



The Alabama Baptist

Toll free 800-803-5201
www.thealabamabaptist.org

May 14, 2020

Vol. 185, No. 20
Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

INSIDE



Annual church giving report
◆ Pages 10–11



Theology 101 — Ichabod
◆ Page 15



Godly influence outlasts miles, generations
◆ Page 17

Giving TO missions

Financial support of missions critical when physical support not possible

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Jeff Meyers — like many others — has seen a lot of plans canceled for 2020. In light of COVID-19, his church pulled the plug on most of the missions trips it had planned for this year.

But though it's sad, and even personal — his sons were looking forward to serving on a trip this summer — he sees new and strategic ways to help.

“When we go on mission seasonally (on short-term trips), we're able to provide needed manpower and relief for those who are serving there permanently,” said Meyers, pastor of First Baptist Church, Opelika. “Because people on the field won't have that kind of assistance this year, the resources we can give monetarily are even more necessary now.”

So in recent weeks, he's been encouraging the more than 1,000 church members who normally go on an annual missions trip to take their travel expenses and put that money directly into missions offerings.

‘Straight to missions’

In 2019, the church surpassed its goal for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering and was the sixth highest giving church in the state. This year — with all AAEO promotion done online — church members gave big again. The church surpassed its goal by 40%.

“In the midst of this time when churches are struggling financially, I would encourage people who have an inclination to go on a short-term trip to consider giving [that money] straight to missions,” Meyers said.

He recommended finding other
(See ‘Every,’ page 14)

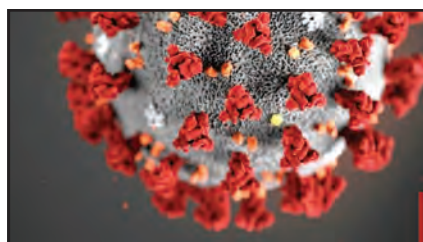


123rf.com, edited by Lauren C. Grim

Make a Kingdom impact today.



Find us on
Facebook
The Alabama Baptist newspaper
facebook.com/thealabamabaptist



COVID-19

See pages 6–9 for information and updates

OUR EXTENDED ALABAMA BAPTIST FAMILY

ALABAMA BAPTIST STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS

1-800-264-1225 | www.alsbom.org
Offices: Prattville

Leadership: Rick Lance, executive director

ALABAMA BAPTIST CHILDREN'S HOMES & FAMILY MINISTRIES

205-982-1112 | www.alabamachild.org
Main office: Birmingham

Leadership: Rod Marshall, president and CEO

ALABAMA BAPTIST HISTORICAL COMMISSION

205-726-2363 | www.abhconline.com
Office: Birmingham

Leadership: Lonette Berg, executive director

ALABAMA BAPTIST RETIREMENT CENTERS

800-264-1225, ext. 329 | www.abrc.org
Main office: Prattville

Leadership: Ray Burdeshaw, acting president

THE BAPTIST FOUNDATION OF ALABAMA

334-394-2000 | www.tbfa.org
Offices: Montgomery

Leadership: Barry Bledsoe, president

SHOCCO SPRINGS BAPTIST CONFERENCE CENTER

256-761-1100 | www.shocco.org
Location: Talladega

Leadership: Russell Kliner, executive director

ALABAMA CITIZENS ACTION PROGRAM

205-985-9062 | www.alcap.com
Offices: Birmingham

Leadership: Joe Godfrey, executive director

ALABAMA WMU

334-288-2460 | www.alabamawmu.org
Offices: Prattville

Leadership: Candace McIntosh, executive director

JUDSON COLLEGE

800-447-9472 | www.judson.edu
Location: Marion

Leadership: Mark Tew, president

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

205-726-2011 | www.samford.edu
Location: Birmingham

Leadership: Andrew Westmoreland, president

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

251-675-5990 | www.umobile.edu
Location: Mobile

Leadership: Lonnie Burnett, president

Being creative & serving during COVID-19 pandemic



Photo by Cameron Sheffield

Above: Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery, and WE CARE ministry worship with prisoners through the fence at Elmore Correctional Facility.



Photo by Zach Beasley

Students at Strong Tower at Washington Park, Montgomery, receive goody bags to brighten their day.



Screenshot

FBC Pleasant Grove reaches out to children with a weekly Kidzone video featuring Scripture, music and fun.

Karen Mitchell, a member of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Birmingham, is part of a group sewing masks for hospitals and others in need. Members of the group have different responsibilities: some cut the pattern, others sew the cord that ties the masks onto the face and others deliver the finished masks.



Photo by Eleanor Stenner



Photo courtesy of Billy Womack

Left: Billy Womack (left), pastor of Smyrna Baptist Church, Dothan, delivers fresh eggs to church members Linda and Earl Hand. Since the COVID-19 crisis started, another church member who owns chickens has been harvesting the eggs and giving them to Womack to distribute.

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

(ISSN 0738-7741; USPS 011-080)

© The Alabama Baptist, Inc.

is published weekly except for one week in July and December by The Alabama Baptist, Inc., at 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. Phone: 205-870-4720. Statewide phone: 800-803-5201.

Website: www.thealabamabaptist.org

Email: news@thealabamabaptist.org or subscribe@thealabamabaptist.org

Periodicals postage paid at Hattiesburg, Miss.

ANNUAL TAB SUBSCRIPTION RATES
Includes print, digital and full web access

Group Rate per issue — \$16.25
(Need at least five in your group to qualify)

Individual — \$24.95 per year with 3-year plan

JENNIFER DAVIS RASH EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Cynthia Watts
Executive Assistant

Carrie B. McWhorter
Content Editor

Debbie Campbell
Director of
Communications

Janet Erwin
Executive Editor

Linda Harrison
Director of Human
Resources

Grace Thornton
Special
Assignments Editor

Melanie McKinney
Advertising Manager

Margaret Colson
Special
Assignments Editor

Pam Holt
Sales
Representative

Hannah Muñoz
Digital Editor

Susan Stevens
Sales
Representative

Myriah Snyder
Digital Storytelling

Jessica Ingram
Event Coordinator

Lauren C. Grim
Creative Services
Manager

Annette Brown
Guest Services

Amy Hacker
Creative Services
Associate

Sarah Gill
Customer Relations

James Hammack
Digital Services
Manager

Deb Lowery
Financial Assistant

Haley Piersol
Digital Services
Associate

Richard Maddox
Computer Services

NEWS SERVICES

Baptist Press (BP), Associated Press/Religion News Service (AP/RNS), Morning Star News (MS).

POSTMASTER

Send address changes to:
The Alabama Baptist
3310 Independence Drive
Birmingham, AL 35209

ADDRESS CHANGE

Send old and new addresses, and name of church to:
Subscription Department
3310 Independence Drive
Birmingham, AL 35209
Allow two weeks.

To the best of our knowledge, all of the ads in *The Alabama Baptist* represent legitimate companies and offerings. However, one should always exercise normal business caution in responding to ads.

Full member of Alabama Press Association

Accredited member of Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability



'Nation's Top Regional Christian Newspaper'

1999, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 as judged by Associated Church Press, Baptist Communicators Association, Evangelical Press Association or Religion Communicators Council



The crossword puzzle can be found on page 17.

Share what you, your community or church have been doing to find creative ways to serve others. Email news@thealabamabaptist.org.

MY RASHIONALE

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

jrash@thealabamabaptist.org
@RashionalThts



How has COVID-19 changed you? Who are you on the other side?

We are almost there. True, we are all changed in some way forever, but we are going to make it to the other side of this COVID-19 experience.

As the fog lifts, we will soon realize exactly what has happened and the variety of struggles that took place these past two months.

Some lost loved ones; others struggled through the most extreme sickness they've ever experienced.

Some aren't sure how they are going to pull out of the situation financially; others missed weddings, funerals or births.

Some merely need a haircut; others were forced to let their true hair color grow out.

No matter where you fall on the spectrum, James chapter 1 reminds us to "count it all joy" and to "let perseverance complete its work."

Trials strengthen our faith and mature us as believers.

Paul says in Romans 8:28 all things work together for good to them who love God and are called according to His purpose.

This doesn't mean everything will be good nor will life always be easy, but if we keep our eyes on Jesus and hold tightly to Him, He will guide us through the tough spots and meld our hearts closer to His at each step.

Before we get distracted again, it will benefit us to take time to reflect on the positives that have taken place: slower

pace, calmer days, more time with the Lord, more time with family, opportunity to catch up on unfinished projects, time to exercise and read, opportunity to rest — and in some cases, the realization of some serious issues that need attention and can no longer be ignored or covered up.

For those whose experience was and maybe continues to be difficult, know God is faithful and will provide the strength you need to face each day.

You also are surrounded by a faith family who cares and wants to walk with you along the journey.

Allow others the opportunity to be there for you.

At the same time, look for others who are struggling and do what you can to be there for them as well. It's amazing how helping someone else can lift your spirits.

As we reemerge into society and begin interacting with people again, hold tightly to what God has shown you this year. Let His light shine even brighter.

The timing is especially interesting as we are likely shifting quickly from a time of being fully focused on COVID-19 to an intense election season.

Will those of us who profess Christ as Lord be able to stand for our convictions and debate politics in a manner worthy of Who we represent?

Will we be able to remember that God loves the person on the other side of the issue too? Will we stand on truth with love and grace?

Or will we decide that political discussions and disagreements don't count when evaluating our hearts against the Fruit of the Spirit standard outlined in Galatians 5:22–23?

Proverbs 3:3–8 says, "Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.

"Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your body and refreshment to your bones."

Jesus says, as recorded in Matthew 5, we are to be salt and light, not one or the other — both.

"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).[✠]

HOW DO WE RESPOND?

Fatal shooting of 25-year-old Ahmaud Arbery difficult to comprehend, opportunity to make a true difference

Ahmaud Arbery, a 25-year-old black man, was reportedly on a Sunday jog through a subdivision Feb. 23 when he was shot during a confrontation with a white father and son.

The Brunswick, Georgia, community is struggling to cope with the incident, according to Todd A. Rhodes Sr., pastor of Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church.

"If anyone would put them-

selves in the place of the African American community [and understand the anger], then I believe that everyone or anyone of any race, more than likely, would feel the same way.

"People of faith can make so much more of an impact in the community that has experienced such an unjust tragedy [if] we come together — be we black, or white, or Hispanic, or Asian, male,

female, young, old, rich or poor — as people of faith in God.

"It is our faith in God that connects us and helps us to not take part in the political or the social rhetoric that people often use to spark the fire that can blow up the keg."

(Excerpt from Todd Rhodes pulled from the May 7 Baptist Press article by Diana Chandler)

Your Voice



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

Livestreaming and the future of church services, attendance

By **James Hammack**
TAB Digital Services Manager

Many churches have found themselves organizing livestreamed services in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and I'm not convinced we should stop when the stay-at-home orders are loosened and lifted.

Theologically, I strongly believe virtual church is not meant to be the main method of church going forward. So how do we serve those who will be leery of returning to the once routine Sunday gathering?

How do we extend grace and love to all of our people?

The livestream is key. Livestream is a poor substitute for the gathering, but it is necessary. The concern that this pandemic may turn some of our members into LEC attendees (Livestream, Easter and Christmas) is valid.

We should be vocal about the call in Scripture to meet together and recognize that the physical gathering is something to rejoice over and look forward to.

All of us should long for the day our exile and separation is over. Praise be to God and amen!

But if we can't manage grace and love for our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, we are in danger of showing the world that Christ is nothing more than a name.

Christ calls us to more: "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

How should we then do church? There will continue to be people with legitimate concerns who will

not quickly gather again with the body. I propose we continue to let our light shine online.

So many churches have researched and implemented strategies to meet the current needs of our people. Let's not put this work aside. Use the next several weeks to plan for both livestreaming and the physical gathering.

Consider how to fit the worship area with cameras and microphones in order to livestream the physical gathering. Do you need a better camera or different audio equipment? Do you or others need additional training?

Critically walk through your services and imagine all possible scenarios. For example, imagine where the camera is and who might accidentally be blocking it by sitting in the pew.

Be ready to adjust and extend grace. No one is going to get this perfect when we gather again. But we can all adjust and do our best to meet the needs of those present and those on the other end of a phone or computer screen.

We will need a copious amount of grace to extend to ourselves as we make the occasional blunder but also our members who are struggling with the "when" and "how" of joining back together.

Don't forget the ones who won't make it back just yet. And take the time to plan ahead.

EDITOR'S NOTE — TAB Media is happy to help churches and staff members with tips and recommendations for various elements of church technology. Contact us with your questions at 800-803-5201.

'We miss you': Update on Shocco Springs

By **Russell Klinner**
Executive director, Shocco Springs

As you can imagine, we have been hugely impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. Life here on campus has been quite different — and eerily quiet.

We miss seeing the hands-on discipleship and networking that occurs all over our campus. We miss the ministry. From youth to seniors to WMU and on and on, we miss you.

Camps for summer are not going to be the same for sure. Obviously, everything surrounding COVID-19 is continually evolving. For now, our first camps for summer will start in late June and continue to build from there.

Social distancing measures will be taken as suggested by the Alabama Department of Public Health and other government officials. While we don't know

definitive answers yet, I am sure things will look a little different.

Spacing in conference rooms will change, the dining room will be adjusted, hand sanitizer will be available and masks may possibly be required.

We will work to make it as safe as possible to ensure that ministry can continue to happen on our campus as soon as possible.

Although we have experienced no layoffs or job cuts, the financial losses sustained over the last few months have necessitated us putting some capital projects on hold.

We had planned to start construction of the new chapel in August but will now need to delay until funds can be restored.

The journey over the last few months has taught me so much. God's plans are always good. The resources we have been setting aside for so long in preparation for

construction can now be used to sustain us throughout this year. I thank God for His provision for us.

And my prayer is that through all this, God teaches each of us the value of gathering together as the body of Christ. Ephesians 4 reminds me that the individual parts of a body must be joined together. While online meeting options are good, nothing can replace the face to face, natural environment God uniquely provides here at Shocco.

We are a Christ-centered gathering place. As part of the body, we exist to provide a unique resource — a place where you can gather for discipleship and worship and ultimately to glorify Christ in all things.

For more information on how you can support Shocco during this time, go to shocco.org.

“God has something in store for us even in times of stress [and] uncertainty.”

RICK LANCE

Executive director, Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

The quality of good sermons is not determined or measured by the applause of those who “just heard” but by the actions of those who “still hear.”

Morris Murray Jr.
Minister of music and outreach
Samaria Baptist Church
Jasper, Ala.

“I have been through wars, depressions, civil unrest and about all one could imagine in my lifetime. But the hardest thing I think I have experienced is the fact that this coronavirus has caused me to be totally separated from my family. In hard times we have always been able to physically embrace one another to show our love and support. But now I stand alone in this

place.” — Words of 100-year-old nursing home resident in isolation from all outside visitors including family.

If we get another chance to see our loved ones and our friends in facilities, please take advantage of this ministry opportunity. There are many lonely days in the lives of our senior citizens.

David Willis
Montgomery, Ala.

The biblical word “patience” does not primarily mean putting up with a difficult person or responding to frustration with a gentle voice. Biblical patience is about staying under the load, not giving in or giving up. For many of us it means not caving in to pessimism

or fear or sadness or blaming (all of which come at us in the noise of the culture).

Where shall we find such beautiful patience? It does not come by gritting our teeth and holding our tongue. Godly patience is birthed by the spirit of Jesus in us when He is in control.

Bob Adams
Retired pastor

It is the job of a leader to keep people focused, to keep the church focused. That’s what leaders do, and if you ever notice, poor leaders lose focus and good leaders keep focus.

Pastor Ken Adams
Crossroads Church
Newnan, Ga.

Prayer should be the place we take our need and our concerns to lay at the feet of Jesus.

I pray [with my students] because [they] need to know that God is as concerned about the daily intricacies of their lives as He is about the world at large. He knows their names. He knows where they are headed, and He knows the concerns they carry with them. And He is all-sufficient for that need. ...

My students need to know this — even more than they need to know music theory.

I want to be a great teacher, an effective teacher, a teacher whose students exhibit outstanding measurable music achievement. But more than that, I want my students to know the power and presence of a risen Lord.

Professor Charlotte Hester
Associate professor
of music education
University of Mobile

Plant the gospel, not a church; the church grows where the gospel goes.

Pastor Peter Assad
Kansas City, Mo.

From the *Twitterverse*

@nathanafinn

If theological reflection doesn’t lead you to grow in your love of God and neighbor, then you may know a lot of facts about theology, but you missed the point of the exercise.

@paulwasher

The incomprehensibility of God’s person and works should never be a cause for doubt but a catalyst for wonder. Why should we marvel at that which is small enough to be encompassed by or engaged in a finite human mind?

@_JakeBrown

The assurance in Christ of a future, physical existence with the Lord should encourage us in

whatever we face today, transform us in our love for God and for our neighbors and embolden us to tell everyone we can the good news of who Jesus is and what He has done.

@myarnell

The greatest challenge facing American evangelicals today doesn’t come from lame media persecution, nor from worn out liberal theology, nor from some imagined conspiracy within. Our greatest challenge remains in our own hearts, in particular how we value our fellow human beings!

@craiggroeschel

Faith isn’t blind optimism. Faith points us beyond our problems to

the presence and power of a God who is with us and for us!

@AndyStanley

People crave certainty, but as a leader, certainty is beyond your control. The next best thing is clarity.

@Relevant

Now is the time for the Church to show what it’s made of.

@bcmlink

This semester has been unique to say the least. As students finish up the school year, let’s remember that our ministry to students doesn’t end. How can we continue to #ReachEveryStudent this summer in light of current circumstances?

Today, we are living in a world of uncertainties. Not allowed to worship in group settings, not allowed to “do” ministry as we have for decades. This is not the end for God’s churches. I am hearing and reading great testimonies of God’s work, people surrendering their hearts and lives to Christ during this lockdown. We have right now, today, a great opportunity to be and share the gospel. ...

The only way to do this is to personally engage. Today, we are being challenged to think differently about how to engage the culture. How is your church engaging the community with the gospel in these troubling times? How are you personally?

George Yates
Church health strategist
Alabama Baptist State
Board of Missions

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

Expressing the

LOVE OF JESUS

Individuals, ministries crafting face masks to help slow spread of COVID-19

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Laura Rickard was on the way to prom in mid-March when she heard the news that school was canceled for the rest of the year because of COVID-19.

“That took away the rest of my senior year,” said Rickard, a Corner High School student and member of New Temple Baptist Church, Dora. “I was really sad about it.”

But even so, her next move wasn’t to sit in her loss — it was to figure out how she could best help others.

“I’d always found sewing relaxing,

so I found a pattern, watched a few videos online and began to sew face masks,” she said.

Rickard sewed them for her friends, her family and her family’s coworkers. She sewed them for Mission of Hope, for her church and for others in the community.

And roughly 300 masks in, with some help from her mom, she’s still sewing.

“Each mask we make is prayed over,” Rickard said. “We pray for the protection of the wearer.”

In the early weeks of the pandemic, hospitals requested cloth masks to extend the availability of approved

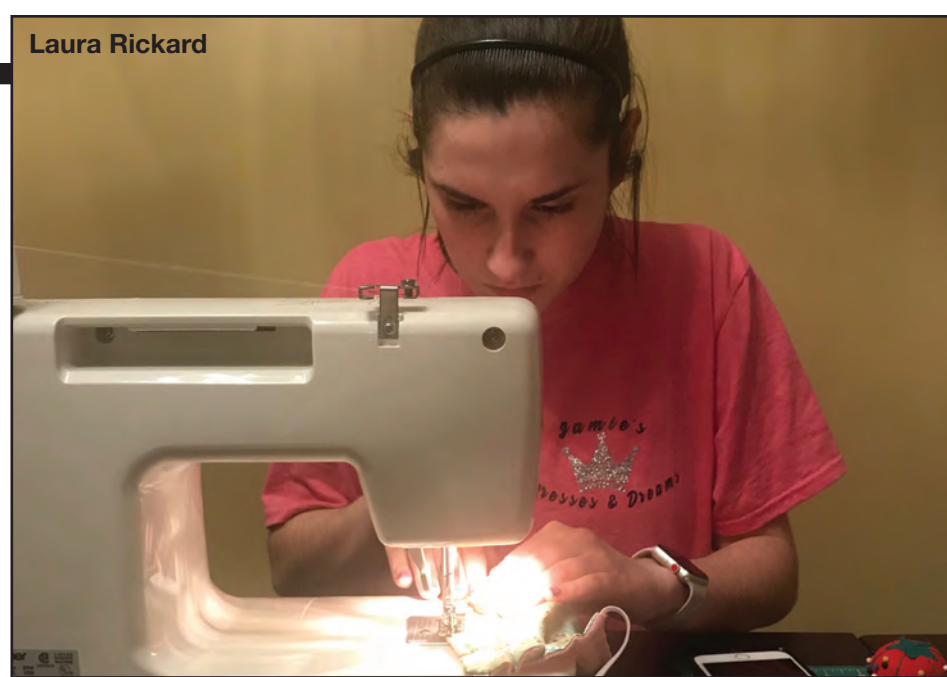


Photo courtesy of Laura Rickard

protective gear, and all over the state and nation, seamstresses like Rickard worked selflessly to supply them.

Some ministries like We Sew Love at Huffman Baptist Church, Birmingham, have cranked out large numbers of masks made from sheets and pillowcases. A group from Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Birmingham, also is sewing masks to donate. Other people have used patterns like the one found on the Alabama Woman’s Missionary Union website to sew their own.

Now perhaps the big question is — if you’re not wearing one, should you be?

Confusion about whether or not masks are necessary has been floating around since “coronavirus” first became a household word. But as time has gone on, more medical professionals and government officials have suggested that masks can help slow the spread of the virus.

In early April, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention changed its policy to recommend everyone cover his or her face with a mask or cloth covering anytime they come within six feet of people outside their home. This policy change came on the heels of growing evidence the virus wasn’t just spread in the air through sneezes or coughs — it could also be spread through exhaling or speaking.

As of April 28, all Alabamians were urged to wear masks or face coverings by the Alabama Department of Public Health, and all Birmingham residents were mandated to wear them in public unless participating in exempted activities, such as exercise and certain types of construction work.

Should you wear a mask?

If you’re not specifically mandated to wear one, should you? What about as restrictions begin to loosen?

Across the nation, Christians and non-Christians alike have grappled with that question. *Time* published an article in early April dealing with “The Ethics of Wearing (or Not Wearing) a Face Mask During the Coronavirus Pandemic.”

The Atlantic summed it up this way in an April 22 article called “The Real Reason to Wear a Mask” — it’s not about you, it’s about others. The article compared wearing a mask to stopping the flow of a hose by turning off the faucet.

“Research shows that even a cotton mask dramatically reduces the

Pastor of older congregation wonders how ‘new normal’ will look

Keith Gambill says the church he serves as pastor — Enon Baptist, Camden — is an older, rural congregation, but they’ve adapted well to meeting online.

There’s no Wi-Fi at the church, but they’ve been continuing their Wednesday night Bible study on Revelation via Facebook live with Gambill teaching from his study at home. They’ve done that for Sunday worship too.

And though their congregation is largely 65 and older — with roughly half of their members in the nursing home — they’ve found ways to get everyone connected and looked after.

But Gambill’s wondering how the next “new normal” will look

now that churches are cleared to meet again — and how to keep everyone safe.

“I talk with the members, and they can’t wait for us to all be able to get back together,” he said. “But when we do ... it will be different.”

Gambill said he’s a hugger, and so are many of his church members, but they will have to maintain the social distancing guidelines.

“That’s going to be hard,” he said. “Our church is a loving church, and it’s going to be tough not to walk up to each other.”

And Gambill said he’ll wear a mask except when he’s preaching because he and many members of his church are high risk. For now, it will also mean he won’t be at the

As of May 11: Churches allowed to meet again with 6-foot distancing, frequent cleaning/ disinfecting and other strict guidelines.

number of virus particles emitted from our mouths — by as much as 99%,” the article stated. “This reduction provides two huge benefits. Fewer virus particles mean that people have a better chance of avoiding infection, and if they are infected, the lower viral-exposure load may give them a better chance of contracting only a mild illness.”

To put it simply, wearing a mask can do a lot to protect others, even if it’s just a simple cloth mask. Many people who are infected with the virus don’t know it — and don’t realize they’re spreading it to others.

While immune-compromised people may want to wear an N95 mask to protect themselves, those who aren’t can help protect others by wearing a cloth mask.

In countries where mask production was ramped up — and people have been wearing them — the numbers show the virus is slowing, *The Atlantic* article stated. “[O]rdinary people are not helpless; in fact, we have more power than we realize. Along with keeping our distance whenever possible and maintaining good hygiene, all of us wearing just a cloth mask could help stop this pandemic in its tracks.”

Burdened hearts

The article asked readers to think of coronavirus as a raging fire.

“If we could just keep our embers from being sent out every time we spoke or coughed, many fewer people would catch fire. Masks help us do that,” the article stated. “And because we don’t know for sure who’s sick, the only solution is for everyone to wear masks. This eventually benefits the wearer because fewer fires mean we’re all less likely to be burned. My mask protects you; your masks protect me.”

Candace McIntosh, executive director of Alabama WMU, said showing love for others is the reason many have taken to making and wearing masks amid the crisis.

“Sewing masks has been an incredible outlet for many to express the love of Jesus during this pandemic,” she said. “Our hearts have been burdened for those in need of personal protective equipment whether in the medical profession or the service industry.”

The need has grown as the government advised everyone to wear them, she said. “I have been so encouraged by Alabama Baptists all over our state who are loving their neighbor through the ministry of sewing.”

‘WHAT WE DO’

Sharing Christ & protecting lives

TeleCare Unit provides health screenings during COVID-19

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

During COVID-19, as Alabamians have taken the idea of “drive-through” and “drive-in” to new lengths, Deborah Bowers has just been carrying on with something she’s been doing for a long time.

Drive-up medical clinics.

For years, Bowers — a faculty member at the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Nursing — has taken pop-up medical care to Africa, South America and other parts of the world, unloading tables and supplies from her car and providing care for hundreds of people in need. It’s a concept she’d worked on as her D.Min. project at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

And a little over a year ago, The Foundry Ministries reached out to her and asked if she’d adapt that idea to Alabama to bring much-needed care to Birmingham’s homeless population and others in need in the area.

She said yes, and the Changed Lives Mobile Clinic was born.

The clinic takes medical services to the residents at the Foundry as well as the Changed Lives Christian Center, a homeless ministry and transitional home run by the Foundry.

The clinic provides free care for those who need it, as well as an opportunity for more than 40 nurses and nursing students to gain experience in community health.

It’s “exciting” and “a win-win,” said John Roland, chief development officer for The Foundry Ministries. “It allows people in our programs to get medical care much more conveniently and for free, and it creates partnerships and opportunities for donors to get involved in something good for the community.”



Screencapture/UAB School of Nursing video

UAB School of Nursing faculty Deborah Bowers (left), Michael Mosley (on screen) and Emily Patton help the homeless and other high-risk, low-income people receive medical care via telehealth at The Foundry’s onsite health clinic.

Not only that, it provides opportunities for them to partner with churches who might want to learn the model for their own medical missions trips, said Roland, who also serves as interim pastor of Robinwood Baptist Church, Birmingham.

“We’d love to be a training ground for churches who want to go overseas and see how we do it and model that,” he said.

Last year 280 individual patients received care at no cost.

And it all starts with providing access to the gospel, Roland said.

“We are Christ-centered ... no apologies,” Roland said. Sharing the gospel is “what we do.”

Care during COVID-19

Though coronavirus threw a wrench in the mobile clinic’s system, they were able to keep things going without a hitch, thanks to the UAB School of Nursing opening up their TeleCare Unit.

Three nurses at The Foundry — wearing full protective gear — guide patients through virtual appointments with other UAB medical staff on provided devices.

They’re able to help them take their own vitals with supervision, schedule any additional needed tests and help keep their prescriptions up-to-date.

They’ve also taken other safety measures, such as scheduling patients in 20-minute time slots to promote social distancing.

“Many of the patients we saw

in our first virtual clinic had ongoing health issues that left untreated could potentially be life threatening,” said Bowers, according to UAB School of Nursing News. “Many

of the men in the program have chronic diseases, high blood pressure or diabetes, and many more have mental health issues that are now compounded by the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19. Maintaining this clinic in the way we have hopefully helps keep CLCC and The Foundry Farm residents in their treatment program and keeps them from going to a local emergency room for primary care.”

Read more about The Foundry Ministries at tabonline.org/the-foundry.

For more information about The Foundry or CLCC, visit foundryministries.com or cl-cc.org.

Profound

INFLUENCE

COVID-19 offers time for family discipleship; resources available

By Lanell Downs Smith
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

In February, Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery, became the first Alabama Baptist church to offer a family Bible study focus using “Moments with God,” by Alabama Baptist author and pastor Rob Jackson.

Heritage Baptist utilized the 42-day, parent-led study to promote in-home discipleship among families with preschool through elementary-aged children as part of their 2020 “Who’s Your One” focus.

Jennifer Foster, children’s minister at Heritage, said the church realizes a parent’s primary “one” lives in their home, so they worked intentionally to provide families with tools for sharing the gospel and discipling children.

On Feb. 2, Heritage hosted a “Who’s Your One at Home” breakfast during the Life-Group (Sunday School) hour, leading families through the LifeWay Christian Resources video series, “Settle for Nothing Less.”

The one-hour research-based seminar is designed to teach parents about the 10 greatest influencers of their children’s spiritual health. Geared toward helping parents understand their role as the primary faith trainer for their children, the series highlights a child’s reading of the Bible as the number one influence toward spiritual growth.

Foster said families with preschoolers and younger children received free copies of Jackson’s “Moments with



123rf.com

God.” Families of students were given “Next: Growing a Faith that Lasts” by Andy Blanks.

“Moments with God” explores the greatness of God and is designed for parents to use at home daily with their children, Foster noted.

Temam Knight, pastor of Heritage and longtime friend of Jackson, said the study was a natural fit for the church’s

discipleship program.

“We want parents and children to use this study to know God more together,” Foster said. “Most Christian parents know they should be the

primary faith trainer in their children’s lives, but often they are unsure about where to begin. ‘Moments with God’ gives them a beginning point to read God’s word together, talk about God’s word together and pray together.”

As churches strive to reach the members of Generation Z, Foster said studies like “Moments with God” lay a foundation for parents to help

their children begin to read the Bible together and talk about spiritual truths.

“Having those conversations when their children are little equips parents to continue those conversations as their children age,” Foster said. “Learning to read the Bible as a child has a profound influence on continued spiritual growth into adulthood.”

‘Equip for discipleship’

Foster added grandparents also benefit from the study.

“These sweet folks are the primary faith trainers for their grandchildren for a variety of reasons. We were so grateful that they came to learn how to disciple their grandchildren,” Foster added.

She said the church provides resources and seminars throughout the year as part of their LifeStones ministry to help parents capture milestones in their child’s life and to point him or her to Jesus.

“We equip parents to disciple their children with resources appropriate for each milestone. ‘Who’s Your One at Home’ was an expression of our ongoing LifeStones ministry,” Foster said. ✝

Leading a child to Christ

Leading a child to a salvation decision is exciting but can also be intimidating. Don’t give into your fears. Remember that while God has called you to share this message, it’s the work of the Holy Spirit who leads a child to give his or her life to Christ.

To that end, parents can continually look for natural ways to engage children in spiritual conversations, asking and answering questions in teachable moments.

When they ask questions, pray first. Then, invite the Holy Spirit to work with you as you share. Consider these tips from WMU:

1. Be conversational.

When counseling one-on-one with a child, be conversational. Ask open-ended questions, then listen closely to the child’s reply. Questions to ask a child might include:

- ▶ Who is Jesus?
- ▶ What is sin?
- ▶ What is a Christian?
- ▶ Why do you want to become a Christian?
- ▶ How do you feel? (Sometimes the feelings we have are God’s way of speaking to us.)
- ▶ What has led you to start thinking about becoming a Christian?
- ▶ How long have you wanted to be a Christian?

2. Use the Bible.

During the conversation, show the child verses in the Bible. Slowly explain the following verse to the child.

Verses you may need:

- ▶ 1 John 4:10 (God loves you.)
- ▶ Romans 6:23 (Sin separates us from God.)
- ▶ Romans 5:8 (Christ died for us.)
- ▶ Romans 3:23 (Everyone sins.)
- ▶ 1 John 1:9 (Confess and ask for forgiveness for sin.)
- ▶ Acts 16:31 (Believe and be saved.)
- ▶ Romans 10:9 (Follow Jesus.)

Use language that children can understand to describe what each verse means. Avoid using abstract concepts. For example, instead of saying “giving your heart to Christ,” say “Give your whole self — your actions and your thoughts — to Christ.”

3. Avoid pressure.

Ask the question, then listen. Don’t push for a decision.

4. Continue the conversation.

Talk about Jesus naturally as much as possible and answer questions your children might have. Talk about the character of God. Lead by example. Let your life be a testimony to what living in the grace of Christ looks like each day. (WMU, TAB contributed)

For links to these and other helpful resources for family discipleship, go to tabonline.org/family-discipleship.

To purchase ‘Moments with God,’ go to tabonline.org/moments.

Navigating a new normal

Combat COVID-19 anxieties, trials by clinging to Christ, His gospel and fellow believers

By Michael Bozeman, MA, LPC
Special to The Alabama Baptist

If we are not careful, the word “despair” could easily be used to describe how we have felt during the last couple of months.

Our normal was taken away from us in the blink of an eye. The security we once felt was challenged by something we could not change.

Maybe we did not get sick or lose someone to COVID-19, but we all have felt the ramifications of this disease. We will all have to learn how to navigate this new normal.

If I am being completely honest, there have been moments throughout this season that I have found myself in a desperate place. This desperation comes from living inside of something that is completely out of my control.

My anxiety has been on a rollercoaster most days. I go back and forth between complete trust in the Lord, and then wondering, “Lord, are you listening to me?”

The uncertainty of what the future will look like can easily overwhelm us and keep us in a place of hopelessness, but there are steps we can take to get ahead of that and avoid despair.

‘Christ on His throne’

It is in these moments I am thankful we can call out to the Lord and trust His word to us that He will never leave us or forsake us.

I can take solace in the fact that even in a world that seems to be spinning out of control, Christ remains on His throne, and His love and care for each of us has not changed even a little.

I have found myself drawn to the Psalms during this time when my fears and anxieties are so loud.

In Psalm 34, David writes he sought the Lord, and the Lord heard him. It wasn’t just the fact that the Lord heard him, but he goes on to say



Pixabay.com

He delivered him from all his fears.

I am thankful the same God who was able to rescue David from his despair is the same God who comes to our aid in times of hopelessness.

Even when the enemy tries his hardest to make me believe something opposite, Christ remains the answer.

So as we start to navigate this new normal, it is important that we filter everything through the lens of the truth of the gospel.

It is imperative that we surround ourselves with people who will help hold us accountable to seek the truth.

I have told many people that the most fulfilling part of my job most days is I get to help people as they finally see clearly the lies of the enemy. I get to watch as their spiritual eyes are opened and the lie they’ve heard no longer becomes something that has a hold on them.

The enemy will continue to bring doubt and fear. He will continue to try to make us believe in some way we are in control of our future, yet

the beautiful truth of the gospel is that every time, the lie will never overcome the truth.

What does it look like for us to continue to move forward as we come out of this season? Where do we turn when we seem to not be able to get our bearings? Maybe we need

someone to help us see things clearly who isn’t directly involved in what we are personally experiencing.

Having a Bible-believing counselor to talk with could be life-giving. These counselors can sit with us

through the struggle from a nonjudgmental place. Counseling offers the opportunity for us to talk about our hardest things in a safe environment.

Christ never intended for us to do this life alone. Proverbs 27 reminds us we are to sharpen each other just as iron sharpens iron. We do that when we allow people into what is really happening in our lives.

In a society that often tells us to be strong and never let people know our struggles, we drive a deathblow to the enemy’s plan to isolate us when

we are open and honest about the despair we feel.

Openly and honestly assess where you are emotionally as well as spiritually during this season. Take the necessary steps to become the healthiest you possible. Take time in your day for self-care. Self-care looks different for each of us. Maybe it is reading a favorite book, going for a walk, cooking a new recipe or learning a new skill. Look for those moments to take care of yourself.


Dispel the darkness

Surround yourself with people who will come alongside you and point you to truth. Engage the Word daily and allow it to dispel the lies of the enemy. Walking in the truth some days is really hard, but the great news is that it always produces what the Lord intends for it to produce.

We are all in this together and learning to navigate this new normal. No playbook has been written on how to handle all that has happened. Each day becomes something new, and we possess the opportunity to allow the weight of hopelessness and despair to overtake us or to trust in the promises of the Word.

I pray as we continue to push through, the Lord will be where we turn, and we will allow the light to always do what it does and dispel the darkest of places.

EDITOR’S NOTE — Faith & Family is a bi-monthly look at important spiritual, cultural and relational issues facing today’s families. Go to PathwaysProfessional.org/blog for more articles on contemporary topics like these.

Michael Bozeman is a licensed professional counselor serving in Birmingham and northeast Alabama with Pathways Professional Counseling, a sister ministry of Alabama Baptist Children’s Homes & Family Ministries. 



Cooperative Program Receipts

FOR CHURCHES

Annual Church Profile report helps churches, associations be more effective in ministry

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Robert Walker said nothing out of the ordinary is going on at his church — just personal, one-on-one contact with the community.

“We reached out to a couple of families, and they had some members in their family who were interested in church,” said Walker, pastor of Gateway Ministries, Selma. “We talked to them about their spiritual condition and about their walk with the Lord, and they received Christ.”

Intentional evangelism

That kind of intentional evangelism, as Walker called it, is why the church of around 40 ended up at the top of Alabama’s list for baptism ratio on this year’s Annual Church Profile report. The small congregation reached out, shared their faith and last year ended up baptizing one person for every 1.4 existing church member.

“We’re elated about it,” Walker said. “The Lord has just really blessed us. We give Him all the glory.”

Bobby DuBois, associate ex-

To download the full giving report of Alabama Baptist churches, visit tabonline.org/2019ACP.

Numbers in this report were provided by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. To contact them, call 800-264-1225.



2019 CHURCH RECEIPTS

Cooperative Program	\$37,859,135.93
Lottie Moon Christmas Offering	\$11,415,420.79
International Mission Board	\$230,306.39
International Mission Board Designated	\$905.76
World Hunger	\$387,086.96
Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.....	\$6,097,744.40
North American Mission Board	\$24,261.27
North American Mission Board Designated	\$394.00
Associational Missions.....	\$1,778,699.44
Children’s Homes & Family Ministries	\$2,736,519.81
ALCAP	\$158,445.76
American Bible Society	\$871.92
State Causes	\$97,100.19
State Missions.....	\$60,321.10
Myers-Mallory State Missions.....	\$1,248,389.13
SBC Causes	\$11,889.29
Disaster Relief	\$379,137.82
All Other Designated	\$1,395,783.09

Total Receipts for 2019.....\$63,882,413.05

ecutive director for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said it can be easy to think numbers don’t matter, that there’s not a positive purpose for a church submitting ACP data.

But the ACP is “far more than numbers,” he said — it helps tell the story of what God is doing in the state and identify trends that help with missions strategy and other planning.

For example, associations use the information to help strengthen their churches, DuBois noted. “They can spot trends, identify ministry areas where churches need help or use the information to target particular churches with training opportunities.”

It can help churches identify their own trends too.

“A church long-range planning committee may ask about

information on their church that could help them analyze their own congregation’s ministries,” DuBois said. “Most churches don’t have annual data covering the past decade or two of ministry in a format that is easily accessible. The ACP provides that detailed information that can be sent to the committee the same day electronically.”

And by using ACP data, churches can find new ways to do effective ministry, DuBois said.

The ACP is “far more than numbers” — it helps tell the story of what God is doing in the state and identify trends that help with missions strategy and other planning.

Bobby DuBois
associate executive director, Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

“A church leader trying to help his church be more effective in ministry may ask the SBOM for a list of churches similar in size who are doing exemplary work in an area so they can contact the churches to see what has or hasn’t worked for them,” he explained. “It is a way for churches to learn from and help other churches.”

It can also help churches that are looking for a pastor, DuBois said. “A pastor search committee may ask for information on the church where a pastoral candidate is serving.”

This issue of *TAB* includes some highlights of the state’s total data for 2019, and the reports of every church’s giving and baptisms are now available online at tabonline.org/2019ACP. Churches that did not complete an ACP will see blanks in their baptism listing.

In the 1990s, just more than 9 out of 10 Alabama Baptist churches submitted their ACP information, but in 2019 that number was only 8 out of 10.

‘Valuable information’

“The gap of 10 less percentage points represents a decrease of over 350 churches submitting data,” DuBois lamented. “The decrease hinders our ability at all levels of Baptist life to provide valuable information to ministry partners that can help strengthen our churches and associations. The ACP is far more than numbers.”

CHURCH REPORT FOR 2019

TOP CHURCHES IN GIFTS

2019 MYERS-MALLORY GIFTS

1. Montgomery First, Montgomery \$30,229.12
2. Prattville First, Autauga \$29,145.32
3. Liberty, Shelby \$23,859.00
4. Fort Payne First, DeKalb \$17,760.00
5. Mount Zion, Madison \$17,689.52
6. Athens First, Limestone \$14,529.00
7. Enterprise First, Coffee \$13,516.00
8. Huntsville First, Madison \$12,581.00
9. Golden Springs, Calhoun \$12,236.71
10. Pell City First, St. Clair \$11,412.00
11. Selma First, Selma \$11,025.00
12. Glynwood, Autauga \$10,414.00
13. Trussville First, Birmingham \$10,026.25
14. Shades Mountain, Birmingham \$10,000.00
14. Tuscaloosa First, Tuscaloosa \$10,000.00
16. Lakeside, Birmingham \$9,029.00
17. Alexander City First, Tallapoosa \$8,485.80
18. Greensboro, Hale \$7,972.00
19. Mexia, Bethlehem \$7,916.00
20. Gadsden First, Etowah \$7,554.00
21. First Fairhope, Baldwin \$7,424.52
22. Union Hill, Friendship \$7,305.00
23. Clanton First, Chilton \$7,058.00
24. Pleasant View, Blount \$6,810.00
25. Taylorville, Tuscaloosa \$6,784.00

2019 ANNIE ARMSTRONG GIFTS

1. Hunter Street, Birmingham \$175,552.86
2. Montgomery First, Montgomery \$157,912.15
3. Shades Mountain, Birmingham \$135,000.00
4. Trussville First, Birmingham \$118,243.50
5. CrossPoint, St. Clair \$86,729.22
6. Lakeview, Tuskegee Lee \$82,756.43
7. Huntsville First, Madison \$75,088.71
8. Opelika First, Tuskegee Lee \$75,077.96
9. Whitesburg, Madison \$72,626.03
10. Prattville First, Autauga \$60,227.48
11. Athens First, Limestone \$50,597.73
12. First Fairhope, Baldwin \$48,530.99
13. Golden Springs, Calhoun \$48,057.74
14. Boaz First, Marshall \$47,318.97
15. Enterprise First, Coffee \$42,340.11
16. Calvary Dothan, Southeast Alabama \$40,786.89
17. Headland First, Judson \$38,649.00
18. Dawson, Birmingham \$37,939.54
19. Mt. Gilead, Southeast Alabama \$37,645.25
20. Andalusia First, Covington \$37,623.22
21. North Shelby, Shelby \$36,299.00
22. Pell City First, St. Clair \$35,976.73
23. Valleydale, Birmingham \$33,700.00
24. Redemption Church, Mobile \$30,000.00
25. Spring Hill, Mobile \$29,602.52

2019 LOTTIE MOON GIFTS

1. Shades Mountain, Birmingham \$302,072.80
2. Headland First, Judson \$245,196.00
3. Opelika First, Tuskegee Lee \$235,610.39
4. Whitesburg, Madison \$234,837.00
5. Lakeview, Tuskegee Lee \$231,182.14
6. Montgomery First, Montgomery \$225,285.78
7. Hunter Street, Birmingham \$221,741.06
8. Tuscaloosa First, Tuscaloosa \$217,476.72
9. Mount Zion, Madison \$205,839.74
10. CrossPoint, St. Clair \$173,458.44
11. Trussville First, Birmingham \$165,867.87
12. Prattville First, Autauga \$132,883.84
13. Calvary Dothan, Southeast Alabama \$132,630.80
14. Willowbrook, Madison \$126,439.17
15. Dawson, Birmingham \$125,018.25
16. Pell City First, St. Clair \$112,943.00
17. Huntsville First, Madison \$103,286.31
18. Golden Springs, Calhoun \$95,913.55
19. Central, Morgan \$94,029.41
20. Boaz First, Marshall \$85,371.98
21. Enterprise First, Coffee \$82,969.95
22. Athens First, Limestone \$77,929.30
23. Highland, Colbert-Lauderdale \$70,126.82
24. Birmingham First, Birmingham \$69,935.00
25. NorthPark, Birmingham \$68,502.02

3 stories you should know



TAB graphic

Thousands of viewers joined online May 5 for 'Praying on the Mountain,' a call to prayer for spiritual awakening in America. Held in conjunction with an event birthed by Fred Lunsford (left), a 95-year-old retired pastor from North Carolina, viewers were guided in prayer by Ronnie Floyd (right), president and CEO of the SBC Executive Committee, and others. The video of the event and more information about Lunsford is available at mudcreekchurch.org. (TAB)

Coosa River Assoc. calls new DOM at drive-in meeting

Stan Albright is the new director of missions for Coosa River Baptist Association. He was called at a drive-in executive committee meeting May 2 conducted through the FM transmitter at First Baptist Church, Talladega. He will begin in June.



ALBRIGHT

Albright previously served as pastor of First Baptist Church, Oxford. He also has served with the North American Mission Board, the Baptist Convention of New Mexico and the Northwest Baptist Convention, and has been a church planter and on church staffs in Alabama and Texas. He and his wife, Joanie, have two children and four grandchildren. (TAB)

Supreme Court hears contraception case

The U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments in a case pitting Catholic nuns against federal requirements that employers provide insurance coverage to workers for contraceptives, including those that can potentially induce abortions.

The Trump administration and the Little Sisters of the Poor, who received a favorable ruling in a similar case in 2016, urged justices, meeting May 6 by telephone conference, to uphold federal rules that protect the rights of employers with religious or moral objections to the abortion/contraception mandate.

Interim regulations issued in 2017 and final rules issued in 2018 protect employers with religious or moral objections to the abortion/contraception mandate, but Pennsylvania, New Jersey and other states challenged the interim rules. (BP)

— SBC NEWS —

State Baptist conventions facing COVID-19 pandemic-induced cuts

By Margaret Colson
The Alabama Baptist

Numerous Southern Baptist entities, including state conventions, seminaries and national entities and auxiliaries, are implementing budget and staff reductions in response to the economic downturn resulting from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

State conventions were among the first entities to take significant budgetary action during the pandemic. While approaches have been varied, the focus on reducing expenses has been the common factor among state conventions, including the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and other contiguous state conventions.

Alabama

In Alabama, SBOM Executive Director Rick Lance moved quickly to cap expenditures to 80% of the budget, suspend state missionary travel indefinitely and institute a hiring freeze. And because of his 20-year intentional effort in streamlining staff to a mission-critical size — currently

62 — Lance did not have to face the tough decision other groups and entities have had to make regarding staff positions.

"We are half the size we once were and were already understaffed when COVID-19 hit," Lance said, noting the years of streamlining allowed the staff to be nimble and adaptable enough to move quickly into a new setup with the current restrictions.

"We are doing everything online and continuing to prioritize and stay in touch with the churches," he said. "We are staying focused on the next best thing to do to keep us all moving forward.

"We have yet to determine how much we will need to reduce the 2021 budget."

Georgia

W. Thomas Hammond Jr., executive director of the Georgia Baptist Mission Board, chose what he labeled a "proactive" approach to decision-making when he announced a 43% reduction in

mission board expenses, effective April 9.

Hammond said he conferred with approximately 50 Georgia Baptist pastors representing churches of all sizes to discuss anticipated giving patterns.

While some pastors reported giving had increased, many other pastors expressed a significant downturn in giving — as much as a 35% reduction.

Through extrapolating the numbers, Hammond said GBMB leaders determined the mission board could anticipate a possible 60% reduction in Cooperative Program receipts,

at least temporarily. Those projections, he said, were the basis of the reduction in mission board expenses.

The plan resulted in a multi-pronged approach, including the cancellation of Georgia Baptist camps through June, restricting all staff travel expenses and furloughing some Georgia Baptist staffers while cutting the salaries of those remaining on staff.

Part 1 of 2

To read the story
in its entirety,
visit [tabonline.org/
SBC-cuts](http://tabonline.org/SBC-cuts).

Virtual SBCAL conference encourages post-pandemic associational ministry

As churches seek to navigate the coronavirus pandemic, polling data suggests they are turning to their local Baptist associations for assistance more than any other group.

So the Southern Baptist Conference of Associational Leaders focused its first virtual conference on helping churches emerge from COVID-19.

Twenty-one percent of Southern Baptist congregations say their association is providing them more help during the pandemic than any other individual or group, according to polling by Gloo, a technology organization partnering with the Barna Group to study churches amid COVID-19.

That was the poll's top response, ahead of the Southern Baptist Convention (18%) and state and local government officials (17%).

Conference speakers at the April 30 SBCAL webinar asked associational leaders to consider how they can maintain that degree of influence as the crisis subsides.

The pandemic presents Christian leaders with an unprecedented "degree of freedom" to "really inspect your mission and your strategy in this moment," Brad Hill, Gloo's head of network and partnership strategy, told the 285 associational leaders in attendance. "It's not often we get the ability to do that in such a profound way."

Cohosted by Gloo, the webinar featured teaching sessions by associational mission strategists and several Southern Baptist entity leaders.

Part of the impetus for SBCAL's virtual conference was the coronavirus-related cancellation of the organization's June annual conference in Orlando, Florida.

Numerous Alabama Baptist associational leaders participated in the virtual conference and appreciated the opportunity to connect with and learn from one another virtually.

For Steve Dunn, self-described "rookie associational missionary strategist" of Bethlehem and Pine Barren associations, the virtual meeting was "the next best alternative" to holding the meeting as an in-person conference.

'Greater efficiency'

Dunn said the virtual conference was an "excellent example of how to transition to greater conference efficiency," as it reduced or eliminated expenses related to conducting and participating in conferences.

This particular conference, he noted, "was a great source of information with one of the best online formats I've experienced."

SBCAL leaders say they will continue to offer online events along with in-person conferences even after physical gatherings become possible again.

A recording of the virtual conference is posted for SBCAL members at SBCAL.org. (TAB, BP contributed)

Persecuted church

Cuban journalist threatened over religious freedom reporting

HAVANA — Officials with Cuba's Department of State Security have repeatedly threatened a Christian author and journalist who reports on human rights and religious freedom issues in Cuba.

Yoe Suárez has covered a couple imprisoned in 2019 for homeschooling their children, detention of Apostolic movement leaders, church protests of Cuba's 2019 constitution and labor camps the government ran from 1965 to 1968.

Suárez's work has appeared in non-state media outlets, as well as *Newsweek*.

On Feb. 5 and April 3, Suárez and his mother



Morningstar photo

were summoned to Havana police stations; Suárez was summoned alone on March 27.

His mother was told her son could be arrested or have his toddler son taken

away unless Suárez stops writing articles outside control of the communist regime.

Suárez reportedly was threatened with Cuba's mercenarism law (punishable with 10–20 years imprisonment or death) and told he would be framed and discredited unless he becomes an informant for the Department of State Security. (MS)

— SBC NEWS —

"Everyone (on the Georgia Baptist staff) has been impacted, either through salary reduction or furlough," Hammond said. Currently, GBMB full-time staff stands at 146 people including those who are furloughed, he reported.

"We would love for (these measures) to be temporary; we just don't know."

Florida

In an open statement on the Florida Baptist Convention website, Tommy Green, executive director-treasurer, said, "Just as churches are making financial adjustments, we, as a convention, must proactively make adjustments as well."

Green outlined the following steps, approved by the administrative and finance committees of the Florida Baptist State Board of Missions:

- ▶ Compensation to both salary and benefits for all convention staff reduced immediately.
- ▶ All Florida ministry-related budget line items reduced by 30% to include the convention's contributions to its Cooperating Ministries.

The convention also committed to the following programs established for financial relief to Florida Baptist churches in financial crisis:

- ▶ Interest-free COVID-19 emergency loans to

churches as bridge loans to aid them in meeting immediate financial obligations through May.

▶ A two-month moratorium on payment on all current loans administered through the convention for the months of April and May.

Additionally, convention leadership affirmed its promise to funding, without reduction, church planting efforts through SEND Network Florida.

Louisiana

Meeting virtually May 5, Louisiana Baptist leaders reported an increase in CP gifts from March to April. However, Steve Horn, executive director of Louisiana Baptist Convention, said the state's CP budget was 5% behind through April.

Horn said the convention is "holding the line with regard to expenses" and has been able "to avoid drastic cuts and staff reductions." He noted funds from the Georgia Barnette State Missions Offering would be used to help churches and associational ministries.

Mississippi

"Like most of our counterparts, the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board has put a hold on hiring, will limit travel for all employees and will be

prorating budgets to balance with receipts," reported Shawn Parker, executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Convention Board.

He said convention leaders are "using technology to stay in touch with our churches, and we are continuing to support churches with the needed resources to do ministry in this new environment. The MBCB is blessed today by decisions of prior leadership so we are as well-positioned as could be under the circumstances to weather the storm."

Tennessee

"Our journey with the COVID-19 crisis began with an emergency leadership team meeting at 10 p.m., March 11, when [upcoming events were canceled]," said Chris Turner, communications director for the Tennessee Baptist Mission Board.

On March 17, travel restrictions were implemented. Initial budget reductions of 20% were established ... with other potential cuts based on incremental projections through the end of fiscal 2020 (Oct. 31), Turner said. "We have not furloughed or laid off any staff but have temporarily adjusted staff responsibilities based on our most pressing strategic needs. We also froze all hiring of open positions." 🇺🇸

‘Every single bit matters’ in giving to international, local ministries

(continued from page 1)
creative ways to give and creative ways to promote giving too.

“In the past, promotion on social media and through electronic means hasn’t worked super well for us, but this year it worked better than our traditional ways of communicating our offering goals,” he said.

Meyers said he’s blessed to have a church with missions and Cooperative Program giving in its DNA, not to mention the resource of being so close to Auburn University and having the opportunity to mobilize students.

But regardless of the size or makeup of a church, every single bit matters, he said — especially at a time like this.

“That’s why the CP was created — to be a part of the picture no matter how large your piece is,” Meyers said. “All the little bits add up, and through those little bits, we get it done, from here to Alaska and around the world.”

Bobby DuBois, associate executive director for the

Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said he sees that spirit in the way churches across the state give — and keep giving.

“Alabama Baptists are among the most generous people in the world,” he said. “Even in times of challenge, our people have historically kept their focus on supporting their church, as well as Alabama and Southern Baptist missions and ministries — ministry objectives that are still making a Kingdom impact today.”

DuBois said it won’t surprise him, even in the face of COVID-19, to see Alabama Baptists set the pace this year in CP and associational missions giving. “That is one reason why it is such a blessing to be part of the Alabama Baptist family,” he said.

Kyle Johnson, pastor of Union Hill Baptist Church, Cottonwood, said he’s seen God raise up people around him to be extra generous in this time.

“We had no online giving before coronavirus, and

many times people aren’t comfortable putting their checks in the mail,” he said. “We were really concerned that our giving was going to go way down, but we trusted the Lord with that.”

And what he found was that people sacrificed for God’s purposes and worked out a way to give, even when it was tough.

“Our tithes have increased a lot. We’ve seen the faithfulness of God,” Johnson said.

And when needs arose in their local area — physical needs like food and paying rent — the people of Union Hill Baptist saw God’s faithfulness come through once again.

“We had talked about real-locating some funds to be able to bless families, but we didn’t really know how much we could do,” Johnson said. “We were praying through that, and a specific number kept coming to mind, but it was a high number for us.”

They stepped out in faith. And in the days that followed, they were notified that a “dear lady who had gone home to be with the Lord” in 2019 had left a gift for the church in that exact amount, Johnson said.

“God has really humbled us and shown Himself faithful.”

“It is such a blessing to be part of the Alabama Baptist family.”

**Bobby DuBois
SBOM associate
executive director**

IMB experiences budget shortfall, moves missionaries amid pandemic

The International Mission Board reported it has experienced a significant budget shortfall during the past two months and has evacuated and relocated IMB personnel for many reasons related to the pandemic.

“The impact of COVID-19 ... is quickly becoming evident,” said IMB President Paul Chitwood.

He reported that revenue totals for March and April dipped \$2 million below budget. “Moreover,” he said, “we have made a significant investment in

evacuating and relocating IMB personnel from certain places around the globe for a host of reasons related to the pandemic. These were unbudgeted expenses that are coming in at about \$2 million.”

Because of “this combined negative impact of \$4 million,” the IMB has cut spending and established a hiring freeze for stateside staff positions, Chitwood reported, adding that out-of-season Lottie Moon Christmas Offering gifts would be helpful.

To read the full story, visit tabonline.org. (Margaret Colson)

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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 Nocalula 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: susan@gmail.com.

MINISTER OF STUDENTS

Albertville First Baptist Church is seeking a full-time minister of students (7th through 12th grade). This person will work in partnership with additional church staff and a volunteer ministry team. Please send resumé to: chris@albertvillefbc.org.

SIGNS

NEED A NEW CHURCH SIGN?

Reliable Signs Services, a full-service sign company located in Alabama for 25 years, is ready to help you grow your church sign ministry. From digital message signs to traditional signs. Reliable Signs handles the design, fabrication and installation statewide. www.reliablesigns.com. 1-800-729-6844 or 205-664-0955.

BUSINESS

FOR SALE NEW & USED STAIR LIFTS

Lift chairs, power wheelchairs, car lifts, scooters and walk-in-tubs. We service Alabama 1-800-682-0658.

TRAVEL/VACATION

LOG CABIN RENTAL

Lake Guntersville area, beautiful view and fully furnished. Discounts to ministers. Log on to www.paradisevista.net to see pictures. Call for reservations at 205-540-3600.

GULF SHORES CONDO

1-, 2-, 3-bedroom luxury beachfront condos and four-bedroom beach resort house! Booking with the owner directly saves you \$\$\$. Call Chris at 502-459-7600 or email: cashley945@earthlink.net.

AFFORDABLE BEACHSIDE CONDOS

Gulf Shores and Orange Beach, Alabama. Rent direct from Christian family owners. Lowest prices on the beach for over 25 years. Call Donna: 251-656-4935, Don: 251-752-2366, Eddie: 205-556-0368 or www.gulfshorescondos.com.

FOR RENT

STUDIO APARTMENT

Furnished studio apartment in Hoover. 15 minutes to Samford. 20 minutes to Birmingham. Near Galleria. Utilities included. Washing machine, dryer, microwave, TV, etc. included. \$750/mo. \$200 non-refundable deposit. No smoking, no pets. 205-283-3272, twilkinson0110@bellsouth.net.



“Fear not, for I am with you;
be not dismayed, for I am your God.”

ISAIAH 41:10



FM 101.1 AM 850
BIRMINGHAM
WXJCRADIO.COM

THE MOST POWERFUL BIBLE
TEACHING SIMULCAST IN AMERICA





Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Theology in Unusual Terms

Ichabod

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

Last week, we explored theological truths that may be gleaned from the rather unusual term Ebenezer. This week we turn to another rather strange term from which to seek divine truth, the name Ichabod. The daughter-in-law of Eli the priest gave her newborn son this name. With the baby's birth imminent, national and personal tragedy struck. Her husband Phinehas was slain as the Philistines defeated Israel and took away the Ark of the Covenant. Subsequently, the news caused her aged father-in-law Eli to collapse in death.

Symbol of God's presence

With that sacred chest being the visual focal point of God's presence with His covenant people, its absence meant the absence of God's presence, thus the meaning of that name given in 1 Sam. 4:21: "the glory has departed."


Through the personal name of the son of the widowed mother, the name was a statement about the nation Israel. God's glory had departed His chosen people.

What abiding truth might we take away from that ancient event? For one thing, it takes us back to the Garden of Eden when sin entered God's earthly paradise and the human pair who occupied that perfect place experienced departed glory. That occasion was the forerunner of what became the common experience of all humanity, as Rom. 3:23 puts it: "All have sinned and fall short of

the glory of God." Thus, Ichabod could be written over the whole story of human existence until God performs His restorative work of redemption. It could be the nickname by which all of us are known apart from redemption. Until then we are all God's "Ichabods" — belonging to Him as His creations but not as vessels in whom His glory dwells.

Redemption possible

The departed glory is the loss of God's express pleasure and indwelling presence, as well as the loss of the enjoyment and blessedness of fellowship with God who designed and made us. This departure also means the loss of His creative purpose of having people who reflect the glory of His likeness, as well as the loss of the future eternal enjoyment of unbroken fellowship with Him and His redeemed family.

God's redemptive mission through Christ is to restore His glory to repentant and forgiven believers in Jesus. He does this one person at a time. Only as we invite Christ into our hearts does the meaning of Ichabod lose its significance for us. In Christ, the glory returns. 

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.



Tips for church leaders who are crunching the numbers

By Michael J. Brooks
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, called it "a war of sorts" as the nation and its churches navigate through the current COVID-19 issue.

"We've always had the need for prayer, but even more so in these days of challenge," he said in greeting participants in a video seminar on April 30 titled "Financial Issues in Changing Times" featuring Greg Love, director of retirement solutions for GuideStone Financial Services.

'Unprecedented faith'

"Unprecedented times require unprecedented faith," Love said. "Though many are struggling we trust in the power of God. A frequent phrase used in Scripture is 'it came to pass,' and this pandemic will come to pass too."

Financially, Love suggested churches should implement three important strategies:

1. Aggressively manage costs.

"Churches must focus on essentials at this time," he said.

"What has to be done now? Can we renegotiate with some vendors or contractors and do what we need to do later? Perhaps churches should revise their 2020 budgets and call them the 'corona budget' representing the short-term."

2. **Communicate needs and trust God to motivate giving.** "We also should let [the congregation] know how we're managing budgets and that we're being good managers," he said.

3. **Make giving easy.** "If [members] can mail offerings, let them know this is so," he said. "If you have an online system, let them know this."

Love also addressed staffing and retirement considerations.

"These decisions are difficult and tough," he said. "We've heard from struggling congregations, and we know leaders are facing many of these kinds of hard decisions."

Love said many churches are maintaining the "status quo" by retaining staff at full salary, but others have had to reduce pay and benefits for either exempt or nonexempt employees.

"Churches should consult legal counsel on this matter," he said.

Lee Wright, coordinator of church compensation services for the SBOM, said he has fielded questions about church employees, including day-care workers and their eligibility for unemployment compensation.

"Ordinarily the answer is 'no,' according to Alabama law," he said. "However, church employees laid off are eligible to receive unemployment compensation for this emergency. As an alternative, some churches have used the new federal PPP loan program to fund salaries."

Love said another option is for churches to implement leave of absence or furlough policies for staff.

"Lay-offs or terminations are the least desirable option, and we certainly don't recommend this," Love said. "It's an option that should be last in our thoughts."


When it comes to managing retirement funds, Love said

ministers are anxious about market volatility but "permanent decisions shouldn't be based on temporary circumstances. ... This is not a time to be unwise."

'Reevaluate risks'

Love suggested Southern Baptist staffers should "reevaluate risks" by looking at their personal spending, especially recurring costs such as cable or streaming services, paying off debt and working on their emergency funds of six months of income.

And it's a good time to increase retirement contributions through employer-sponsored programs, Love said.

Further information is available at alsbom.org/ministries/church-compensation/ and at tabonline.org/guidestone-resources. Wright can be reached at 334-549-1383. 

More information available at alsbom.org/ministries/church-compensation and tabonline.org/guidestone-resources.

Lee Wright can be reached at 334-549-1383.

ONE MISSION: The Great Commission ONE PROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANY MINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

GOOD NEWS

For You!



Share **YOUR** stories of how God is at work in your church and community on our Facebook page or at alsbom.org/goodnews.

During recent days, numerous Alabama Baptist pastors have shared on Facebook how God is blessing their congregations during these unusual times. Here are just a few of the good news testimonies we found:

"Our church of 45 to 50 has fixed 200 backpack buddy bags a week since the schools have been dismissed due to COVID-19." —**Roger Chambers, FOURMILE BAPTIST CHURCH, WILSONVILLE** (Shelby Association)



Two men at Friendship Baptist Church in Springville built a stand for Pastor Nicholas Gandy to use during drive-in worship.

"Drive-in worship is growing, giving has been strong and we have many members who are learning to use social media for the first time." —**Jeff Gardner, ST. ELMO FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH** (Mobile Association)

"Our livestream services have been tremendous. We began a drive-in service, and it is well attended. Tithes and offerings have continued to grow. We had 40 people saved the month prior to having to close our doors. Can't wait to reopen." —**Bruce Word, FREEDOM CHURCH OF GADSDEN** (Etowah Association)

"Children's Sunday School teachers are mailing out lessons weekly to our regulars and prospects. Youth teachers have created a project for youth to work on at a distance in preparation for when we come back. People are meeting needs as they find out about them — not waiting for formal processes." —**Nicholas Gandy, FRIENDSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH, SPRINGVILLE** (St. Clair Association)

"Our tithes have been amazing with about a 50 to 75 percent increase over budget needs." —**Whitt Hibbs, UNION GROVE #1 MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH**, Albertville (Marshall Association)

"New families are coming to our drive-in church service: an increase from 20 people attending to more than 50 now on Sunday mornings." —**BR Johnson, CLOVERDALE BAPTIST CHURCH, MONTGOMERY** (Montgomery Association)

"We have begun a food pantry ministry that is providing inroads for the Gospel into our community." —**Jonathan Jenkins, FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF KINSTON** (Coffee Association)

"We are continuing our drive-in worship services. There have been seven consecutive weeks with record crowds, and we are now reaching people in four countries. God continues to move!" —**Mike Clark, MABLE HILL BAPTIST CHURCH, ARDMORE** (Madison Association)

Preparing for What's Next

Your Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions has developed a document that will help you ask the right questions, consider helpful suggestions and access a variety of resources as you begin to prepare for the process of reopening your church facilities. It is available as a PDF to download and/or view by visiting alsbom.org/reopen.

photo by unsplash

UPCOMING FREE WEBINARS VISIT [ALSBOM.ORG/EVENTS](http://alsbom.org/events) TO REGISTER

LEADERSHIP AND MINISTRY IN CHALLENGING TIMES

Tuesday, May 19, 10-11 a.m. — TOPIC: Pastoral Care
FEATURED PANELIST: Brian Croft, pastor, author, and founder of Practical Shepherding.
 Watch social media for future topics to be covered in this weekly webinar.

CHURCH INSURANCE: PROTECTING PEOPLE AND PROPERTY

Tuesday, May 19, 10 a.m.-Noon
DISCIPLE MAKING LUNCH AND LEARN
Thursday, May 21, Noon-1:30 p.m.
 Interact online with pastor, author, speaker and coach Joel Malm, followed by a 30 minute Q&A session with the Alabama hosts.

THE TRUTH ABOUT TRUTH

Thursday, May 21, 1-2:30 p.m.
 Join Richard Howe from Southern Evangelical Seminary and Matt Burford, state missionary and apologeticist, in this candid conversation about how we can deal with varying truth claims, equip ourselves to evaluate our world, and use that training to reach people for Christ.

HOW TO RESPOND TO GOD IN A CRISIS

Thursday, May 28, 1-2 p.m.
 What is God saying to us in these challenging days? What should our response be to Him? This seminar will address these critical questions. Featured panelist is John Avant, formerly pastor of First Baptist Concord, Knoxville, Tenn., and Vice President of Evangelism and Spiritual Awakening at the North American Mission Board, and now with Life Action Ministries.





CHURCH TAX CONFERENCE FOR SMALL CHURCHES

Tuesday, June 16, 10 a.m.-Noon

ONLINE CALL TO PRAYER
Every Wednesday at 10 a.m.
 Visit alsbom.org for link or join us on Facebook



give
 THREE65

-  online giving page
-  text-to-give
-  non-cash giving
-  crowdfunding

Visit GiveThree65.com for details.

A ministry of the State Board of Missions and The Baptist Foundation of Alabama



PRAYER HOTLINE
1-877-4-AL-PRAY
(1-877-425-7729)

Remember - visit alsbom.org/coronavirus and our COVID-19 Resource Group Facebook Page for a variety of helpful resources!

Godly influence outlasts miles, generations

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

The street address was 1108 and a half, and Therman Murphree said it might as well have been a tenth.

The one-room adobe house, which sat on the edge of a woman's front yard in Del Rio, Texas, was tiny. But it looked pretty good to a newlywed just returned from serving in the Air Force overseas around the time of the Korean War.

"It was a shack, but I knew that would be the only one I had the opportunity to get," he said. "There wasn't much money at that time."

But Murphree — a young Alabama boy assigned to a base far from home — and his new wife, Jean, were going to do the best they could. They settled into that little house with no money and no community and did the only thing they knew to do.

They sought out a church. "I had made a profession of faith while I was overseas and had been counseled by the chaplains over there, but I had never been baptized," Murphree said.

And the day he joined First Baptist Church, Del Rio, and came up from the waters, a new journey — and a new friendship started. Murphree hadn't really learned what discipleship meant yet, but he was about to.

That lesson was going to come in the form of a couple named Fred and Martha Jean Sawyer.

"From that day forward, they were right by our side," Murphree said.

The Sawyers invited the young couple to eat at Martha Jean's parents' house after church one day, and from that day on, they automatically set two extra places at the table.

"They were precious peo-

ple, pillars of the church," Murphree said of the Sawyers. "And they started getting us involved."

Bedrock of family

They signed the Murphrees on to work with the youth and even sing in the choir, something neither of them ever thought they would be a part of. But that was just the Sawyers — they were always ready to involve them in whatever they were doing, whether it was a church activity or taking them to a park and buying them a meal or a milkshake when they didn't have the money to do it themselves.

And through that life-on-life relationship, the Murphrees learned something that became the bedrock of their family — they learned what it looked like to be a caring couple who spent their lives following Jesus.

The Sawyers never had any children of their own, but they impacted the Murphrees' future children, grandchildren and great-



Photos courtesy of Therman and Jean Murphree

Therman Murphree (left) is pictured here on one of the couple's visits back to Del Rio, Texas, to the home of Martha Jean (center) and Fred Sawyer (right).

grandchildren in ways they could've never imagined.

"They were compassionate and loving, and they supported the church in every respect," Murphree said. "God blessed us in knowing them."

'Special people'

And even though the Murphrees only stayed in Del Rio for 20 months before moving back to Alabama, God planted the seeds in their hearts through the Sawyers of what they want-

ed to become. The Sawyers stayed in touch too, calling and visiting regularly up until just a few months ago when Fred Sawyer passed away at almost 97 years old, following his wife, who died more than a decade ago.

"They were special people. They loved us like family and set an example for us," said Murphree, a member of First Baptist Church, Holly Pond. "If we could be that kind of example to people, I feel like the Lord would be pleased with us." ✠



Therman and Jean Murphree

Christian Crossword

By Evelyn M. Boyington Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		
12				13			14					
15				16				17				
18							19	20				
			21		22	23		24				
25	26	27			28		29		30	31	32	
33				34					35			
36				37					38			
			39	40			41		42			
43	44				45			46		47	48	49
50					51	52	53					
54					55					56		
57					58					59		

Across

- To plop.
- There is a ___ here, which hath five barley loaves. (John 6:9)
- Joshua built an altar unto the Lord God of Israel in mount ___. (Josh. 8:30)
- Then shall the ___ man leap as an hart. (Isa. 35:6)
- Age.
- A solo.
- The high and lofty One that inhabiteth ___. (Isa. 57:15)
- They passed through the ___ea as by dry land. (Heb. 11:29)
- Thick.
- Spatter.
- Indebted to.
- Whatsoever ye shall ___ in My name, that will I do. (John 14:13)
- Ship's direct steering.
- Soon.
- From the beginning

- of the year even unto the ___. (Deut. 11:12)
- Where ___ the men which came into thee this night? (Gen. 19:5)
- Let us lay ___ every weight. (Heb. 12:1)
- Pekoe.
- In a place where two ways ___. (Mark 11:4)
- In the first year of Darius the ___. (Dan. 11:1)
- The love of God is ___ abroad in our hearts. (Rom. 5:5)
- ___ art thou, Lord? (Acts 9:5)
- Revise.
- ___ you this day whom ye will serve. (Josh. 24:15)
- What thou ___, write in a book. (Rev. 1:11)
- Gentleman (German)
- Turn back thine hand as a grape ___ into the baskets. (Jer. 6:9)
- Annoys.

- Antelope.
 - Pro ___.
 - The smell of thy ___ like apples. (Song of Sol. 7:8)
 - Droop.
 - Break.
- ### Down
- They ___ before the men of Ai. (Josh. 7:4)
 - The Jews of ___ sought to stone thee. (John 11:8)
 - Sign.
 - There was not one feeble ___ among their tribes. (Ps. 105:37)
 - Hawaiian garland.
 - Where ___ thou? (Gen. 3:9)
 - All the ___ of my life. (Ps. 23:6)
 - British noblemen.
 - No man ___ it unto them. (Lam. 4:4)
 - Helps.
 - To whip.
 - I make all things ___. (Rev. 21:5)
 - Window glass.
 - Woe to them that

- are at ___ in Zion. (Amos 6:1)
- Sly.
- Eccentric wheel.
- Unrefined rock.
- They that weave ___ shall be confounded. (Isa. 19:9)
- The prophet of the Lord ... whose name was ___. (2 Chron. 28:9)
- Born.
- Mom and ___.
- Minor prophet.
- Cattle.
- I saw, and behold a white ___. (Rev. 6:2)
- Adjective suffix.
- Part of the face.
- Champion.
- As the partridge sitteth on ___. (Jer. 17:11)
- Of ___, the family of the Eranites. (Num. 26:36)
- Bristle.
- A ___ for him in the way. (Job 18:10)
- American Newspaper Association.
- Pull.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For May 17

Explore the Bible

By Robert E. Jackson, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



CITIZENS Romans 13:1–14

Submit (1–7)

Paul tells first-century believers to submit to their governing authorities because God appoints them and empowers them to punish the disobedient. In other words, political officials are God's servants, and He is working through them even if they do not know it (Isa. 45:1–7; Dan. 4:17). Therefore, to rebel against these authorities is to reject God's appointed delegation.

A key to understanding this passage is the word "submit," which does not mean "blindly obey." What Peter said before the council still applies: "We must obey God rather than people" (Acts 5:29). Thus, in the Holocaust, Christians were to obey God rather than Hitler.

Nevertheless, under normal circumstances, Christians submit to their leaders out of their "conscience" or awareness that the Lord ordains all authority. Furthermore, submitting to the government frees Christians from fear of the "sword" or punishment of the government.

For example, part of this submission is to pay taxes. Christians do not fear the wrath of the IRS because we have reported our income and taken legitimate deductions.

Instead of being troublemakers, Christians respect and honor others, even government officials. This message is especially appropriate in our current political climate. How many times just in the past few weeks have we heard disparaging remarks about leaders?

At times we deplore leaders' beliefs, political persuasion and even private lives. Still, we must pray for authorities, keep our mouths closed to maligning them and set an example by submitting, respecting the office and honoring our leaders for the glory of Christ.

Love (8–10)

The apostle plays on the theme of debt (13:7) as he returns to his teaching on love (Rom. 12:9–21). Love is an obligation just as taxes and repayment of debt are an obligation (vv. 7–8). While Christians

should owe no one, we are indebted in love.

Origen, an early church father, said, "Let your only debt that is unpaid be that of love — a debt which you ... will never succeed [fulfill]." He is correct; it is impossible to pay off this debt because there is always a "neighbor" to love. To support this position, Paul cites the four most famous commandments that deal with interpersonal relationships. This kind of love chooses God's way.

For example, adultery is not "true love" because it shows a lack of concern for the married partner, no respect for the sexual partner and total self-centeredness. Instead of selfish love, the Mosaic law is "summed up" or fulfilled in loving others.

In short, love must be central in all our relationships. To love our neighbor as ourselves is to understand that Christ first loved us, and we respond to others out of this same kind of love.

Anticipate (11–14)

Paul urgently reminds us that each day is closer to the return of Christ. My prayer is that all Christians will wake up and get busy fulfilling the things Paul emphasized in this letter. The night is almost over, Jesus is coming soon. We must actively "take off" and "put on." With determination and purpose, we should throw off the things in our lives that keep us from being the people God desires. With equal zeal, we must put on the armor or weapons of light.

We are at the epicenter of a cosmic battle in which the armor of Christ is crucial for success. Our outcome is bleak if we continue to live like the world. Our strength is insufficient for such a battle.

However, we are to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" and His divine power. We are assured the victory is in Him.

Therefore, look to His coming again with eager anticipation as we cry with all the saints, "Come, Lord Jesus!" ✠

Bible Studies for Life

By James Riley Strange, Ph.D.

Professor of New Testament, Samford University



SERVE Galatians 5:13–15; 6:1–5, 10

Today is the fourth in our series on traits that can mend and strengthen relationships among Christians.

Our passage comes near the end of a letter in which Paul addresses a problem: in the region of Galatia, Gentiles who responded to the gospel that Paul preached are now requiring males to be circumcised. That explains Paul's famous statement at the beginning of chapter 5: "For freedom Christ has set us free [from the law]."

The letter is infamous for its acrimony (1:6; 3:1, 3), against which the gentler sections stand out.

In fact, Paul makes his harshest comment in 5:12 before abruptly switching to this instruction on mutual service and love.

Start reading at 4:21 for context.

Show your love by serving the other person. (5:13–15)

The Greek word translated "freedom" can mean both manumission of a slave and license to behave as one wishes. Paul will play on both senses.

Gentiles who turn to Israel's God because of the gospel must not keep the Jewish law if they think they will be justified with God by doing so. That is a form of spiritual slavery (5:1). Neither, however, are they free to indulge their desires (literally, "the flesh"). Rather, they are to control their desires through another type of servitude: devotion to one another through love. (Paul also contrasts desire and love in 1 Thess. 4:1–12.)

Paul says that the whole law is fulfilled in the commandment to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev. 19:18; compare Rom. 13:9). Jesus quoted this Scripture in a similar way (Matt. 22:37–40; Mark 12:28–33; Luke 10:27). This is probably what Paul calls "the law of Christ" in Gal. 6:2.

In verse 15 we learn what Paul means by desires/"the flesh" in this instance: strife in the congregation (see the "works of the flesh" in 19–21).

Here Paul uses two metaphors of food: Paul likens strife to fellow believers devouring one another. The antidote to these destructive works is mutual servitude — what Paul also calls living "by the Spirit" (verse 16). Such living produces "fruit" (virtues) that feeds the congregation (22–26).

Serving others means helping to carry their burdens. (6:1–5)

Paul has a few more things to say about the congregation. The first is who is qualified to correct a wrongdoer (those who "have received the Spirit") and how they should do it ("in a spirit of gentleness" — a fruit of the Spirit).

"Bear one another's burdens" is another reference to mutual servitude. In Christ, all statuses are leveled (Gal. 3:28): all "are nothing" and deceive themselves if they "think they are something." Paul alludes to the fact that slaves occupied the lowest rung in the Roman household, below even the children they taught. This is the attitude that members of the congregation are to adopt toward one another.

Verse 5 sounds like it contradicts verse 2, but we should assume coherence. According to Paul, the obligation to help one another does not relieve each Christian of responsibility for his or her own "work." Paul often uses "work" or "works" to refer to how a person lives (see Gal. 5:19). "Works of the law" do not justify (Gal. 2:15–21), but we will be judged according to our deeds (Rom. 2:6–11).

Seize every opportunity to serve. (6:10)

This is the last sentence Paul dictates before taking up the pen in verse 11. Here again he uses the word "work," now a verb (NIV: "do"), and he expressly ties it to the idea of "the household of faith." As household members who serve one another, how often will opportunities to "work for the good of all" arise? Until the Lord returns, they will never end. ✠



Media reviews

MOVIES/TV

Netflix's 'The English Game' series leads May streaming lineup

By Michael Foust
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

One of the best new series on Netflix spotlights a slice of little-known English history and a sport that rarely gets front-page coverage in the U.S.

Titled “The English Game,” the six-part series tells a riveting story of soccer’s transition in the late 1800s from a sport enjoyed only by England’s wealthy elite to one that was also played by hard-working blue-collar men.

Based on a true story

It is based on a true story about soccer legend Fergus Suter, who in the series helps Blackburn become the first working-class team to win the prestigious FA Cup by defeating the Old Etonians, a team composed of high-class elites.

But even if you hate soccer, don’t worry. “The English Game” has an entertaining plot even non-sports fans will enjoy.

In the first episode, Suter is paid by a businessman

to move to Darwen and play for the local soccer club, with the goal of winning the FA Cup title. Suter works in the local mill to hide the fact he was illegally paid to play. (At the time, soccer was limited to amateurs.)

Because Darwen’s soccer team is made up of mill-workers, any strike by the workers also threatens the soccer season. That happens in Episode 1, but the strike is quickly resolved — and the local townspeople collect money to pay the team’s train fare for a cross-country game.

Eventually, Suter joins another team, Blackburn, after it agrees to pay him more. (The extra funds allow him to support his impoverished mother and siblings.)

“The English Game” is a story about a lot of things, including the English class struggle to survive and the role of sports in society. At first, the two classes seem worlds apart — fighting in the streets and in the courtroom — but then Suter



‘The English Game’

Netflix photo

befriends Arthur Kinnaird, a wealthy player for the Old Etonians. They learn they have a lot in common, including a unique passion for the game others don’t share.

The series has a little bit of romance. It even has a few moments of dialogue about Christianity that might be worth a discussion.

More importantly, it remains largely in family-friendly territory for adults, teens and maybe tweens. (Although you might need to skip one or two scenes.) The language is minimal and the romance relatively tame (kissing only; we learn of an out-of-wedlock birth).

If you enjoyed “Downton Abbey” and you like all things British, then you likely will enjoy “The English Game” too.

Also streaming this month:

Adults/teens

► “*The Big Show Show*” (Netflix) — A professional wrestler settles down with his wife and three

children after retirement. The series stars real-life wrestler The Big Show and is rated TV-G, yet includes some TV-PG content (a handful of OMGs, for example).

► “*God’s Not Dead*” (Netflix) — A college student stands up for Christ when his atheist professor criticizes Christianity. Rated PG for thematic ma-

terial, brief violence and an accident scene.

Children

► “*Dr. Seuss’ Horton Hears a Who*” (Hulu) — An elephant named Horton discovers a city of creatures on a speck of dust and risks his life to save them. Why? Because a “person’s a person, no matter how small.” It’s a great film with a pro-life message. Rated G. 🌟



‘Dr. Seuss’ Horton Hears a Who’

IMDB photo

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.

Investing in women's lives

CWJC of Rusk County, Texas, helps women discover their true worth

By **Trennis Henderson**
WMU National Correspondent

When it comes to impacting women's lives through the ministry of Christian Women's Job Corps, Christie Gambrell's basic perspective is, "At CWJC, we help meet the felt needs of women as we help them find their true worth through Jesus."

As executive director of Christian Women's Job Corps of Rusk County, Texas, Gambrell has worked with hundreds of women through the past several years.

Among CWJC's diverse offerings are English as a Second Language, which includes citizenship classes, and Life Skills training, which addresses such topics as money management, healthy relationships, computer classes, Bible storying and mentoring.

Volunteers also provide literacy and high school equivalency (GED) tutoring. Additionally, CWJC of Rusk County is one of six CWJC programs in the nation that include a WorldCrafts artisan group, a fair trade compassion ministry of national Woman's Missionary Union.

Noting "we work with about 50 women every year and usually about that many volunteers," Gambrell said, "When you work with this many women, you see women who succeed and women who don't. But that's true in every form of education and Christian ministry."

'Wonderful successes'

"We've had some wonderful successes," she added. "Each semester we see women successfully enter the workforce. This past year we had four women who received their citizenship. We have women who've gone to college. We have one who's working on her master's degree right now."

Nita Tirado is among those success stories. She first came to CWJC to get help with earning her GED. She then enrolled in the Life Skills classes where she gained computer



WMU photo by Pam Henderson
Christie Gambrell (center) drops in on a tutoring session led by CWJC volunteer Diana Willis (left). Willis, who provides math tutoring to CWJC participants, said she enjoys 'helping people learn something that they don't know.'

skills and other practical training.

Even more significantly, she learned about the gospel of Christ and accepted Jesus as her personal Savior.

Following her CWJC involvement, she successfully found employment before eventually getting married and becoming a stay-at-home mom.

My CWJC classes "gave me confidence in general," Tirado reflected. "My favorite class out of Life Skills was Bible study," she added. "It was amazing for me. It really was. I just felt peace. It was something that I was needing at that time in my life."

During the past few years, Tirado and her husband have been paired with a CWJC volunteer couple who provide mentoring and Bible study.

That connection "has been very important in my family's life because our mentors are the sweetest

people," Tirado emphasized.

"In my life, I've never had anybody like them. They show you love as a couple. They're older and they're still holding hands and that just gave me this really nice feeling of that's how I want to be with my husband when we're old.

"The mentoring has been the biggest thing that has helped me in my life," Tirado noted. "It helps us to be better parents and to guide our kids on God's path. That's the biggest blessing of coming here for me."

Gambrell noted recruiting mentors typically is one of the biggest challenges for most CWJC sites.

Participants "who are able to have mentors are the ones that I always see the greatest success with," she added. "I don't think people understand the importance of having somebody who's your personal cheerleader, someone to stick with

you and encourage you. That's especially true with single women or women who don't have a supportive family."

Along with mentoring and training, Gambrell said their partnership with WorldCrafts also has been a significant resource.

"Our county is rural. We have over 900 square miles, lots of little communities, and there aren't a lot of good work opportunities for women," she explained. "Early on in our program, we began to look for ways to help women supplement their incomes.

"It's been such an amazing thing for our ladies to be part of WorldCrafts," Gambrell said. "Having a student artisan business allowed our ladies to be able to do something to help earn income. I remember one girl who had never made anything in her life. She couldn't believe people were buying things she made."

In addition to the WorldCrafts partnership, CWJC of Rusk County artisans also produce products that are distributed locally, including crocheted chemo hats for chemotherapy patients in area hospitals.

'Our missions field'

"Christian Women's Job Corps has been a wonderful way to reach women in the community with the gospel of Jesus Christ, with encouragement for their lives and with support," Gambrell said. "Our missions field is right here."

Diana Willis, one of the CWJC volunteer tutors, has 16 years of experience as a high school math teacher. Noting that many of the participants pursuing their GED needed help with math, she said, "I felt like I could make a little bit of a difference.

"I enjoy helping people learn something that they don't know," she added. "I feel like my spiritual gift is service, and I feel like it's a service to help others improve their life and work toward their GED if they don't have it. It's just fulfilling to know that I'm helping somebody along that path."✝

"It's great to see them become someone that they didn't think they could be. It's because somebody believed in them and somebody invested in their lives. That's what Christian Women's Job Corps is all about."

Christie Gambrell
CWJC of Rusk County, Texas



A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO WXJC RADIO,
our partner in producing TAB Talks, which airs Saturdays at 2 p.m.
and is released as a podcast the following Monday morning
at tabonline.org/podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts.



**FM 101.1 AM 850
BIRMINGHAM
WXJCRADIO.COM**

**THE MOST POWERFUL BIBLE
TEACHING SIMULCAST IN AMERICA**



In Touch Ministries

**WITH DR. CHARLES STANLEY
WEEKDAYS AT 8:30 AM**

