

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

Last week, Theology 101 suggested that the best Old Testament one-word description of God is that He is holy. If we seek in similar fashion to discern the best one-word description of God in the New Testament, our most obvious conclusion would likely be God is love, another four letter word. Of course, the Old Testament is not without revelation of the love of God, just as the New Testament is not without the truth that God is holy. However, the distinctive or prominent truth about God in the New Testament is His love.

We often take note of the twice-made declaration in 1 John that "God is love" (4:8, 16). The whole of the New Testament does what 1 John 3:1 invites: "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us." It witnesses to the love of God.

Everlasting love

If we reflect upon some aspects or characteristics of God's love, we might begin by noting that His love is everlasting. In fact, this aspect of God's love was revealed through the prophet Jeremiah through whom God spoke, saying, "I have loved you with an everlasting love" (31:3). That God's love is everlasting means that it is without beginning and end. Such love as God's love does not change.

God's love also is redeeming love. His incomparable love acted to send His Son. The message of the New Testament is that we

were not redeemed "with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Pet. 1:18-19). In being redeeming, God's love also is forgiving. This truth has deep roots in the Old Testament in God's reminder to Moses, "The Lord is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression" (Num. 14:18).

Disciplining love

While God's love is abundant, it is not indulgent. His love is disciplining love. Hebrews 12:6 puts it like this, "Whom He loves, He chastens. He disciplines every child He receives." Divine discipline is not to be received as punishment but as a means by which God seeks to strengthen and purify us. In short, God loves His children too much to let us alone when we sin.

On the other side of God's disciplining love is His restoring love. Jesus captured the reality of this restoring love by telling the story we call the parable of the prodigal son. However, the main character in this parable is not a young and sinful son, but a waiting, welcoming and restoring Father.✝

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.





Looking Toward Celebration Sunday



Rick Lance
State Missionary

To say that we live in unprecedented times is an understatement. Various areas of the economy -- such as education, medicine, business and individual households -- are undergoing unexpected change, coping and, sometimes, innovation.

Not surprisingly, Alabama Baptists are finding creative ways of continued obedience to the Great Commission. It is refreshing to see Alabama Baptist resolve and intentionality to obey Christ in the midst of this unusual time in the history of our nation and the world -- even when, for the most part, the Body of Christ does not gather in person but meets online for worship, prayer, Bible study, evangelism and mutual encouragement.

The celebration of Holy Week is prompting the need for further creativity from churches as they mark the most holy of all Christian observances, celebrating the Crucifixion and the Resurrection of our Lord.

Without Christ's atoning sacrifice, there would be no forgiveness of sins. Without the Resurrection, there would be no promise of resurrection for those who trust Him as Savior and Lord.

These awesome and magnificent truths are worthy of proclamation year-round but especially so during this season when numerous churches are already experiencing attendance increases online than they had during previous in-person worship services. The audience for the Gospel seems more accessible than ever and needs to hear the Good News as always.

One blessing coming from all this is that Facebook Live, YouTube and other social media have indeed provided platforms where the Gospel is more accessible than ever. Facebook especially has been populated with a proliferation of video postings from churches that preach salvation through Christ as the only way to the Father and the Savior who alone can forgive sins and promise a home in heaven.

As we celebrate the sacred season of Easter, let's also look toward a future -- after the pandemic diminishes-- when there will be a memorable Celebration Sunday when Christians will rejoice anew in the "assembling of ourselves together" (*Hebrews 10:25*).

Have you already imagined, as I have, what a Sunday of rejoicing that will be?

We do not yet know the time when the church of the Lord Jesus will once again be able to gather in church houses, but we can plan now -- with great anticipation -- to celebrate that special day.

In the meantime, let's rejoice in what the Lord has done through the power of the Gospel, what He is already doing through His people during this era of uncertainty and challenge, and what He will do when we come together again in person for corporate worship as His obedient disciples.

Matthew 6:33

Alabama Baptist makes history with IMB

In early February, Alabama Baptist Somer Nowak made history as the first person employed by a Southern Baptist entity to oversee and manage prevention and response efforts for child abuse and domestic violence. The International Mission Board (IMB) announced the hiring of Nowak, fulfilling IMB President Paul Chitwood's commitment to lead the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in abuse prevention and response.

Nowak recently sat down with The Alabama Baptist/TAB Media to introduce herself and discuss her priorities as she assumes this role.

Q: Tell us a little about yourself personally.

A: I am a small-town girl from Alabama. I am blissfully married and have two kids, ages 11 and 8. I accepted Christ as a little girl — age 6 — and was baptized. However, when I was 22 years old, I rededicated my life to Christ after realizing I had never truly given Him complete control. I

grew up with a lot of head knowledge of God, but that day He captured my heart, and I gave Him the driver's seat. I spent about 23 years of my life in Pine Grove Baptist Church, Centre, and then moved to First Baptist Church, Centre, with my husband and children years later. Both churches played, and still play, a huge part in my walk with the Lord.

Q: When and how did you (1) first develop an interest in and (2) become involved professionally in preventing and reporting child abuse?

A: I earned my bachelor's degree in psychology and sociology, always having in mind the goal to help children and families. I was blessed to get a job at the Cherokee County Children's Advocacy Center while I was working on my master's degree in counseling. During that time, my passion for this type of work grew. I loved being a part of the healing process for children and their families, and I also enjoyed being part of a process that



Somer Nowak

IMB photo

brought justice to those who were harmed. It was during my time at the Advocacy Center, and then my time in the Cherokee County school system as a guidance counselor, that my knowledge and experience grew in the area of child safety and reporting. This knowledge came from years of learning from others and walking alongside those who were willing to teach me processes.

Q: Why are you passionate about this topic?

A: That's easy: I'm passionate about advocacy because of the children. When

you look at a child, all you see is innocence. God gave me a passion and a burden to help children keep that innocence, if at all possible. I am passionate about educating children and families on subjects that are hard to talk about. In this new era of digital media, we must educate ourselves so that we can protect those whom God instructed us to protect.

Q: Why do you think your role at the IMB is such a vital position in our denomination at this time?

A: Sadly, we live in a fallen world where Satan is looking to tempt, confuse and destroy anything and everything he can. With Satan's new tactics in an ever-changing environment and society, this type of position is vital in making sure children and families are educated and protected as well as people who harm others are held responsible for their actions. We, as Southern Baptists, want to work hard at this fight against child harm and sexual harassment. The IMB is taking this challenge seri-

ously and moving forward each day to ensure we are doing all we can in those efforts. This position is one piece of evidence that we take this subject matter very seriously and are committed to keeping people safe.

Q: Why is it vital for Christians to be leaders in prevention and response efforts for child abuse and domestic violence?

A: I believe God commands us to be leaders in prevention and response efforts. There are several places we find in God's word where He calls us to speak for those who are weak and uphold justice for the oppressed. Satan knows no boundaries, and he is just fine with harming the small, weak and innocent — and he will use whatever means necessary. We must be diligent and pray God's protection and also be diligent in educating and responding. This is not a one-person job, but the job of the Church to join together and fight this battle.

Q: How can Alabama Baptists pray for you as you begin this new ministry role?

A: Alabama Baptists can pray that I would, each day, have God's wisdom on how I should serve His people. I know that if I place my eyes on Him, listen and wait for His guidance, I will find the way to best serve those He has placed in my path. I only want to be found faithful at the end of the day, and I know I need His wisdom to do just that. I thank you all for your prayers. 🙏

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3 stories you should know



U.S. Army Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Michael Davis Jr.

As governors call on the National Guard to aid in COVID-19 response efforts, a growing number of Southern Baptist National Guard chaplains are being mobilized in support of their state guard units to attend to the spiritual welfare of their troops and assist in the community. Chaplain Scott Thompson, who serves as pastor of Ridgecrest Baptist Church, Ozark, said he would be deployed to Hammond, Louisiana, if his unit were activated in response to the virus spreading in Louisiana. (BP)

GuideStone to offer option to change health coverage

With many churches reporting strained budgets due to the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, GuideStone is offering a one-time opportunity for both group plans and personal plans to step down to a lower-cost health care plan for the remainder of 2020.

Generally the option to change plans is available only during re-enrollment.

The one-time change option, the health plan relief initiative, was available beginning April 1.

Churches can elect to move from a standard PPO plan to an HSA-qualified High Deductible Health Plan or even to GuideStone's lowest-cost option, Secure Health 3000. Visit [GuideStone.org/coronavirus/insurance](https://www.guidestone.org/coronavirus/insurance) for information on eligible plans. (BP)

Asian American leaders urge Christians support

Asian American Christian leaders responded to an FBI warning issued in March about a potential surge in hate crimes against Asian Americans amid the spread of the novel coronavirus by publishing the "Statement on Anti-Asian Racism in the Time of COVID-19."

The statement had gathered about 6,800 signatures online as of April 2.

The statement denounces anti-Asian racism and calls on pastors to speak against anti-Asian rhetoric, violence and hate crimes from the pulpit and to increase awareness of Asian American issues.

It also calls for Americans to support Asian American businesses and workers that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. (RNS)

— NEWSBRIEFS —

Texas chocolate factory now making medical face shields for hospitals



A chocolate factory owned by a Southern Baptist couple is among many U.S. factories that have converted their normal operations to instead make medical face shields to supply hospitals with personal protective equipment.

Michael and Angie Moss own Sweet Shop USA, the largest handmade chocolate manufacturer in the country, in Mount Pleasant, Texas.

On March 20, Michael Moss woke up with an idea to make medical face shields. He contacted a vendor in New York who usually supplies the chocolate factory with packaging and asked if he could cut plastic shields with a die cut machine. The vendor told Moss he was planning to close his doors the following Monday because of a lack of orders, and he was delighted to have something to make, Angie Moss said.

"We presold in the first three days almost 300,000 facial shields," she said, adding that many hospitals usually order from manufacturers overseas, such as in China, but the pandemic has severely disrupted those supply chains.

The face shields now produced at the chocolate factory are called "Waymaker," Moss said, because Isaiah 43:16-19 has been important to them in recent days. The passage says in part, "Behold, I am doing a new thing. Do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the desert."



BP submitted photo

To make the shields, Sweet Shop USA converted its packing area — 20,000 square feet of the 80,000 square feet facility. They set up tables "sort of like stations, and we're trying to practice social distancing. They've got masks on too, trying to keep everybody safe," Moss said. (BP)

Cities, states grapple with church services in wake of COVID-19 crisis



As coronavirus infections multiply throughout the U.S., cities and states are scrambling to advise churches on how their gatherings fit into social distancing

guidelines urging Americans to avoid groups of 10 or more people and to stay at home as much as possible to slow the spread of coronavirus.

In a March 27 press briefing, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio threatened to close the buildings of churches and other religious groups if they continue to gather for corporate worship as COVID-19 spreads through the city. Southern Baptist leaders voiced their objections to de Blasio's threat.

In Georgia, a shelter-in-place order said churches fall under the prohibition on gatherings of more than 10 people and said drive-in church was included. Georgia's public health commissioner, Dr. Kathleen Toomey, said health officials have identified at least five COVID-19 outbreaks in the state stemming from church gatherings plus more outbreaks connected to funerals.

In Alabama, state officials declined to provide guidance on drive-in churches, advising churches to heed the advice of local law enforcement officials before holding such services.

The U.S. has more than 250,000 coronavirus infections as of April 3, and that number is increasing rapidly. The global infection rate surpassed the 1 million mark on April 2. (TAB)

— ALABAMA NEWS —

Huntsville pastor Inman retires after 33 years in ministry

Larry Inman said it's odd to not have an opportunity for a final message at his church in the middle of the COVID-19 crisis.

But as he retired from All Nations Church, Huntsville, at the end of March, he said he wasn't looking back in sadness. His 33 years in ministry — with the last 15 of those spent at All Nations — have been filled with God's goodness.

"Having the opportunity to be a pastor has been a wonderful thing," Inman said.

After he felt a call to ministry, Inman earned a degree at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He first came to Alabama in a youth and education role at Huntsville Park Baptist Church, Huntsville. Along the way he served in other churches, including as pastor of Fairview Baptist Church, Athens.

And through the years, he and his wife, Sandy, saw God work in their own lives and the lives of people around them. Nine years ago, All Nations changed its name from Hillsboro Heights Baptist Church to become an intentionally multicultural congregation. Inman also walked through cancer, something he said God used to make him a better pastor.

And he had the privilege of baptizing many over the years, including his own grandson.



INMAN

"I'm thankful to God for the privilege and look forward to what He has for us next," Inman said. (Grace Thornton)

Alabama Legislature breaks until April 28 due to coronavirus threat

Alabama lawmakers met briefly March 31 and agreed to put the legislative session on hold until April 28 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Both the House and Senate took precautions to comply with social distancing guidelines meant to reduce the chances of coronavirus spread. Employees with the Alabama Department of Public Health were on site to check the temperatures of all who entered the State House to make sure no one with a fever was allowed in the building.

Attendance in both houses was reduced, with 58 of 105 House members answering roll and 20 of 35 senators attending, just over the minimum in each chamber to conduct business.

Items still on the 2020 legislative agenda include the education and General Fund budgets for the 2020–2021 fiscal year, which begins Oct. 1, as well as moves to legalize medical marijuana and the Vulnerable Child Compassion and Protection Act,

which prohibits interventions in children experiencing gender dysphoria. (TAB)



Wikimedia photo

Persecuted church**Chinese Christian mother taken to court over school decision**

BEIHAI, Guangxi — A Chinese Christian mother has been taken to court for refusing to put her child into the country's public education system, opting instead for home or Christian school.

Officials have threatened to end Fan Ruzhen's government subsistence if she does not comply.

The government brought the case against Ruzhen in September 2019. She appeared in court in December 2019. Statements from five teachers supported Christian education as an option.



ChinaAid photo

Two days later, the judge told Ruzhen and the officials to reach a settlement, but the government has continued to pursue the case. Ruzhen's most recent court appearance was on March 16, 2020, in Yintai District Court in Beihai.

Chinese law requires nine years of education, and home-schooling is banned for Chinese citizens.

China ranks No. 23 on Open Doors' 2020 World Watch List of countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian. (TAB)

News near you**ALABAMA-CRENSHAW ASSOCIATION**

► **Craig Hamm** is the new pastor of **Friendship Baptist Church, Brantley**. He also has served as pastor of First Baptist Church, Tallahasatchie. He holds degrees from Auburn University and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He and his wife, Kelly, have two children.



HAMM

CALHOUN ASSOCIATION

► On Jan. 26, **First Baptist Church, Piedmont**, celebrated its 150-year anniversary.

Former pastor Philip Cooper was the guest speaker, and special music was brought by

Kelly Garner, who grew up at First, Piedmont, and is now associate professor of music at Union University in Jackson, Tennessee.



FBC Piedmont photo

Special recognitions were made by Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions; Roger Willmore, director of missions for Calhoun Baptist Association; Lonette Berg from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission; John Merrill, Alabama Secretary of State; Bill Baker, Piedmont mayor; and Theresa Kizor, of the Piedmont Historical Society.

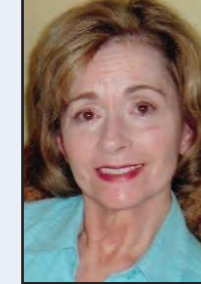
"Everything about the celebration was bathed in prayer," said Cynthia Harper, co-chair of the anniversary celebration committee. "We were able to renew friendships with guest speakers and musicians and share great memories of previous years." Michael Ingram is pastor.

MOBILE ASSOCIATION

► **Patricia Anne Wolfe**, wife of Fred Wolfe, founding pastor of Luke 4:18 Fellowship, Mobile, died Feb. 21. She was 80.

Wolfe served alongside her husband throughout their 61 years of ministry.

Hundreds expressed their love and sympathies after her death.



WOLFE

"[I have] many, many memories of Anne picking us up in the school carpool, all of the visits in our home and her sweet, sweet spirit. Knowing her since 1972 has been a pleasure and an honor," Brian Dorsett said in a Facebook comment.

Wolfe is survived by her husband of 63 years, two sons, six grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren.

TUSCALOOSA ASSOCIATION

► **Lonnie Free** is the new youth pastor at **Calvary Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa**. He previously served as youth minister at Centreville Baptist Church. He is engaged to Taylor Urech. 🌈



FREE

TAB offers free COVID-19 resource collection online

The Alabama Baptist/TAB Media has been working around the clock to bring readers important updates regarding the COVID-19 outbreak, resources for church leaders and ideas for families during this time. So much information is available that it wouldn't all fit in the print newspaper. But everything is available on our website — TAB Online.

All the articles and links have been put into one free and convenient resource to help readers and leaders in this time. This resource can be found at www.tabonline.org/covid-resources.

Podcast resources

Another resource available during this time of social distancing is the TAB Media podcast channel.

Each podcast offers something different for

listeners: TAB Talks is a radio show-style program featuring a special guest or guests; TAB News is the audio digest version of the weekly newspaper; and TAB Briefs is a quick

look at some of the top news stories locally, nationally and internationally.

The most recent TAB Talks episodes may

be particularly helpful to many during this crisis. The TAB Talks Special: Overcoming Anxiety released March 24 and features Caris Snider as she shares her story of conquering anxiety.

Last week's TAB Talks: Thriving during COVID-19 features a conversation with licensed professional counselor Melissa Golden as she shares how we can navigate the ongoing crisis together.

Listen to the TAB Media podcasts at tabonline.org/podcasts or anywhere you find your podcasts. (TAB)

Find all of TAB's COVID-19 resources at www.tabonline.org/covid-resources.

**Don't let
SOCIAL DISTANCING
become spiritual distancing.**



*"Fear not, for I am with you;
be not dismayed, for I am your God."*

ISAIAH 41:10



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CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR

Bellevue Baptist Church, Gadsden, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking God's man to serve as our senior pastor. Please agree with us in prayer over this matter. If you believe you may be God's man for us, your resumé may be sent to: resumesbellevuegadsden@gmail.com. Resumés may also be mailed to: Pastor Search Committee, Bellevue Baptist Church, 150 Noccalula Dr., Gadsden, AL 35904. Please check our church website (bellevuegadsden.com) or our Facebook page for more information about our church. For a job description, please contact Susan Sauls: sauls.susan@gmail.com.

PASTOR

Louisville Baptist Church, Louisville, Alabama, seeking full-time pastor. Submit resumé to: Rhonda Henson, P.O. Box 38, Louisville, AL 36048 or rhenson_rn@yahoo.com.

PASTOR

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

PASTOR

New Friendship Baptist Church, Somerville, Alabama, is seeking a new pastor. The church is located in rural Morgan County just beyond the rapidly growing small town of Priceville. While the congregation is aging, there is also much potential for growth and expansion. If interested, please send resumé to: New Friendship Baptist Church, P.O. Box 76, Somerville, AL 35670.

MINISTER OF MUSIC

Fellowship Baptist Church of Gardendale, Alabama (3228 Teresa Drive), is prayerfully seeking a minister of music. Send resumé to: Fellowship Baptist Church, 3228 Teresa Drive, Birmingham, AL 35217, or email: bobbyjshipp1@gmail.com.

MINISTER OF CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP

FBC Huntsville is seeking a full-time minister of contemporary worship. For more information, please visit www.fbchsv.org/worshipemployment. Resumés may be sent to: search@fbchsv.org.

CHOIR DIRECTOR

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First Baptist Church, Leeds, Alabama, is seeking a full-time youth minister. Position would also assist in pastoral duties. Email resumé to: rbras699@aol.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.

BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH PASTOR

Bethany Baptist Church, Crane Hill, is seeking a bivocational youth pastor. Send resumé to: Bethany, 1612 County Road 201, Crane Hill, AL 35053 or email resumé to: office@bethanybysmithlake.com.

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Lookout Mountain Assoc. youth serve community

Katelyn Koonce said it was just a little idea — one she felt like maybe God put in her heart.

She was in the fifth grade, and she thought she might need to start sharing Jesus with her classmates on a regular basis.

“I told my friends about it, and we started and organized the Jesus Club together,” said Koonce, a member of Mill Creek Baptist Church, Gaylesville. “We started teaching meetings every Wednesday at snack.”

The first day it started, they collected money for charity from students and teachers and raised \$100.

As time went on, they were able to give more to help people and saw students come to faith in Christ too. Now, Koonce is in the eighth grade, and the Jesus Club is still going strong during second break every Wednesday.

Finding Christ

“Some people have gotten saved because of it,” Koonce said. “One time a

girl said in class that she was scared to die, and we told her about the club. She got saved, and after we posted a video of her sharing her story, more people came up to me and asked if I could tell them about it.”

‘Importance of youth’

Lloyd Borden, director of missions for Lookout Mountain Baptist Association, said in the communities where his churches are, students like Koonce are invaluable. In October 2019, the association honored a group of youth for the way they were living out their faith in their everyday lives.

“It’s hard to overemphasize the importance of youth in small churches,” he said, noting that pastors and families are able to pour into them and help mobilize them to reach their communities.

Koonce, for one, has made a big difference in the community, Borden said.

“She is a strong witness for Jesus and is recognized by the student body and faculty as such,” he said. “Her



Photo courtesy of Lookout Mountain Baptist Association

Lloyd Borden, DOM for Lookout Mountain Association, said area churches depend on the active faith of their students and the ways they reach out to their communities. The association honored seven at its October annual meeting: (l to r) Carah Sarratt, Shady Grove Baptist; Caleb Reece, Mount Calvary Baptist; David Bryant, Shady Grove Baptist; Katelyn Koonce, Mill Creek Baptist; Elijah Roberts, Yellow Creek Baptist; Gracie Martin, Friendship Baptist; and JenaLee Roberts, Yellow Creek Baptist.

faithfulness as a Christian is known throughout the area.”

‘Personally involved’

As students go through high school, they’re often asked to perform community service as part of their college preparation. But Candace McIntosh, executive director of Alabama Woman’s Missionary Union, suggests seeing everything they do in the way Koonce does — as an opportunity to share Jesus.

“I think it is vital for students to be personally involved in serving through missions,” she said, noting

that Acts 1:8 gives a charge to start sharing Jesus right where you are. “When students serve their community through missions it opens the eyes of their heart to the world around them.”

That includes leading a Bible study, serving a meal at a homeless shelter or cleaning the yard of a neighbor.

‘Share Jesus’

“When they take time to engage with those around them through missions, they are reminded of God’s love for everyone and the need of every person to have the

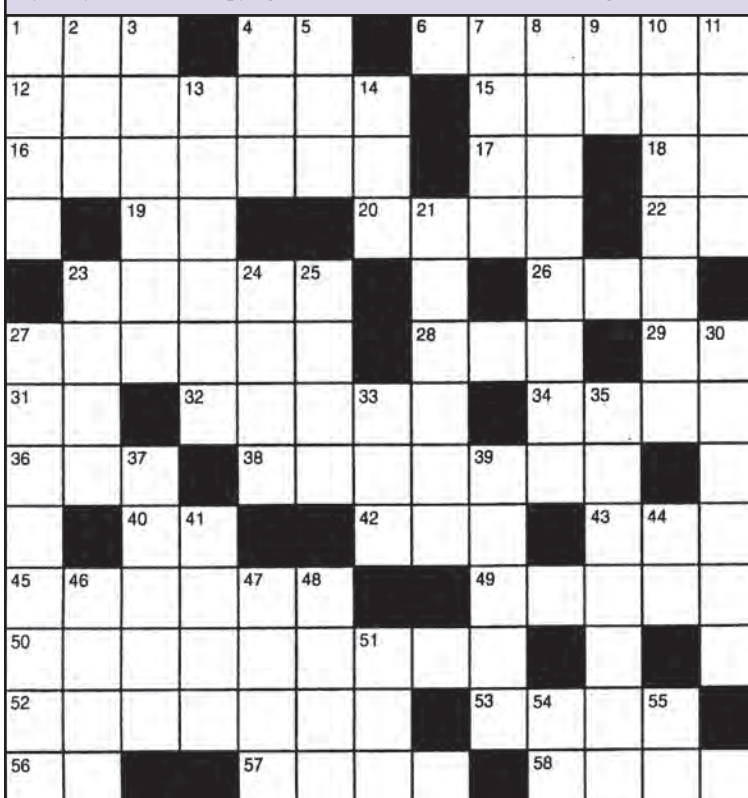
opportunity to hear about God’s love for them,” McIntosh said.

For David Bryant — a member of Shady Grove Baptist Church, Collinsville — that has meant serving as a mentor for other students as he grew up through the association’s youth group he now serves as a leader.

“I’ve seen how important it is to have someone teaching me, and I want to do that for other people,” he said. “I know what they’ve been through, and I want to be there for them and share Jesus with them.” (Grace Thornton)

Christian Crossword

By Judy Ellis Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- Because the enemy hath said against you, _____. (Ezek. 36:2)
- Sixteenth letter of the Greek alphabet.
- Color.
- _____ seed.
- Also Hosah, of the children of Merari, had sons; _____ the chief. (1 Chron. 26:10)
- _____ the son of Jair slew Lahmi. (1 Chron. 20:5)
- A branch of the military. (abbr.)
- Paid. (abbr.)
- Doctor. (abbr.)
- I will even appoint over you terror, consumption and the burning _____. (Lev. 26:16)
- And when _____ defied Israel. (2 Sam. 21:21)
- Pharaoh’s daughter drew him up out of the water. (Ex. 2:5)
- Hot or cold drink.
- These things have I written unto you concerning them that _____ you. (1 John 2:26)
- Sons of Benjamin.

- New Testament. (abbr.)
- He saith among the trumpets, _____. (Job 39:25)
- The Lord is thy _____ upon thy right hand. (Ps. 121:5)
- Crush.
- If _____ be blameless, the husband of one wife. (Titus 1:6)
- Have _____ weightier matters of the law. (Matt. 23:23)
- And _____, Judah’s firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the Lord. (Gen. 38:7)
- Direction.
- _____ not vain repetitions. (Matt. 6:7)
- Determined to send _____ unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea. (Acts 11:29)
- South American grass.
- A continual _____ given him of the king. (2 Kings 25:30)
- Drink waters out of thine own _____. (Prov. 5:15)

- Revise.
- Her majesty. (abbr.)
- And in those days shall men _____ death. (Rev. 9:6)
- After Joel and before Obadiah.
- Prayer ending.
- Child of Aram. (Gen. 10:23)
- Publish in the palaces at _____. (Amos 3:9)
- Cooking vessel.
- The sixth captain for the sixth month was _____, the son of Ikkesh. (1 Chron. 27:9)
- Isaac’s eldest son.
- Remember that thou in thy _____ receivedst thy good things. (Luke 16:25)
- Lunar module. (abbr.)
- We are _____ and fatherless, our mothers are as widows. (Lam. 5:3)
- Deep and _____.
- Saul of _____.
- Any of various nucleic acids.
- Welcomes.

- We would know therefore what these things _____. (Acts 17:20)
- Bounce off.
- Now the coat was without _____. (John 19:23)
- _____, Meshach and Abednego.
- Thy lips are like a _____ of scarlet. (Song of Sol. 4:3)
- Opposite of “live.”
- Went forth toward Gelliloth, which is over against the going up of _____. (Josh. 18:17)
- Screams.
- Indian hut.
- Having faithful children not accused of _____ or unruly. (Titus 1:6)
- Spanish. (abbr.)
- And they came to _____, where were 12 wells of water. (Ex. 15:27)
- Female sheep.
- _____ ye well. (Acts 15:29)
- Direction.
- District attorney. (abbr.)
- Then Nebuchadnezzar came near _____ the mouth of the burning fiery furnace. (Dan. 3:26)

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Someone You Should Know

JUDY MCGUIRK

By Leigh Pritchett
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Judy McGuirk, of Fultondale, retired in her 50s after working 32 years for General Motors. Now at 73, the former training administrator volunteers 20–25 hours each week for her church. Her priority during those volunteer hours is to facilitate the church’s Next Steps Ministry, which connects guests and members with other people, ministries and opportunities for service.

Q: Describe where you focus your greatest ministry efforts.

A: Working in the Next Steps Ministry, I can fol-

low up with guests and provide them with information about who we are as a church and how they can become involved. I also assist in the assimilation of new and current members into our church family through Life Groups, volunteering and other areas of service.

Q: Who was or is one of the most influential people in your faith life? Why?

A: I have had many influential people at different seasons in my life, both inside and outside the church — pastors and their wives, church members, teachers, women’s ministry leaders.

One of the things that has remained constant is the influence of and accountability to my closest circle of friends and family.

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

A: I have had a desire to serve God since I was a teenager, but family life and working full time limited the amount of time I could devote to serving. God did bless me with allowing me to retire at a very young age, and I have tried to use this time to fulfill the work He has for me to do.

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

What was it and what did you learn from it?

A: “The Purpose Driven Life” by Rick Warren had a big impact on my life. It’s not about me. Everything is

MINISTRY: Team leader of Next Steps Ministry

CHURCH NAME: Fultondale First Baptist Church, Birmingham Metro Baptist Association

LIFE VERSE: “Since my youth, God, You have taught me, and to this day I declare Your marvelous deeds. Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare Your power to the next generation, Your mighty acts to all who are to come.” (Ps. 71:17–18)



about God and His purpose for creating me. Also, music has been a big part of my life. Different songs at different seasons in my life have played a big part in shaping me into the person I am today.

Q: What has God been teaching you lately?

A: Our pastor has introduced D-Groups (discipleship groups) to us and I have the privilege of be-

ing a part of one of these groups. I have learned so much about how to disciple others and live out the life God has called me to live.

Q: If there were one thing you could tell your younger self about faith, what would it be?

A: Faith produces faith. God is the source of our faith, and the more we act upon it, the stronger it becomes.✝

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For April 12

Explore the Bible

By Robert E. Jackson, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



RAISED! Luke 24:1–12

Discovered (1–3)

Luke begins this chapter with the feminine pronoun “they,” which connects this group of women to the same women at the cross (23:49) and the tomb (23:55–56). These women didn’t go to receive anything from Christ. They thought He was dead. They went for one reason — to anoint His body and give to Jesus even in their despair.

Surprisingly, the large stone was rolled away, revealing an empty tomb. Luke uses, “they did not find” to convey that no corpse existed to be found. Early in this story, Luke is making a theological statement that Jesus is alive. Furthermore, Luke unites “Lord” with “Jesus” signifying Jesus is now the exalted Lord Jesus (24:3).

God blessed these heartbroken and hopeless women with being the first to see the empty tomb because they were willing to give. Sometimes we, too, are called to love, expecting nothing in return. Numerous times we are called to give even when we are never thanked. We come early and stay late when no one else notices. But God notices. He noticed the women and rolled away the stone so they, and others, could see the tomb is empty.

Reported (4–9)

The significance of this event is not in the women or the angels; instead, it lies in the glorious news that Jesus rose from the grave on the third day. This bodily resurrection of Christ is the cornerstone of our faith.

If Jesus has not risen, then everything we teach and live is in vain. But the tomb is empty, and Jesus is alive.

That women were the first witnesses is remarkable and points to the veracity of Christ’s resurrection. If one were to fabricate a resurrection narrative, they would not rely on the testimony of women, who were not always looked upon in a positive light during the first century.

Yet in God’s providence, He used these women who exhibited faith as

the angel reminded them of Jesus’ promise to rise from the dead on the third day.

These dear women went to the 11 disciples and the others and shared the wonderful news that Jesus is alive.

Confirmed (10–12)

The apostles thought the women’s story was nonsense. Regardless of why they refused to accept their account, I believe their disappointments, in part, blinded them.

We know that two of His followers were traveling with Jesus and stated, “But we had hoped that He was the one to redeem Israel” (Luke 24:21). They looked for Jesus to kick out the Romans, but Pilate was still in power and Jesus was crucified. Things had not turned out as they planned and they were despondent.

Some of us can relate. Our lives have been one disappointment after another; things have not turned out as we expected. God didn’t heal our loved one. The new job never materialized. COVID-19 wiped out all our retirement.

Like the early followers, we can cry, “I had hoped you were the one to redeem us, to liberate us, but here we are.” What should we do? Like Peter, run to the tomb and marvel that it is empty. It is empty because our Lord has risen from the grave.

Experiencing the Lord puts everything in proper perspective. An encounter with the risen Savior changes everything. Even though we still struggle and things don’t work out the way we plan, we learn to trust in His sovereignty. He is working all things for good for those who love Him (Rom. 8:28).

Think about it — the resurrection of Christ and the giving of the Holy Spirit transformed a group of perplexed cowards into people who boldly turned the world upside down. He did it for them. He will do it for us. Look to the empty tomb and marvel. Our Lord is alive! ✠

Bible Studies for Life

By James Riley Strange, Ph.D.

Professor of New Testament, Samford University



THE TRUTH OF THE RESURRECTION 1 Corinthians 15:1–8

That Christ was raised from the grave is a foundational claim of Christianity, and Paul was the first to declare it in writing.

Christ, who “became obedient to the point of death — even death on a cross” (Phil. 2:8), did not remain dead, and He is alive today, prepared to return “with the clouds of heaven” (Matt. 26:64).

All New Testament authors either proclaim this or assume it is so.

Nevertheless, we cannot prove it, not yet. We can’t produce the living Lord in order to dispel all doubts, and even if we could, some would refuse to believe (Luke 16:31).

What we have are two things:

1. We have the witness of those who saw Him alive. We will read Paul’s account momentarily, but recall that the evangelists record that Jesus predicted His resurrection, His disciples entered an empty tomb on Easter morning and He appeared alive and spoke to His disciples. Two evangelists say that He ate with them. At the end of Luke and at the beginning of Acts, they watch Him ascend into heaven.

2. We have witnessed the power of the living Lord at work in our lives and in the lives of others. We have seen people transformed in dramatic ways from one way of living and one set of attitudes to another. Some say they have been rescued from a wretched future. They know what they are capable of, if not for the living Christ at work in their lives.

Read all of chapter 15 for context.

Christ died. (1–3)

Some think that verses 3 and 4 contain a liturgical confession (see Rom. 4:24–25; 10:9–10; 1 Thess. 5:10).

Later, a branch of Christianity that taught Jesus did not die grew in popularity (compare 1 John 4:2–3). Perhaps some believed this as early as Paul’s day.

Remember that Paul did not

have a New Testament to read to the people to whom he preached. Rather,

he proclaimed what he “received” from the Lord Himself. (See 11:23; Gal. 1:11–12).

When Paul says that Jesus’ death and resurrection happened “in accordance with the Scriptures,” he may be referring to Isaiah 53 and Hosea 6:2 (compare Luke 24:26, 44–47).

Christ was resurrected. (4)

It is no challenge to believe that Jesus died, for that is the fate of most (Elijah, and maybe Enoch, are the exceptions).

It is difficult, however, for many to accept that Christ was raised from the dead.

Many in Corinth found this particularly hard to believe because some Greeks believed only the soul could live eternally. All matter would eventually be destroyed.

This is probably why Paul struggles to explain the bodily resurrection starting in verse 35.

Christ was seen alive by many. (5–8)

All accounts of the resurrected Jesus’ appearances are unique in the Gospels.

Paul’s account also is distinctive, for only he tells us about this appearance to “more than 500 brothers at one time.”

Furthermore, Paul places himself among those who saw the risen Lord (see 9:1).

Was that a separate event from the experience of Acts 9:3–9, where Paul did not see Jesus, but heard Him?

We need not linger here, for Paul’s purpose is to emphasize God’s grace (vv. 9–10).

Unlike these people, the risen Lord has not appeared to us in bodily form. But He extends the same grace to us that He did to all who saw Him.

We, too, have no merit by which to claim this gospel that is saving us even now (v. 2). Thanks be to God that, because of the resurrection, we can. ✠



Media reviews

MOVIES/TV

Netflix's 'Pandemic' documentary eerie must-watch during current crisis

By **Michael Foust**
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

One of the best new entries in the Netflix lineup is a documentary series that won't leave you laughing or even cheering — although it's so engrossing that you might binge it until the end.

Titled "Pandemic," this six-part docuseries quietly entered the Netflix lineup Jan. 22 just as the COVID-19 virus was beginning to catch worldwide attention.

'True-to-life'

Filmed prior to the outbreak, it was advertised as a documentary that explored ways humans can prepare for the "next devastating global outbreak."

Little did we know that the next life-changing worldwide pandemic was just around the corner.

The docuseries (rated TV-14) follows doctors and virologists around the world as they try to slow the spread of epidemics at their source — which, as we learn in "Pan-

dem," often is China.

"[China is] the place where we've seen the emergence of virtually all of the deadly influenza viruses over the last half century," Dennis Carroll, then-director of the USAID's emerging threats unit, says in the documentary.

Viruses originate in animals. Carroll takes us to wet markets along the China-Vietnam border, where, he says, animals "in a confined space elevate the risk for a virus to spread and mutate."

Stopping viruses is often a medical game of Whac-A-Mole, although scientists have plenty of successes.

The documentary opens with a somber scene of Carroll visiting a mass grave in Pennsylvania that was used to bury those who died during the 1918 influenza pandemic that killed 50 million people.

"This kind of carnage is not relegated to history," he says. "When we talk about another flu pandemic happening, it's not a matter of if, but when."

Carroll's warning may be eerie in hindsight, but his



IMDB photo

'Pandemic'

advice on the topic should be considered.

The entire series is fascinating, although episodes 1 and 3 are the ones that most directly relate to the current pandemic. (Episode 3 spotlights China.)

"Pandemic" also gives a positive nod to Christianity, spotlighting an Oklahoma Christian doctor who is driven by her faith to help others.

(Content warnings: "Pandemic" is largely void of language, although the exceptions will be significant for some families: I caught two f-words — both spoken by researcher Sarah Ives. I didn't catch any language in episode 3.)

If "Pandemic" is a little too true-to-life for you right now, another new Netflix documentary might provide a welcome distraction with a scientific angle to boot.

Titled "Night on Earth," the six-part original series

uses the latest camera technology to record the actions of animals — lions and monkeys and everything in between — at night.

"Using new technology, we can see into the blackness to discover a hidden side [to the world]," the narrator tells us.

Stunning images

This documentary, though, is far more than a series filled with thermal images. Much of the documentary uses new low-light cameras that can film ultra-high definition in the dark — and in color. The result: stunning images of animals under the moonlight that (almost) appear as if they were filmed in sunlight.

We watch lions hunt a cheetah. (The latter is just too fast.) We see lions hunt a giraffe. (It escapes too.) But not everything gets away. A mouse captures and kills a scorpion. (But honestly, I

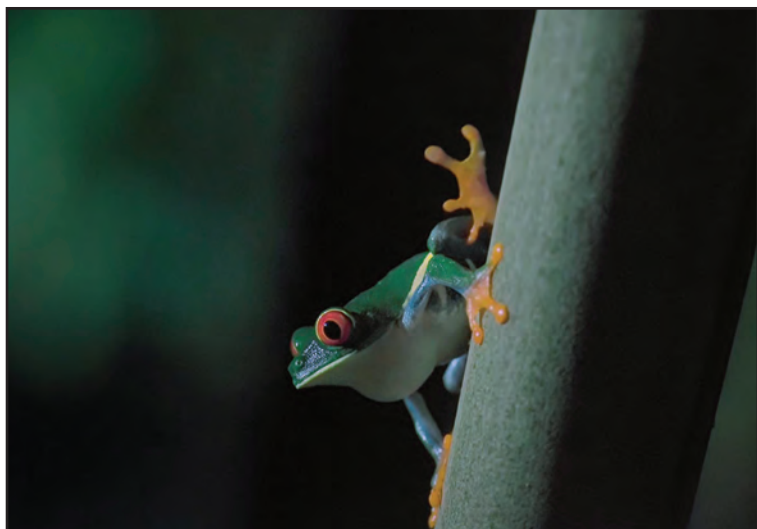
was just fine with that.)

"Night on Earth" gives us a peek at animals on the plains, in jungles, in cold environments and deep in the sea.

It's a unique celebration of God's creation that will entertain you, yes, but also might lead you to worship and repeat the words of David: "On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate" (Ps. 145:5). ✝

Meet the reviewer

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



'Night on Earth'

IMDB photo

Showing appreciation

Michigan church replant launches fruit basket ministry to 'build bridge to community'

By **Trennis Henderson**
WMU National Correspondent

Children's Missions Day (CMD), an annual missions emphasis promoted by Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), has the potential to generate missions projects that reach far beyond a single day.

Such projects can be as practical as assembling and distributing fruit baskets to show appreciation to military veterans, firefighters, law enforcement officers and others in a local community. At least that's the case for True North Community Church in Petoskey, Michigan.

The next generation

CMD, held this year on Feb. 15, is designed to prepare the next generation to reach people with the gospel of Jesus Christ — both today and in the future.

For Rick Bristol, a North American Mission Board (NAMB) church planter at True North Community Church, participating in a partner church's CMD project led him

to launch an ongoing community outreach program through his own congregation. A WMU leader at Orchard Church invited Bristol to speak at Orchard's CMD because he is a military veteran and their project focused on honoring vets for their military service.

In addition to speaking at the event where the children assembled fruit baskets for veterans, he was asked to find an appropriate location to distribute the baskets. Contacting his county's Veterans Affairs office, he offered to deliver the gift baskets.

Bristol noted that the VA official's immediate response was something like: "Absolutely, the vets need all the Jesus they can get!"

Based on the success of that experience, Bristol approached his True North congregation about continuing the fruit basket ministry on a weekly basis.

"I said, 'Hey listen, church, this is something we did for the Orchard. ... I think we could do it here. I



WMU photo by Pam Henderson

Resort Bear Creek Fire Chief Al Welsheimer (right) expresses appreciation to Rick Bristol, pastor of True North Community Church, for the congregation's fruit basket ministry to firefighters and others in the community.



WMU photo by Pam Henderson

Katie Bristol, who coordinates children's ministries at True North Community Church in Petoskey, Michigan, works with kids to create thank you notes adorned with personalized artwork to include in the church's fruit basket distribution ministry.

think it's something we could do fairly often. I want to try it once a week. Can we make seven baskets a week?" he recalled asking. "So that's what we did. We came together and it's been a growing process and a learning process."

Sharing fruit baskets is one of several ministry projects Bristol and his wife, Katie, have launched over the past couple of years.

Their primary ministry efforts are aimed at replanting True North Church after the previous congregation gradually declined to only six active members.

The Bristols and their growing congregation continually are looking for new avenues of ministry and spiritual impact. Bristol said one of his first goals as a replanter was "looking at turning our building inside out" to help meet community needs.

That's where the church's fruit basket ministry comes in. Besides taking baskets to the VA office to

"recognize the sacrifices of the former military members," Bristol said the church quickly expanded the community appreciation initiative to include law enforcement officers and firefighters.

Expressing appreciation

He contacted Fire Chief Al Welsheimer and explained that True North "just wanted to show our appreciation for your men and women who are willing to run into a burning building to save a life. Can we give you these baskets to show how much we love them and how much we're praying for them?"

Expressing appreciation for the church's initiative, Welsheimer said, "I think one of the important things is it really shows the kids at a young age the importance of sharing and giving back. It's not all about getting things; it's about giving back to your community. As we know, that's what Jesus did. He gave back, He gave everything." 🙏