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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

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Pray for JAPAN

Japan prayer effort continues despite Olympics postponement

By Margaret Colson
The Alabama Baptist

Known as the “land of the rising sun,” Japan is one of the most unreachable countries in the world, with less than 1% of the country’s 126 million people professing Christ.

It’s the venue of the 2021 Olympics, rescheduled from this year because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

And it’s home to four Alabama Baptist families who are serving as missionaries in the country more than 6,000 miles from “sweet home Alabama.”

That is why Japan is the focus of a 30-day call to prayer for Alabama Baptists.

The prayer effort was scheduled for June 25 through July 24 prior to the pandemic.

Prayer is priority

July 24 would have marked the opening ceremonies for the 2020 Olympics.

Still, even without the Olympics occurring this year, prayer for Japan remains a priority.

“Our missionaries there are really excited,”

said Scotty Goldman, director of global missions for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

“Ask any missionary anywhere, ‘What’s one thing we can do for you?’ Without fail, every one of them have said to me, ‘Pray for us.’ They know that without prayer, their ministry is going to struggle. To know that they’ve got people all over their home state who are lifting them up for 30 days, that’s going to be really special for them.”

The plan

for the 30-day prayer commitment began to take shape after Goldman and Matt Burford, SBOM evangelism strategist for north central Alabama, took a vision trip to Japan, where they met and visited the Alabama Baptist and Texas Baptist missionaries investing their lives in the
(See ‘30 days,’ page 14)

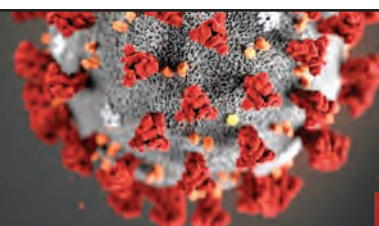


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COVID-19

See pages 6–7 for information and updates

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The crossword puzzle can be found on page 15.

Cowboy church hopes to be 'burning bush God uses'

When we put the picture in the June 18 issue of the Burning Bush Cowboy Church chuck wagon, we didn't get it exactly right.

It wasn't their wagon. But this one is — and though it's not quite ready to serve, it almost is, thanks to the hard work of Charles Walker, who has been working hard to build out the chuck box to go inside it.

Bigger move

"We've got it finished pretty much and will be moving it out soon," said his son, Alvie Walker, who serves as pastor of Burning Bush, located in Troy.

In fact, it's part of a bigger move the church has going on — it recently purchased a 42-acre property with a barn they're converting into a new church building. On the land, they have a fishing pond and are planning to build a full-size horse arena along with the church building, which will be made of rough-hewn timber on the inside.

"Our church is made up of horse people, people from the cowboy culture or people who just like the fact



Photo courtesy of Alvie Walker

Alvie Walker (left) and his father, Charles, stand next to the chuck box the elder Walker has been building for the chuck wagon at Burning Bush Cowboy Church, Troy.

that it's very laid back, very 'come as you are,'" said Alvie Walker, who planted the church with his wife, Priscilla, around six years ago as a strategic church plant of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

They have about 50 members and average 20 or 30 on Sundays — sometimes people have to be out on Sundays to get the cows put up or the hay put up, he said.

It's called Burning Bush Cowboy Church because God used a burning bush to speak to Moses, and Alvie Walker hopes the church will "be that burning bush God uses to speak to the people."

Growing in faith

"Everything we do, we try to do it to lift God up," he said.

The people there are growing in their faith, and watching God provide a new church building for them has only increased that faith. They see a lot of potential for ministry at the new property, and that of course includes the chuck wagon, Alvie Walker said.

"God has just been in this move," he said. "We've been blessed." (Grace Thornton)



Photo courtesy of Alvie Walker

The Alabama Baptist will not publish a July 2 issue. The next issue will be July 9.

Back to Campus special issue

Shout out to **Boyce College at Southern Seminary** for reserving a spot in TAB's special Back to Campus issue coming this summer. Call 800-803-5201 for more information.

TAB Media

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

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MY RASHIONALE

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

jrash@thealabamabaptist.org
@RashionalThts



Taking a minute to reflect before we tackle the second half

Wow — 2020 is something else, isn't it? We've dealt with some heavy issues in the first half of this year, and we've not even touched several items of concern to people of faith, particularly those who are Baptist.

But those discussions will have their day. For now, it might be a good point to pull back and recenter ourselves before we attempt to tackle the second half of this intense year.

We want to do a little reflecting here at TAB Media as well and stop to thank you all for your support, encouragement and partnership.

Staying connected truly made the difference for us. Your subscriptions to *The Alabama Baptist*, your gifts through the Cooperative Program, your engagement on social media and your generous TAB donations are taking us to a new level.

We never could have guessed 2020 would have turned out the way it did, but we are grateful for God's practical wisdom in helping us move forward in the digital arenas before COVID-19 changed day-to-day operations.

Because of you, we were able to be fully functioning with our podcast ministry and the cartridges for the visually impaired.

We also spent 2019 preparing for mobile office setups with most staff members so we could better cover the state and surrounding areas more efficiently.

So when the pandemic hit, our staff basically executed the plans we already had in place.

For the few positions that function best onsite, we made some quick adaptations and adjusted to a fully functioning operation from multiple locations and across state lines.

In other words, we joined the rest of the world and worked from home with the exception of two staff members who maintained onsite office hours to serve in a sort of "command central" role.

The paper continued to be printed and mailed each week, and we even added a weekly four-page, in-depth look at various aspects of COVID-19.

And while we worked to cover a broad range of topics around the coronavirus — especially of interest to people of faith — we also tried to use less space on the aspects widely covered by other media sources.

We intentionally kept about 75% of the paper focused on "routine" life issues and happenings each week to help maintain perspective and calmness as much as possible.

Our amazingly talented and creative TAB Media team also managed to launch new efforts while continuing to update and polish existing systems.

On Instagram, you'll now find consistent stories featured. On Facebook, you'll find a new "Beyond the Headlines" group for deep-dive conversations. On the website, we debuted a new Business & Ministry Directory.

The team also created a TAB Highlights e-newsletter that hits your inboxes on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and provides easy access to that day's podcast release.

And on the TAB Media Group YouTube channel, we stepped up our offerings with video interviews from TAB Talks and other coverage opportunities. 🙌

RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

Simple act of celebrating with older siblings during their moment in the spotlight offers expanded life lesson

Among the Class of 2020 high school graduates across the nation are my nephew — Jacob Davis, Russellville High School — and niece — Taylor Mitchell, Rock Hill (S.C.) High School.

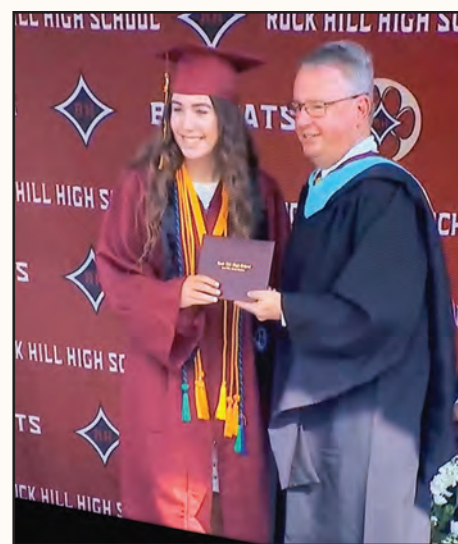
Jacob and Taylor both have younger siblings who are watching them receive endless accolades at the moment.



JACOB DAVIS

Special events, messages and cards, monetary and other gifts, lots and lots of photos — and the graduation ceremony itself — captured everyone's attention during the month of June.

And through it all, the younger



Taylor Mitchell graduates from Rock Hill (S.C.) High School on June 6.

siblings shared in the joy and celebration. They weren't jealous or upset about the lack of attention they received. They understand they

are important too, but for this moment, the focus shifts to the graduates in the family.

Watching them roll with everything so well made me think about how the same thing happens when a family member is suffering in some way.

During those times, we may pour most of our effort into the family member needing attention, and that sometimes means other family members receive less attention. But when these seasons happen, it doesn't mean the remaining family members are any less valuable. It only means a particular family member needs focused attention at that moment.

Could this concept also apply in the national conversation about racial and biblical justice?

—Jennifer Davis Rash

Your Voice



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

First person: Disrupted plans don't disrupt our callings

By Stella McMillian
International Mission Board

My bags were packed. My goodbyes were said. I was ready to start my second term serving with the International Mission Board in East Asia. All I was waiting on was my Taiwanese visa, sure to arrive any day.

Then I got an unexpected call from the embassy.

The good news? The visa had been approved. The bad news? It was approved the same day the borders in Taiwan closed to prevent the spread of coronavirus. I wouldn't be going anywhere anytime soon.

I'm not the only IMB worker unexpectedly kept from my place

of service by this pandemic. Some of us have been displaced by travel restrictions, others by medical needs that necessitate relocating.

One thing we all have in common, however, is separation from people God has burdened us for by circumstances we can't control.

Thankfully, this season will likely be temporary. By God's grace, one day this pandemic will end. For some, these separations are far more permanent.

In just a few short years as a missionary, I've heard more stories than I ever expected of coworkers who had to leave ministries they loved far sooner than they would have planned.

No matter what, believers are first and foremost called to God Himself. Like the prophet Habakkuk, we can rejoice in the Lord "though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines."

For the believer, the Lord is an unshakable refuge strong enough to bear us up through any storm. Our calling to know and love Him never changes.

No matter what, believers are also called to each other. Scripture describes the church as a body for a reason. We are called to be united in Christ and to bear each other's joys and sorrows.

This seems so fundamental, but it really came to life for me this

last year when I needed help from the believers in my life more than ever before. Countless times and in countless ways, they were God's provision to support and strengthen me as I navigated difficult decisions and transitions.

No matter what, we are called to proclaim the gospel. Scripture tells us to "always be ready to give an answer" when we are asked about the hope we have. Nothing can disrupt this calling, not even being quarantined during a pandemic.

Though the family members I'm staying with currently are all believers, just a few days ago, an unbelieving friend from my old city messaged me. She said she'd been reading her Bible and wanted help understanding Romans.

I can't travel, go to church or even visit my grandmother right now, but I can still share my faith. My friend and I are entire continents apart, but God has graciously opened a door for me to share truth with her. Our calling to proclaim the gospel never changes.

A year like this is almost comical, with so many ups and downs rounding out with yet another unforeseen change of plans. I know I'm not alone in that. Disrupted lives are a shared frustration around the world these days.

We can't control much right now, but as believers we can press on faithfully in the steadfast callings on our lives even as we wait for this season to pass.

Response to Explore the Bible commentary on Romans 14

I must firmly disagree with Rob Jackson on his application of "freedom in Christ" in the May 21 issue.

"Freedom in Christ" behaviors apply to preference items which are not specifically stated in Scripture as right or wrong.

This does not give license to waive clear commands, such as the Ten Commandments. Otherwise, as many do, we could justify breaking all of God's laws, including prohibiting the casual use of God's name, murder, adultery, stealing, lying and coveting.

The fourth commandment

orders us to do no work on the Sabbath. For those who wish to claim mowing grass and washing cars is not work, we are commanded to give no appearance of evil and to give no opportunity for unbelievers to judge our behaviors as duplicitous, giving occasion to mock God. We cannot honor or love God through disobedience to His clear commands, contradicting biblical truth. To shop electively (non-emergently) on Sabbath supports, encourages and even forces others to break God's law forbidding work on Sabbath. We have all been thankful for those who provide essential

services on Sabbath to meet occasional emergent needs, which may have been our fault for not tying "the ox" up properly in preparation for Sabbath, but this should not be routine behavior for a Christian's convenience.

Yes, we do not condemn the disobedient, whether rebellious or simply ignorant, because God is the Judge and our law is love. We are commanded to forgive. However, we must always discern what is right and wrong based on Scripture and behave accordingly.

Bob Cosby
Birmingham, Ala.

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

EDITOR'S NOTE — Stella McMillian is an IMB worker and contributing writer. Name has been changed for security reasons.

“ It is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits and humbly to implore His protection and favors. ”

GEORGE WASHINGTON
U.S. president

We all have many difficulties, many troubles, and our woes;

But that's just the way things are, the way that each life goes.

I'm really, really thankful for my family and each friend,

Who are there to encourage when there seems to be no end.

Just the simple words, "I love you" sometimes is all we need,

To soothe a broken heart, that can lift us up indeed.

So Lord as I'm reflecting, for this is what I pray;

Use me to encourage someone else along the way.

It may not be a lot of trouble or cost a single dime,

Just to tell someone I prayed for them and spend a little time.

So Lord help me take the bless-

ings of encouragement to me,

And share them now with someone else, for this is what I plea.

Charlie Button
Huntsville, Ala.

One thing that hasn't changed in my 45 years of ministry — relationships. That phone call, that personal touch, nothing can compare to that.

Jamie Baldwin
State Board of Missions

In the last election cycle, I voted for the candidate I felt was the least bad candidate. ... The reality is there is no perfect candidate. POTUS does not stand for Pastor of the United States but for President of the United States. We must realize every president is a human with

the flaws and ills of humanity. ...

Jesus is not running for President. ... Therefore no matter who runs and is ultimately elected, they will always be the least bad candidate.

Marshal Ausberry
SBC first vice president

A lot of us, we are not listening to understand. We are listening to respond.

Pastor Terry Scalzitti
Ocean View BC
Myrtle Beach, S.C.

The one great crime on the part of the disciple, according to Jesus Christ, is worry. Whenever we begin to calculate without God, we commit sin.

Oswald Chambers

From the *Twitterverse*

@SpenceSpencer01

Keep all things in perspective: Jesus is still on the throne.

@timkellernyc

The gospel changes everything.

@PaulTripp

God will expose the inadequacy of where you've placed your hope while he gives you hope that will never shame or fail you.

@lecræ

Just out here trying to be the Samaritan in Jesus' parable. If we aren't going to serve our neighbor, shame on us for standing by critiquing them.

@MichaelCatt

It's easier to point fingers at those

we disagree with than it is to look in the mirror and ask Jesus what He thinks of what I'm thinking. Bill Stafford use to say, "Take everything to the cross."

@drtonyevans

Hope is where you're going. Not where you are or where you've been. Take heart. Hope again.

@imTerenceLester

You're not wealthy until you have something money can't buy.

@Blackwell_Kevin

Much of our cultural ills can be traced back to the breakdown of the family. God's design still works — godly husband disciplining his family to know Scripture, love God and live obediently. We must get back to His original plan!

@brocraigc

It won't be long until pastors, worship pastors and student and children's pastors all across @EtowahBaptist will spring into action preaching the gospel, exalting Christ and connecting online and in person. Thank you. I'm grateful for you. I'm praying for you. #thisismyneighborhood

@richardblackaby

True leaders solve problems. That is their calling. It is not to blame others for the problems, or to make empty promises about dealing with problems. It is to face issues head on, and resolve them.

@bobgoff

We shouldn't say everyone's invited if we're going to act like they're not welcome when they come.

Letters to the Editor

My heart is heavy. Where do I start, and how do I keep it short?

After reading the June 11, 2020, issue, I must respond.

I became a police officer in March of 1962. I retired in 1989. In that time as command officer, I learned a little about how those in the thin blue line think.

None I ever knew wanted to take another person's life. No matter how right or wrong, when an officer takes a life, his or her life is changed forever for the worse. Not one word of prayer is in TAB for the ones that protect and defend us.

Aren't the officers involved presumed innocent until proven guilty? Aren't they deserving of their day in court? The most vile offender would be.

As long as the SBC, TAB and major media demonize the police, soon all you will have for police are demons.

Lt. Anthony C. Berry (ret.)
Foley, Ala.

Thanks for posting a statement regarding the death of the citizen at police hands.

Now please post a statement supporting the law enforcement personnel in Alabama as they attempt to restore order.

Anarchy will result in more lives of all colors being lost. And there won't be any churches to go to.

First Confederate monuments taken down, next Founding Fathers monuments, next places of worship.

Dennis Ferrell
Alabama native
Oro Valley, Ariz.

'PERFECT STORM'

of issues



Unsplash.com

Tips for churches confronting pornography in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic

By **Shawn Hendricks**
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

On March 24, one of the internet's biggest pornography websites offered a month of free premium services under the guise of wanting to help people through a difficult time. That day, the site reported an 18.5% increase in worldwide website traffic.

But even as the COVID-19 pandemic has amplified a "perfect storm" of issues, including pornography and sex addiction, it also has increased ministry opportunities for the church and healing, according to those who counsel and minister to individuals struggling with sexual sin.

The porn industry has sought to capitalize on the pandemic in order to grow business, said Traylor Lovvorn, executive director of Undone Redone, a ministry that helps individuals and couples who have been hurt by sexual addiction, pornography and other related issues.

Pornography use and sex addiction also have likely grown worse while people have been in isolation, according to Greg Oliver, executive director of Awaken Recovery, a ministry that helps those struggling with sexual brokenness and addiction.

Oliver noted that people are scared, vulnerable and entering

"you-name-it into their search bars."

"The porn industry knows that," Oliver said. "So without a doubt, I would say [pornography addiction] is up."

Isolation is a "benchmark of porn addiction" and pornography a "wounded way of seeking connection," Oliver said.

The change in routines brought on by the pandemic only adds to the

personal crisis, Lovvorn said.

"All that stuff that normally, in a normal pace of life, is kind of neatly compartmentalized and never really surfaces begins to surface," he said. "When that begins to happen, we naturally begin to run to whatever coping mechanisms or ways of medicating that anxiety."

Ministries like Undone Redone and Awaken Recovery, which utilize a variety of in-person group and individual counseling strategies, have had to rethink their approach and get creative in reaching out to those who have been isolated for weeks and months at a time.

Online approaches

While Zoom calls, podcasts, webinars and other online approaches are better than not meeting at all, they don't provide the same level of support, Oliver said.

"There's something special about sitting in the room face-to-face with

other people who share your struggle," Oliver said. "There were a lot of people who were regular attendees at our support group meetings that we didn't see or hear from for really the whole eight or 10 weeks we were not able to meet in person."

Since some of the in-person meetings have resumed, about 60% of his clients have returned, Oliver said, with many sharing their struggles with being in quarantine.

But while meeting in person can be more effective, both ministries say they will continue to utilize online platforms to help more people.

And now is a good time for the church to address sexual addiction, said Lovvorn, who believes the church has been silent on these issues for too long.

"The church has not been talking about healthy sex," he said. "The church has been silent, and into that vacuum comes a very different message. Really, it's a perversion certainly of this beautiful gift that God has given us."

Overall, these difficult times are an opportunity for the church to offer support and solutions to those struggling with addiction by helping them realize they are part of "a vast group of people," Oliver said.

"Christians addicted to porn, the vast majority of them, feel deeply shameful about it, and they would stop if they could," he said. "So a message that says, 'Quit looking at porn!' is not going to be helpful. A message that says, 'Here's how we

can help you get free from porn' is going to be much more helpful."

Both ministries are actively seeking to grow partnerships among Southern Baptist churches and the evangelical community to provide counseling to those who need it.

Partnerships


Most pastors aren't equipped and trained to provide the needed counseling on their own, said Oliver, who is a member of The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham. He noted that "most of our seminaries don't do very much in terms of training pastors on working with sexually broken people."

One of the challenges, Oliver said, is that church leaders need to identify trustworthy outside groups and then be willing to let them do their jobs.

"There are so many good counselors who are themselves believers who don't want to usurp the spiritual authority of the church," Oliver said.

Ultimately, pornography addiction recovery is a gateway to the gospel, said Lovvorn. The solution is about calling men to "a bigger and better story" and addressing the root issues of the problem.

"God can use these things to bring us to Him," he said, "and help us see our desperate need for Him and that actually is a good thing."

For more information about these ministries, go to undoneredone.com and awakenrecovery.com. 

"God can use these things to bring us to Him and help us see our desperate need for Him, and that actually is a good thing."

Traylor Lovvorn
executive director
Undone Redone

For more information about these ministries, go to undoneredone.com and awakenrecovery.com.

Reforming Alabama's

PRISON SYSTEM

COVID-19 stresses prison system; faith leaders promote restoration and redemption

By **Martha Simmons**
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

CCOVID-19 concerns only add to Alabama's underfunded and overcrowded state prisons. State leaders all agree the system is in crisis, but the global pandemic shifted plans of legislative action earlier in the year.

Going into the 2020 legislative year, more than 40 Alabama pastors and faith leaders — along with the national Prison Fellowship Ministries — signed a letter to the Alabama Legislature calling for “a criminal justice system that is fair and redemptive for our young people and restores adults who are reentering society.”

Like all Christians living in a state of grace, incarcerated youth and adults should also receive a second chance in life, the faith leaders asserted.

“When young people commit delinquent acts, it damages our communities and requires proportional



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accountability measures. However, it is equally important that when we punish, we also provide opportunities to make amends, and offer young people who commit crime avenues to build personal character

and gain back the trust of the community,” they wrote. “Likewise, for those who are returning to the community we also need to provide opportunities to make amends and offer adults who have committed crime a path to redemption. This includes offering a second chance to earn back the trust of the community and to restore themselves to their neighbors as productive and peaceful members of society.”

Chris Crain, executive director of Birmingham Metro Baptist Association, said he signed the letter because even convicted criminals should be thought of as God's children.

“Our legislators should understand that all people are created in the image of God,” Crain said. “Our Birmingham Metro Baptist pastors are helping former inmates find healing and help in life outside of the prison gates. ... Convicted felons must be helped to discover the dignity that comes through a personal relationship with God through Christ.

“This is not to ignore their crime and what the person owes for their wrongdoing,” Crain said. “Our goal

cannot be to simply keep people behind bars only to be released and offend again. We must help them move beyond their worst choices by creating a culture that fosters people living up to their God-given potential. Providing substance abuse treatment, job training and life skills classes in a faith-based environment will provide many of the necessary ingredients to change lives. Faith-based ministries are proven in reducing recidivism.

“Both justice and life transformation are biblical concepts,” Crain said. “I believe the gospel is a non-negotiable element for transforming broken lives in our prisons and criminal justice system. Likewise, only the gospel can bring justice and peace to victims.


“We should remember what Jesus will say to the faithful at the judgment, ‘I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ He will go on to say, ‘Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me,’” Crain said.

‘Brothers and sisters’

“Some of these men and women behind bars are our brothers and sisters in Christ. We cannot forget that,” Crain said.

The letter outlined a list of guiding biblical principles to be considered as work is done to change the youth justice system and criminal justice system.

The principles include the value of human life, community-based accountability, proportional punishment, avenues for personal transformation and rehabilitation of the formerly incarcerated as allowed by public safety concerns, including restoration of the rights and privileges previously lost in order to foster their ability to become productive citizens and taxpayers in society.”

Read the full text of the letter at tabonline.org/pastors-call-for-reform. 

Gov. Ivey addresses COVID-19 spread in Alabama jails, prisons

Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey issued a supplemental state of emergency proclamation June 9 in an effort to quell the spread of COVID-19 in state correctional facilities.

The SOE will ensure that inmates from county jails will be “processed according to prevailing medical standards,” including a 14-day quarantine.

The SOE ratifies the 30-day moratorium on inmate intake that was first announced March 20 and “requires county sheriffs and jails to maintain custody of state inmates until they can be safely transferred to [an Alabama Department of Corrections] facility.”

The SOE ensures counties will be reimbursed for the costs associated with housing state inmates for extended periods. It also provides counties liability protection against claims brought on by the additional responsibilities placed on them by the SOE order and reiterates the governor's commitment to the Barbour County consent decree and her desire that the DOC would return to pre-COVID-19 inmate intake levels as soon as safely possible.

A spokesperson for Ivey said the SOE emphasizes that state and county detention facilities “legally and practically” act as “players on the same team.” (TAB)

Mineral Springs member sees lives changed through jail ministry

For the past few months, Truett Maddox hasn't gotten to go into Chilton County jail like usual.

But it doesn't stop him from seeing the people he's loved and shared Jesus with there during the past 16 years.

"I ran into a guy recently down at the lake who said, 'I recognize you — you came to the jail when I was incarcerated,'" said Maddox, a member of Mineral Springs Baptist Church, Clanton. "I run into several from time to time who share that their life was changed because of my ministry there at the jail, and I tell them, 'The Lord changes you, not me. He deserves the credit for your change.'"

God's calling

Maddox first got involved in jail ministry 16 years ago when the pastor of Union Grove Baptist Church, Jemison, where Maddox attended at the time, started taking a group to the jail.

Other volunteers have come and

gone through the years, but Maddox has always stayed.

"I've felt the Lord called me to this ministry," he said.

Up until COVID-19 restrictions, he led a weekly worship service in the jail. It's a challenge, but it's rewarding, he said.

"If you see lives changed, it's worthwhile," he said.

Larry Felkins, retired director of missions for Chilton Baptist Association, said Maddox has kept the association's ministry at the jail alive through the years.

"He feels confident that he is supposed to be there," Felkins said. "It's not easy ministry, but he has stayed consistent and faithful."

Maddox insists he's the blessed one. "I get a blessing out of the inmates and their contributions in worship. I had one guy, he brought tears to my eyes with the songs he would share with us," Maddox said. "It's rewarding just to see the change God can make in a person's life." (Grace Thornton)

"It's rewarding just to see the change God can make in a person's life."

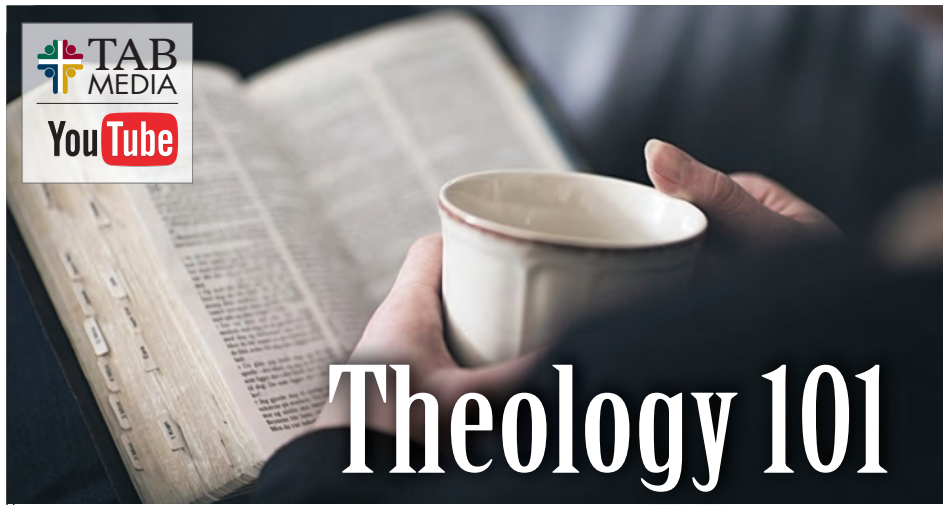
Truett Maddox member, Mineral Springs Baptist Church, Clanton

"[Truett Maddox] feels confident that he is supposed to be there. It's not easy ministry, but he has stayed consistent and faithful."

Larry Felkins, retired director of missions, Chilton Baptist Association



123rf.com



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Christology Through Figures

Bread

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.

Special to The Alabama Baptist

The sixth chapter of John opens with Jesus' miracle of feeding the 5,000, a miracle recorded in all four Gospels. Commonly, we identify as purposes for that notable miracle both feeding a hungry multitude and furnishing a backdrop for Christ's Bread of Life teaching that follows the miracle account. Thus, we add Bread to the figures of speech that refer to Christ.

Bread of life

In calling Himself the Bread of Life, Jesus gave the first of seven "I am" claims recorded in the Gospel of John when He declared, "I am the Bread of Life." In His teaching, Jesus referred multiple times to Himself as the living bread "which came down from heaven" (John 6:41, 51, 58).

Christ did not come into existence in a birth in Bethlehem. He has had eternal existence with the Father from eternity past. Only His incarnation had its beginning with a human birth.

Describing Himself as "the Bread of God ... who comes down from heaven," Christ went on to declare that He "gives life to the world" (John 6:33). Thus, two verses later He could accurately claim, "I am the Bread of Life." Not only does He have life in Himself, Christ also gives spiritual life to those who trust Him as Savior. This life He gives is also everlasting, as He promised, "If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever" (John 6:51).

In short, we confess that the living Christ gives eternal life to His own.

As the Bread of Life, Christ nourishes His people, thereby satisfying spiritual hunger. Thus, as the Bread, He sustains the spiritual life He imparts. He uses the inspired Scriptures, illuminated and applied by the Holy Spirit, as our spiritual nourishment.

Chapter 3 of Ezekiel opens with an object lesson in which God commanded the prophet to eat a scroll, filling his stomach with it. Ezekiel testified, "So I ate, and it was in my mouth like honey in sweetness" (v. 3). We might remind ourselves that when we seriously ingest the Scriptures, we find ourselves spiritually nourished inasmuch as the Bible serves as spiritual food served up by the Bread of Life Himself.

The figure of bread thus serves to inform us concerning the person of Christ — that He is the eternal Son of God, sent by the Father, saying, "My Father gives you the true Bread from heaven" (John 6:32). This same figure reminds us concerning the work of Christ that He imparts and sustains the life He gives us, making it both satisfying and eternal.✠

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.



‘God is on the throne’

Alabama Baptists urged to maintain hope amid nation’s racial tension

By Margaret Colson
The Alabama Baptist

Amid racial tension in our nation, Birmingham-area minister James Sutton urges Alabama Baptists to maintain hope.

“As people of faith we definitely have to maintain hope,” said Sutton, who currently serves on the Diversity Advisory Council for the Christian organization Converge.

In a wide-ranging interview with TAB Talks co-hosts Jennifer Davis Rash and Debbie Campbell, Sutton recalled how he traveled to Minnesota recently in an effort to foster relationships with black pastors, describing the experience as emotional.

It was “overwhelming to be on the ground where George Floyd was murdered, where his life was taken from him, to feel the energy of the community where he lived, worked and played, enjoyed life,” Sutton said.

Floyd is the 46-year-old black man, who was killed in Minneapolis, Minnesota, during a late May arrest in which a white police officer knelt on his neck for close to nine minutes while Floyd was handcuffed and lying face down on the pavement. Floyd’s death has sparked nationwide protests and calls for reform.

While in Minnesota, Sutton attended a memorial service for Floyd, during which there was an eight minute, 46-second moment of silence to signify the amount of time the officer’s knee was on Floyd’s neck.

“I wept the whole entire time,” said Sutton.

‘Just the latest’

“George Floyd is just the latest person in a very, very long list of people who have had their lives taken by police officers or by people who saw themselves as police officers,” said Sutton, who also mentioned the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery and Trayvon Martin.

“So it’s just another person. For me, George Floyd ... could have been my older cousin. He would have been the cousin who was taking me somewhere I shouldn’t have



TAB screen shot

TAB Talks co-hosts Jennifer Davis Rash (right) and Debbie Campbell (left), interview James Sutton, a graduate of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham, about fostering trust and unity for the June 15 podcast.

been going when I was younger. He would have been the person telling me things that I shouldn’t have known at the time. But we would have looked back at a family reunion and laughed at how naïve I was about those times. I see him as somebody who could have easily been an older cousin to me. It’s emotional in that regard,” Sutton said.

Although Sutton acknowledged that many white people in America and throughout the world have been involved in “marching ... and standing in solidarity with black people,” Sutton believes that black Christians and white Christians “have always responded differently to these kinds of issues.”

“In the same way there are two Americas that we experience — one that white people experience and one that black people experience — there’s also two churches unfortunately. And we have had to mourn and grieve alone many times.”

Through time, Sutton said he sees “more and more white brothers and sisters seem to be becoming aware and conscious of the history of this

country, of the history within their own churches and denominations and seem to be waking up. I think that’s very, very positive.”

Seek truth

Sutton expressed concern about what he described as a “slanted history of America ... an exceptionalism about America” and urged Americans to learn “the actual truth of the story. We also have to learn that there’s a history with black people and police. The first police for black people were slave-catchers. So

we’ve always had problems with law enforcement.”

“So we’ve always had this antagonistic relationship,” he said.

“It’s never been about whether we committed crimes or not; it’s always been about policing us, targeting us and protecting white citi-

zens from us. So it’s a lot to learn, and if our white brothers and sisters did that work (learned the history of black people and law enforcement), I think their eyes would be open to a great deal of what we’re saying even up to this present day and how they can actually help.”

He advised whites and blacks to

come together in legitimate friendships and emphasized that the friendships should not be based on a subordinate/in subordinate relationship, such as an employer/employee relationship. Once those relationships are established, truth should be honored.

A challenge

“Unfortunately I think our white brothers and sisters enter into these conversations wanting genuinely to help but not really being prepared for the full reality of the truth of our experience in this country or the truth of how this country came into being,” Sutton said. “Some people are very invested, very invested, in a false narrative, and when that narrative gets disrupted, they check out because their need is to maintain that false narrative.”

He challenged white believers to listen to interviews, podcasts and speeches, and to read books concerning racial inequities in America.

“All of this material has been there since there was an issue with race, an issue with justice. A lot of times when our white brothers and sisters ask, ‘What can we do?’ it becomes clear they have not been listening for the last 400 years because we’ve already answered that question. We’ve said, ‘Here’s a blueprint for how to solve these problems,’” pointing to systemic changes in society.

“Yes, there is a need to hope, but we also have to fight; we have to pray as people of faith,” Sutton said. “Hope is not necessarily that this world will get better. That’s not always the case. But our hope is that God will be glorified and that victory will be won because Jesus got up. That’s where the real hope is. The hope is not that all these systems will actually really change. I don’t know that they will.

“I do know that God is on the throne. I do know that vengeance is His. He will reserve final judgment for all those who have oppressed, who have murdered, who have stolen, who have harmed the widow and the orphan and the immigrant. He will get the victory,” Sutton concluded. ✝

To listen to the TAB Talks episode in its entirety, go to thealabamabaptist.org/podcast/fostering-trust-and-unity-amid-racial-tension/.

After Builders for Christ helped them, Pastor Steve Ledbetter (center) and other volunteers from Enon Baptist Church, Danville, got a glimpse of how they could help others in the same way.

‘This is how God works’



Enon Baptist Church Facebook photo

Lawrence County church finds new opportunity in construction missions partnership

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Steve Ledbetter says he remembers being a little discouraged when he left for vacation that year with his wife and daughters.

Before he left, he'd met with the long-range planning committee at Enon Baptist Church, Danville — the church he'd served as pastor for three or four years at that point — and he felt like they were facing an extreme challenge.

The growing congregation located in rural Lawrence County south of Decatur needed more space, but they were also small when it came to taking on the debt of a building project.

He expected to be faced with what felt like impos-

sible numbers again when he returned.

“But when we came back from vacation, they were really excited,” Ledbetter said of the committee.

‘Come and see’

“This is how God works,” Ledbetter said. “God had a pastor’s wife in Morgan County call one of the guys on our building committee and say, ‘Come over and see what the Builders for Christ are doing for us.’ And when they went, they were just amazed.”

Then someone came and helped Enon assess their facilities and their needs, and when it was all said and done, the committee felt like they could confidently move into the next phase.

“We were really pleased and excited with that — it seemed like God was opening a door for us,” Ledbetter said.

From there, everything went faster than they could’ve ever imagined.

The building went up. About 150 Builders for Christ volunteers worked hard, even shingling the roof in the night with rented high-powered lights because of the summer heat during the day.

“Within a week, we were in the dry,” Ledbetter said.

Ready to go

The church paid off their debt in four and a half years, and at the end of their building program, they had new classroom space, a gym and a larger foyer.

The gym was closed in last summer — enough to use it for their children’s ministries and see those ministries really grow.

Then during COVID-19 gathering restrictions, they were able to get the project wrapped up.

When they finally gathered back together in person recently, they were able to do it in a finished gym.

“God blessed us. We were needing to build and needing space, especially education space,” said Ledbetter, who has now been at the church for about 13 years. “God brought us so many people to help us work on it.”

But not only that — in the midst of that, God brought Enon Baptist a new missions passion in addition to a wonderful building, he said.

As a church, they got a taste for how they could help others through Builders for Christ.

“Now through the Builders for Christ we have three

opportunities each year to go out and help them with other churches, and we have done it every year since they built our building,” Ledbetter said. “A large number of our youth have gone each year to hang Sheetrock alongside our adults and do all kinds of construction work. It has been really neat to see that happen at Enon.”

‘Amazing ride’

He said this season at their church reminds him of Jeremiah 33:3 — God “has done mighty, mighty things” like he’d never seen before.

Along the way, the church has seen God’s faithfulness in such incredible ways that Ledbetter said they took someone’s suggestion and started keeping a log of all the things He had done.

“God has moved at Enon, and it’s been great,” Ledbetter said. “It’s been an amazing ride.”



Enon Baptist Church Facebook photo

When COVID-19 gathering restrictions were relaxed, Enon Baptist Church, Danville, members were able to gather in their new gym, which was finished while the church was meeting via Facebook Live.

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Opinion: ‘Reasoning is better than racism, rioting’

By Jay Wolf
Pastor, FBC Montgomery

Our collective attention has been captivated by the unjust and senseless death of George Floyd.

(While various reports exist about George’s character), an article in *Christianity Today* says he was a follower of Christ who mentored many young men in his hometown of Houston.

Another news story features George’s brother, Terrence Floyd, with his pastor, Kevin McCall, kneeling in prayer on the spot where his brother died and pleading with people to stop the

counterproductive riots by saying, “My family is a peaceful and God-fearing family. Stop the violence. Let’s do this another way.”

Let me suggest God’s “better way” to productively deal with wounds and bring healing can be found in Isaiah’s invitation, “Come let us reason together, says the Lord, though your sins are as scarlet, they can be as white as snow” (Isa. 1:18).

Reconciliation path

Reasoning is better than racism and rioting. God’s words overflow with hope and point us to the path of reconciliation.

The first step on God’s

“better way” is lament. We need to be sorrowful for wrongs done and injustices suffered.

Andy Westmoreland, president of Samford University in Birmingham, explained it this way: “Systemic racism does not endure simply due to corrupt systems; it endures because of hatred within individual hearts, sometimes known and sometimes not, a hatred that corrodes lives, families, institutions and nations. Hatred consumes all.”

Lamentation calls for owning our part of the problem and repenting of corrupt attitudes and actions. Lamenting and repenting requires a Jesus-prescribed humility. It requires surrendering our quest to be right and acknowledging when we’ve been wrong.

When I started following Jesus as a teenager, I began a process of metamorphosis that changed my vocabulary, values and views of people.

Like most humans, I was programmed to be prejudiced against people who were different than me. Sociologists call this “tribalism.”

Tribalism fuels the playful rivalry between Alabama versus Auburn.

On a global level, tribalism provides the toxins that start wars.

One extreme example of tribalism happened in 1994 between the Hutus and Tutsi tribes in Rwanda which resulted in 800,000 people being slaughtered in 100 days.

Authentic love

Jesus used His word in 1 John 4:7–8 to convict me of my tribalism and racial prejudice and called me to demonstrate my love for God by authentically loving others.

God struck me colorblind. My Savior demanded I see all people as made in His image and worthy of being



FBC Montgomery International Ministry Facebook screen shot
Jay Wolf is pastor of FBC Montgomery and part of a group of diverse pastors who have met regularly in Montgomery for 27 years.

treated with dignity, honor and respect.

Following lamenting comes listening. Take time to listen to hurting people and walk in their shoes. Be empathetic.

Jesus listened to the mourning of Mary and Martha after the death of Lazarus and our Savior wept as He sensitively shared their pain.

The Gospels record Jesus asking more than 100 questions. Develop a Christ-like curiosity to lead you to be “quick to listen” and do the hard work of trying to see your neighbor’s circumstances from their viewpoint.

Next translate listening into learning. As the old adage goes, “walk a mile in your brother’s shoes” before you judge them.

Paul put it better, “Accept one another as Christ has accepted you” (Rom. 15:7).

Everyone has been dealt some hard cards. Summon sympathy. Repress apathy. Seek harmony through learning people’s story and their struggles. True leaders are listeners and learners. But do not stop there.

We must engage in the Christ-like activity of love-motivated action.

Jesus said, “Love one another, even as I have loved you, for by your love the world will know that you follow Me.”

Furthermore, God calls us to love with our deeds. And here’s the beautiful bonus feature, “love casts out fear.” Love took Jesus to a cross. Let Christ’s love call you to cross the street and go to your wounded neighbors like the good Samaritan and bandage their wounds and carry them to a place of healing.

Focused on prayer

The police chief of Houston, Texas, Art Acevedo, beautifully captured God’s better way when he walked with those peacefully protesting George Floyd’s death.

After listening to their pain and sharing their journey, he pointed them to the Lord’s love by turning the protest march into a prayer meeting.

George’s death forms another paragraph in the sad encyclopedia of humanity’s atrocities.

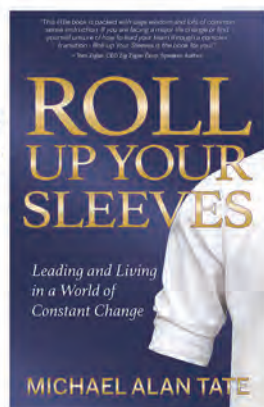
Always remember that Satan is the author of evil.

Jesus explained, “The thief comes to steal, kill and destroy, but I have come that you may have life in abundance” (John 10:10).

When we hate and hurt, we act as Satan’s agents of darkness.

But when we share God’s love and light we serve as the Savior’s redeeming agents of hope and reconciliation. 🌿

An inspiring parable with a biblically-based storyline to help leaders get people through their emotional wilderness to their promised land. Among many other lessons, **Roll Up Your Sleeves** provides a simple toolset for any leader facing complex change. It also creates a clear understanding of what transition does to employees, friends, and family and how you can help.



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To learn more about the author go to www.michaelalantate.com.

3 stories you should know



BP photo

The SBC Executive Committee unanimously elected Rolland Slade, pastor of Meridian Baptist Church, El Cajon, California, as its new chair June 16. Slade was unopposed and elected by ballot vote. Slade served the last two years as vice chair. As EC chair, Slade leads the SBC's fiduciary, fiscal and executive arm. SBC President J.D. Greear called Slade's election an 'exciting day for our convention' because Slade is the body's first African American chair. (BP)

PPP loan scams, fraud target small businesses

An estimated \$130 billion remains in the Paycheck Protection Program for small businesses, and scammers are on the prowl.

The FBI and the Federal Trade Commission are investigating thousands of fraud reports costing victims millions of dollars.

The Small Business Administration warns businesses and individuals to beware of phishing scams that include fake email links encouraging PPP loan applications; scams that offer faster processing of loans for a fee; robocalls asking businesses to verify bank account information; and fake lender applications.

If you believe you have encountered a PPP scam, contact local law enforcement or file a complaint with the FTC. To read more about scams targeting PPP loans, go to tabonline.org/ppp-scams. (TAB)

Supreme Court changes meaning of 'sex' in laws

In a 6-3 opinion, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled June 15 that the category "sex" in Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act encompasses "sexual orientation" and "gender identity," thereby providing non-discrimination protections for homosexual and transgender employees.

Religious liberty defenders said the justices' decision left employers with biblical convictions on sexuality open to legal challenges because the ruling changes the meaning of "sex" in hundreds of laws.

In the majority opinion, the justices acknowledged they were concerned about protecting free exercise of religion for employers but provided no assurances for those who act on their beliefs in hiring and firing.

Read more about the ruling at tabonline.org/court-ruling-sex. (BP)

— NEWSBRIEFS —

ABHC's historical preservation work recognized by national organization



The Alabama Baptist Historical Commission was recently awarded the coveted Davis C. Woolley Award for outstanding achievement in assessing and preserving Baptist history.

This is the third time ABHC has received the award granted by Baptist History and Heritage Society in partnership with the Association of Librarians and Archivists at Baptist Institutions.

Led by executive director Lonette Berg, ABHC was selected "for their dedication to preserving and sharing Alabama Baptist history," said Jennifer Taylor, chair of the Special Collection department at Samford University. In 2019, ABHC served in all 75 of the state's Baptist associations, conducting 137 workshops, historical tours and anniversary presentations.

In addition, ABHC provides an opportunity for Alabama's Baptist churches, associations



BERG

and entities to have historical documents microfilmed.

In 2019, ABHC delivered and provided for the filming of more than 50,000 pages of documents in the microfilm lab at Samford's library.

Berg said it's "an honor for ABHC to help collect, preserve and share stories of God's faithfulness to Alabama Baptists and record the stories of His work in and through state Baptists as they seek to share the gospel, make disciples and serve those in need." (TAB)

Retired North Shelby Baptist pastor, former missionary Allan Murphy dies at 69



Retired Alabama Baptist pastor William Allan "Brother Allan" Murphy died June 13. He was 69.

Murphy was the first pastor of North Shelby Baptist Church, Birmingham, serving from 1995 until his retirement from full-time ministry in 2018.

Murphy came to know the Lord at 17 and immediately began his preaching ministry. While a student at Samford University, he served at numerous churches, including Shady Grove Baptist,

Selma; Bethel Baptist, Georgiana; and Sardis Baptist, Greenville.

Following seminary at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, Murphy served as pastor of Philadelphia Baptist Church, Birmingham.

In 1986, the Murphys answered the call to serve on the missions field. They attended a year of Spanish language training in Costa Rica and learned the language of Papiamentu before moving to the Caribbean island of Curacao for their work as church planters.

Following his retirement from North Shelby Baptist, Murphy served as interim pastor of Indian Springs First Baptist Church until March of 2020.

Murphy served in many other roles, including as a member of several Alabama Baptist entity boards, including *The Alabama Baptist*.

Murphy was preceded in death by daughter, Joy. He is survived by his wife of 47 years, Mary; sons, Joshua and John; daughter Jane; and five grandchildren. (TAB)



MURPHY

— NATIONAL NEWS —

U.S. senator calls for civil rights probe of state limits on church gatherings

A U.S. senator has called for a federal civil rights investigation of states that have continued during the coronavirus pandemic to place strict limitations on religious gatherings while permitting massive protests of the police killing of George Floyd.

Meanwhile, Southern Baptist leaders encouraged public officials to treat worship services the same as similar events while they loosen restrictions resulting from the pandemic.

Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Missouri, wrote U.S. Attorney General William Barr on June 9 to request the investigation, saying state authorities “have violated the free speech and free exercise rights of religious Americans by treating religious gatherings and speech differently than the speech and mass gatherings of protests.”

The viral video of Floyd’s death while pinned under the knee of Minneapolis officer Derek Chauvin prompted protests by thousands of Americans in some large cities and hundreds in some smaller ones, often without the precautions called for by public officials to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

At the same time, authorities in some states and cities maintained stringent caps on worship attendance for churches and other religious groups.

Travis Wussow, a Southern Baptist public policy specialist, said, “Civic leaders need to view pastors as partners.

“Churches need to be treated the same as similar kinds of activities, where they are actually similar,” said Wussow, vice president for public policy of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, in written remarks.

“Church leaders can be trusted to keep their congregations safe and love their neighbors.

“At the same time, when civic leaders offer counsel rather than directives, they are far less likely to overstep the constitutional bounds of the First Amendment.”

In his letter, Hawley said millions of Americans “are

rightly angry about the death of George Floyd, and they should be able to protest peacefully.”

“At the same time, state officials must not use their support for this protest to infringe the free exercise and free speech rights of religious Americans. Yet that is happening across the nation.”

State authorities “cannot block religious speech while allowing protests simply because the states think the protest speech is more valuable,” Hawley wrote. (BP)

“Civic leaders need to view pastors as partners.”

**Travis Wussow
ERLC**

Persecuted church

Vietnamese pastor, religious freedom advocate beaten in jail

WASHINGTON — A Protestant pastor incarcerated in Vietnam is suffering abuse, according to the 2020 annual report from the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom.

The USCIRF report states Pastor A Dao is being beaten and abused by guards and prisoners and is now in poor health.

At the time of arrest, A Dao was pastor of Montagnard Evangelical Church of Christ in Kontum Province and an advocate for religious freedom for church members in Vietnam’s Central Highlands and elsewhere.



USCIRF photo

In 2016, he spoke at rights conferences in Southeast Asia and East Timor and asked the international community to help persecuted church members. He was arrested after returning to Vietnam and sentenced in 2017 to 5 years in prison. Reports say he was tortured to confess to “helping individuals to escape abroad illegally” but maintained his innocence.

Vietnam is No. 21 on Open Door’s 2020 World Watch List of places where it is most difficult to be a Christian. (TAB)

News near you

GENEVA ASSOCIATION

► **Brad Price** is the new pastor of **First Baptist Church, Slocomb**. He previously served as the church’s youth minister for 10



PRICE

years, then served in the same role at another church for a year before returning to First, Slocomb, as pastor. In his earlier years of ministry, Price served at two Baptist churches in Georgia and First United Methodist Church in Dothan. He earned his bachelor’s degree in ministry studies from The Baptist College of Florida and will finish his master’s degree in 2021. He and his wife, Nikki, have four children.

ST. CLAIR ASSOCIATION

► **Rick Deerman** is the new pastor of **North Valley Church, Odenville**. He has served in pastoral ministry for 11 years and is a graduate of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Cindy, have three children. ► **Bobby Walker** is the new pastor of



DEERMAN



LEE

Broken Arrow Baptist Church, Wattsville. Broken Arrow Baptist also recently called **Alan Crump** as associate pastor. ► **Joey Lee** is the new pastor of **Northside Fellowship Church, Pell City**. He and his wife, Rebecca, have three children.

COFFEE ASSOCIATION

► **Church on Boll Weevil Circle, Enterprise**, will host “VBS in a Bag” July 12–14. On July 12 at 7 p.m., the church will host a drive-in VBS and livestream via Facebook. On Monday and

Tuesday evenings at 7 p.m., the church will post a video with music, Bible study and craft time to Facebook. Participants may receive a bag with all Bible lessons and crafts to do at home. For more information, call 334-894-6411 or 334-806-6566.

MOBILE AREA

► **Rob Jackson** is the new vice president of church and ministry engagement for **Volunteers of America**. Jackson,

who serves as the chairman of the board of directors for TAB, also is interim pastor of Spring Hill Baptist Church, Mobile. He recently served as assistant to the president and associate professor of Christian studies at University of Mobile and is the former pastor of Central Baptist Church, Decatur. Volunteers of America is a faith-based nonprofit organization providing affordable housing and assistance services primarily to low-income people throughout the U.S. Jackson and his wife, Tonya, have one daughter. 🇺🇸



JACKSON

30 days of prayer

Japanese cultural values a barrier to gospel message

(continued from page 1)
populous, yet unreached, country.

“It’s wild that a country so advanced, not only culturally but technologically, is still that unreached,” said Goldman. “We began to think, ‘What could we do to help make our folks here in Alabama more aware of that situation?’”

The two prominent religions in Japan are Shintoism and Buddhism, Burford said. The Japanese culture that favors outward signs of perfection with little to no

understanding of the Christian concept of “free grace” makes it challenging to share the gospel, he explained.

Cities in Japan are clean and quiet; the Japanese people are conscientious, wear their “Sunday best” every day and are committed to thinking about the people around them, Burford said. Still, birth rates in Japan

are dropping dramatically, and suicide rates are high.

Alabama Baptists will have many opportunities to help with missions efforts in Japan in the coming

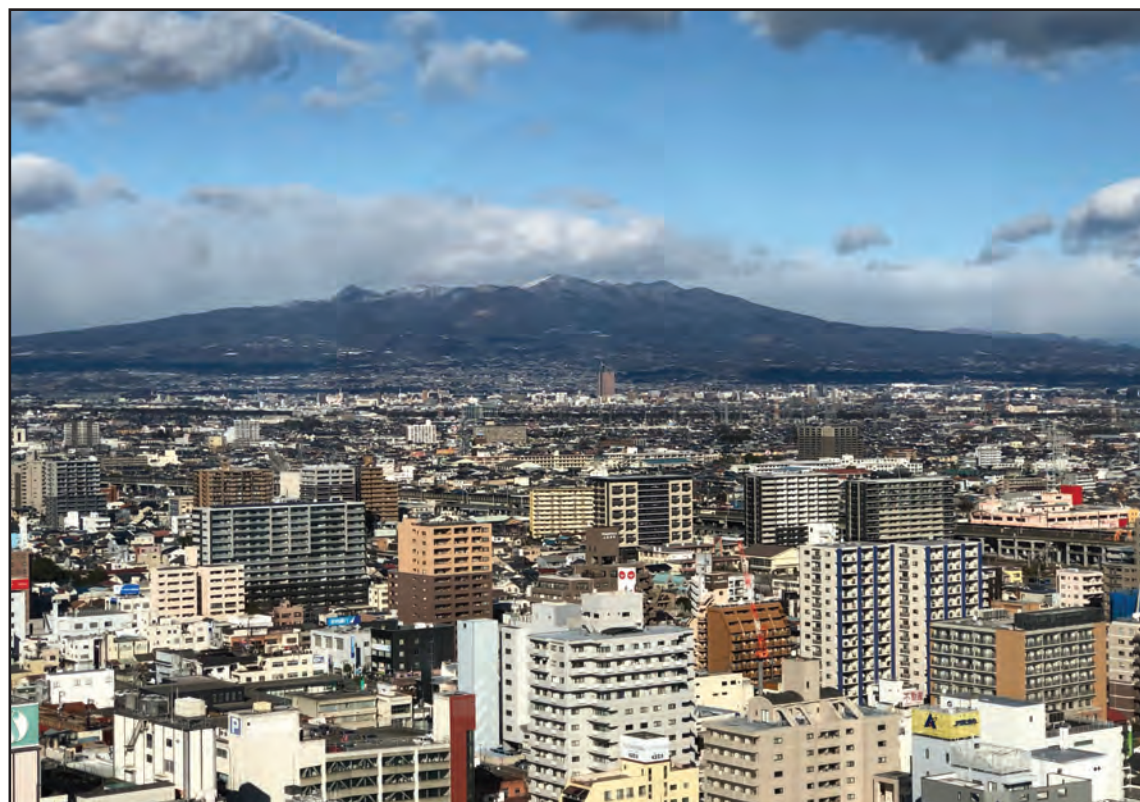


Photo courtesy of Scotty Goldman

Tokyo is the capital of Japan and ranks No. 1 on the list of the world’s most populous cities. Residents of Tokyo account for approximately one quarter of the country’s entire population.

months, Goldman said. He and Burford are scheduled to teach some classes online for Himeji Baptist Church in Japan, and they are continuing to grow the partnerships begun earlier this year.

Prayer prompts

Alabama Baptists can join in praying for Japan by texting “JP2020” to 94090. By registering, volunteers will receive a daily text prompt for 30 days with a specific prayer request for Japan.

Prayer prompts will be sent in the afternoon in Alabama, which is the time the sun rises in Japan. ☀️

For more information about the Japan prayer initiative, go to a18c.org/30-days-of-prayer-for-japan/.

To hear more about missions in Japan, listen to the June 8 TAB Talks episode at tabonline.org/podcasts.

Himeji Baptist Church, in Himeji, Japan, offers Bible classes for pastors. The church, led by Japanese national believers, worships in Japanese but translates its services into English. The church also offers kids’ club and English Café, where people can have conversations with native English speakers.



Photo courtesy of Scotty Goldman

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

Place a classified ad for \$1 per word. For more information call 205-870-4720, ext. 102, or email ads@thealabamabaptist.org.

CHURCH POSITIONS

PART-TIME WORSHIP PASTOR & PART-TIME OUTREACH LEADER

First Baptist Church, Vincent, is currently in prayer and searching for a part-time worship pastor and part-time outreach leader. My name is Robbie Weems, and I am the new pastor at FBC Vincent. We are not looking for someone who is just looking for a check but a person who is passionate about advancing the kingdom of God. Please send your resumé to: weems1969@aol.com or call 205-617-1277.

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Slocomb First Baptist Church, Slocomb, Ala., is seeking to hire a full-time associate pastor. Primary duties include overseeing the ministries to our students from sixth thru college and career. Please submit resumé and/or questions to: fbc206@aol.com.

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Peanut boiling is a favorite among Alabamians

Most Alabamians who head for the beach have places they always stop for snacks. For some, it's peach ice cream or flavored pecans. And for others, the have-to

stop is for boiled peanuts. It's those people Evelyn Allen caters to every day as she opens up Allen's Dry Creek Market on Highway 331 between Brantley and Luverne, where she sells the

boiled peanuts her husband, John, got up at 4 a.m. to boil. "I used to come here and get boiled peanuts when I was a little kid, back when it was called Findlay's Curb Market," Allen said.

So after she retired from phone company work in Florida, she and her husband moved north and reopened the old Findlay building with a new market selling produce, plants and of course, boiled peanuts.

New hobby

"I'm not into knitting or crocheting, so I had to do something," Allen said with a laugh.

One of the defining traits of their peanuts is that they boil them from green peanuts, not from dried ones. The area itself is on the country's road trip radar for boiled peanuts — it's home to the World's Largest Peanut Boil festival put on by the Shrine Club on Labor Day weekend.

The giant peanut the festival uses for decoration sits outside Allen's Dry Creek Market the rest of the year.



Allen's Dry Creek Market Facebook photo

After Evelyn Allen retired from phone company work in Florida, she and her husband, John, moved north and reopened the old Findlay building with a new market called Allen's Dry Creek Market on Highway 331 between Brantley and Luverne, selling produce, plants and of course, boiled peanuts.

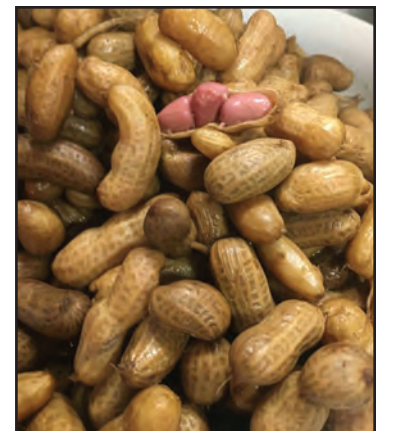
Dianne Catrett, a member of nearby Chapel Hill Baptist Church, Rutledge, said Evelyn's peanuts are some of her favorites — "they're very good," she said.

The two are in garden club together.

'Always loved them'

"I grew up on boiled peanuts," Catrett said.

"A lot of our social life here was peanut boiling. I've always loved them." (Grace Thornton)



Allen's Dry Creek Market Facebook photo

Evelyn Allen's husband, John, gets up at 4 a.m. to boil peanuts for Allen's Dry Creek Market.

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



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

ISAIAH 41:10



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Christian Crossword

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1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
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Across

- Jesus Christ the same _____. (Heb. 13:8)
9. The beginning and the _____. (Rev. 22:13)
12. ____ this day. (Ex. 12:17)
13. Seek to ____ in. (Luke 13:24)
15. To take away weapons.
16. The ____ which He promised. (Deut. 9:28)
18. Electrical engineer. (abbr.)
19. At the ____ hand of God. (Rom. 8:34)
20. The people ____ mind to work. (Neh. 4:6)
22. The ____ of the sea. (Gen. 49:13)
25. They departed from _____. (Num. 33:45)
26. Money or goods given to poor, in love. (singular)
27. ____ prophet. (Rev. 16:13)
28. A fig ____.

- (Mark 11:13)
29. Foot. (abbr.)
31. Any three.
33. ____, I am with you. (Matt. 28:20)
35. Thunder and _____. (1 Sam. 12:17)
37. No room for them in the _____. (Luke 2:7)
38. The children of _____. (Ezra 2:57)
40. Unto the ____ down. (Ps. 50:1)
41. ____ Lord. (Ps. 120:2)
42. Let him be Anathema Maran-_____. (1 Cor. 16:22)
43. Hemoglobin. (abbr.)
44. The ____ of the Lord. (2 Cor. 3:18)
47. "And sun" in Spanish.
48. Tailor. (abbr.)
50. Prefix indicates "inside" or "within."
51. I will ____ thee. (Gen. 22:17)
53. ____, thou shalt love. (Rom. 13:9)

54. Glory and _____. (2 Pet. 1:3)

Down

1. Flee also ____ lusts. (2 Tim. 2:22)
2. East by north. (abbr.)
3. Social Security Administration. (abbr.)
4. The glory of the _____. (1 Cor. 15:40)
5. A weasel.
6. Revised Version. (abbr.)
7. A territory of India.
8. Basic monetary unit of Japan.
9. Eastern time. (abbr.)
10. The eye of a _____. (Matt. 19:24)
11. Nor to your _____. (Jer. 27:9)
14. Airport code for New Delhi, India.
17. Inclined upward.
21. Moses and _____. (Lev. 13:1)
23. Associate in Arts. (abbr.)
24. Very low frequency.
28. His ears shall _____. (Jer. 19:3)
30. Teachest _____. (Luke 20:21)
32. With a gold _____. (James 2:2)
34. Grasses.
36. Not many ____ are called. (1 Cor. 1:26)
39. A unit of conductance, reciprocal to the ohm.
41. Airport code for O'Hare Field, Chicago, Ill.
42. Sixteenth letter of Hebrew alphabet.
45. Multiply ____ the face of the earth. (Gen. 6:1)
46. My ____ is easy. (Matt. 11:30)
49. Revised Standard Version. (abbr.)
51. ____essed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. (Luke 6:20)
52. Yes. (Spanish)



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UPCOMING WEBINARS

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

TECH TALK, Tuesday, June 30, 10 a.m.

Even as congregations begin to regather, the value of live streaming and other online worship opportunities remains. This practical and informative webinar will cover topics including improving the quality of your online worship experience, the pros and cons of recording and posting services vs. live streaming, copyright issues and more.

MINISTERING TO STUDENTS IN CHALLENGING TIMES, Tuesday, July 14, 10 a.m.

Student small groups? Events? Outreach? Check out this webinar where State Missionary Scooter Kellum discusses what youth ministry looks like moving forward as we figure out the new normal.

JULY DISCIPLESHIP LUNCH & LEARN WITH WARREN HAYNES, Tuesday, July 23, 12 p.m.

Hear from and interact with Warren Haynes, seminary professor, author, speaker and pastor, from noon to 1, then stick around if you can for an additional 30-minute Q&A with your Alabama hosts.

MINISTERING TO PRESCHOOLERS AND CHILDREN IN CHALLENGING TIMES, Tuesday, July 28, 10 a.m.

MISSED A WEBINAR? Visit alsbom.org/events to register



Alabama WMU's Great Commission Conversations are 30-minute, weekly online Zoom gatherings featuring dialogue and prayer with missions partners from North America and around the world. Held

every Tuesday at 10 a.m. and 8 p.m., Great Commission Conversations are a unique way to connect personally with those serving on the mission field and to learn more about their work. Join us to hear how God is moving in North America and across the globe. Visit AlabamaWMU.org to sign up.

Learning through isolation

Clay County pastor says hard times an opportunity to rely on God, pray for each other

Noel Vickers said there are definitely people who have faced tougher times than he has through the past few months.

He thinks of his cousin who's been facing cancer and had to go in for treatments alone because of COVID-19 restrictions.

He thinks of church members who are older or have health issues who have needed to stay isolated.

Isolated — that's the word that hit him the hardest.

Facing things alone

Vickers, pastor of New Prospect Baptist Church, Ashland, went in for three outpatient surgeries during

COVID-19, and every time as his wife was told she wasn't allowed to go with him, he thought of how hard it must be for people to face things alone during times like these.

"People are scared," he said. "We've gone through a lot of history as a nation this year already."

But one thing Vickers sees in all this is an opportunity to lean into two truths — how much we need God and how much we need each other.

"Maybe that's one thing the Lord is trying to teach

us through this, when we get to a place like this — we can rely on Him to do more when we can't do it ourselves," he said.

"I think what we need most is for churches to pray for each other right now."

**Pastor Noel Vickers
New Prospect Baptist
Church, Ashland**

For him, that's meant trying to pull together with church leadership to keep the church going when they got down to the "nitty gritty" — only four or five people coming on Sunday mornings at the height of the meeting restrictions.

It's also meant learning to use Facebook to post sermon videos when there's no internet or phone



New Prospect Baptist Church Facebook page screen shot
Noel Vickers, pastor of New Prospect Baptist Church, Ashland, in Clay Baptist Association, preaches a sermon May 4 via Facebook. He began posting sermons in April.

service at the church.

"Our church people have really stepped up to help," Vickers said. "That's been so encouraging. I think what we need most is for

churches to pray for each other right now. We're headed for a better home — but we still have a lot to face here." (Grace Thornton)

New UM nursing programs accredited

Two new advanced nursing degree programs at the University of Mobile are now fully accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education Board of Commissioners.

UM's doctor of nursing

practice (DNP) and the post-graduate advanced practice registered nurse (APRN) certificate programs were granted accreditation in May.

The university's first class of DNP students will graduate in spring 2021.

The DNP is offered as an online program with three on-campus intensives.

Options for completion of the degree include the post-master's to DNP track and the bachelor of science in nursing to DNP track.

The first APRN students will graduate in fall 2020. The Post-Master's APRN Certificate is for nurses who already hold a master's degree in nursing.

The program provides an educational route to specialization in an area other than that obtained in their master's or doctoral programs.

Accepting applications

Both programs are accepting applications through July 24 for classes beginning fall semester 2020. To apply, visit umobile.edu/apply.

More information is available at umobile.edu/schoolofnursing. (UM)

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For June 28

Explore the Bible

By Jay T. Robertson, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



THE CHOICE Proverbs 4:11–27

The Path to Take (11–13)

In the Book of Proverbs, Solomon continually describes two very different roads of life — a road of folly and a road of wisdom.

A father can give no greater gift than to pass on a thirst for wisdom so his children can stay on the right path of life.

Wisdom is the righteous application of true knowledge, and it is only found in Christ (Col. 2:1–3). A personal relationship with God through faith in Christ is necessary to access wisdom (Prov. 1:7; 9:10).

The father renewed his plea for careful attentiveness. If the son will appropriate what he hears, he will enjoy many years of life.

As we have already seen in our study of Proverbs, this is not an iron-clad promise but rather a general principle for life. A son who heeds this warning will avoid the path of folly that leads to destruction.

Again, Solomon pictured life as a journey in which it is vital to choose the right way or path. He repeated this plea throughout Proverbs because we all are faced with decisions each day that require God's wisdom.

Solomon explained how to choose the path marked out by wisdom and led his son on straight paths characterized by righteousness.

When we walk in straight paths, our steps will not be hindered by the obstacles of sin, but we will have ample room to walk and run the life God calls us to live and not stumble.

We are to hold on tightly to the instruction we have received. Since we do not live in a neutral world, we must actually guard this wisdom lest sinners entice us and lead us astray into folly. This wisdom holds the key to life itself.

The Path to Avoid (14–19)

Solomon warned his son to stay off the path of the wicked. The root of the danger was evil not ignorance. Verses 14–15 contain six urgent commands to avoid the path

of folly. It is so dangerous to take even the first step down the path to sin that Solomon shouted a series of warnings. Do not start walking down it. Do not travel in that direction. Stay clear of it. Turn from it, not toward it. Keep going in your original direction rather than even pausing to consider it.

This path is so dangerous because of the evil people whom you are following. They live in a morally upside-down world where sin has become duty. They cannot sleep soundly unless they have been active in practicing evil themselves and causing others to stumble. Their wickedness is second nature to them, like bread and wine, their standard diet.

The path of wisdom is the path of light, while the path of folly is the path of darkness.

For the righteous, the path may start in darkness but grows gradually brighter until the sun has risen and they walk in broad daylight.

For the wicked, however, the path winds deeper into unending darkness where they cannot see the things that cause them to stumble.

The Choice to Make (20–27)

This is the father's third appeal to his son in chapter 4. In these verses we see that the heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart.

The heart refers to the very core essence of who we are. Our heart is the source of our words and actions. What is down in the well comes up in the bucket.

Our outward behavior is shaped by our inward beliefs. This is why the Bible commands us to guard our hearts. We must be vigilant to study the Bible and hide the Scripture in our hearts.

No matter what our age, we all have a choice to make. We need to listen closely to God's wisdom. We need to stay on the path of righteousness and resist the temptation to veer off this path. ✠

Bible Studies for Life

By Roy E. Ciampa, Ph.D., S. Louis and Ann W. Armstrong
Professor of Religion, Samford University



THE ENDURANCE OF OUR HOPE 1 Peter 3:8–17

We are called to love and bless even those who intend evil toward us. (8–12)

Peter and his readers were living in dangerous times. The world that had rejected our Lord would not hesitate to take out its anger on those who followed Him.

It is always important for brothers and sisters in Christ to manifest "unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind." It is even more important in times of persecution or suffering. That mutual support and the presence of the Lord are the keys to responding in the Christ-like ways described in verses 9–11.

Peter alludes to two ways of life. One way is to speak and practice evil and deceit and to revile others. The other way is to turn from such things and to practice and pursue peace and that which is good and to speak kindly rather than to insult others.

Evil is mentioned five times in verses 9–12 and is contrasted each time with "blessing" or "good" or "righteous." In verses 10–12, Peter quotes Psalm 34:12–16 which uses language related to parts of the human face ("see," "tongue," "lips") and then to God's face ("eyes," "ears," "face"). On the human side, the facial parts suggest kinds of behavior and experience, and each part is associated with a virtue or vice.

If one wants to see good (experience God's blessing) his or her tongue must avoid evil and his or her lips deceit. The references of God's (metaphorical) eyes and ears emphasize His responsiveness.

We can live as God calls us to live knowing His eyes watch over us and His ears are attentive to our prayers.

Our hope in Christ carries us through any circumstances or suffering. (13–14)

Those who consistently seek to

do good usually are met by goodwill from others, including those who have authority. But as our Lord also experienced, those who pursue righteousness and goodness sometimes suffer in this world for doing so.

Even in those cases, God will ultimately see to it that a commitment to righteousness will be rewarded with blessing. Such confidence in God's ultimate reward has the power to overcome the fear of and intimidation by those who would do us harm.

Normally people aren't interested in harming those who are zealous to do good and pursue righteousness. But if such a commitment does result in suffering or harm, one should not fear, since God will ultimately bless us for choosing to live as He has called us to live (the opposite of the suffering and harm dished out by human antagonists).

The hope we have in Christ helps us endure unjust suffering, and it also can strengthen us in the face of other forms of suffering.

Faithfulness in suffering is an opportunity to point to the hope we have in Christ. (15–17)

Peter highlights the integrated relationship between the inner workings of the human being and our outward behavior. The proper attitude of our heart and the disposition of our (good) conscience lead to actions or good behavior, marked by gentleness and respect toward others.

The key is for Christ to be honored in our hearts as our holy Lord. Constant submission to our holy Lord leads us to respond appropriately when we have opportunities to explain the basis of our hope and to respond in godly ways when we are slandered or caused to suffer in other ways for doing good.

Such constant submission invites those opportunities to explain the hope we have in Christ. ✠



Media reviews

MOVIES/TV

Hilarious ‘Selfie Dad’ leads June’s family-friendly spotlight

By Michael Foust
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The number of faith-based comedy films that are truly funny can be counted on one hand.

There’s “Mom’s Night Out.” And “The Resurrection of Gavin Stone.” And “Christian Mingle.” And ... well ... that’s about it.

Unless you toss in stand-up comedy DVDs — which I didn’t for this list — there simply aren’t that many faith-based comedy movies period. Comedy is difficult. And when you mix faith into the plot, it becomes even harder to hit the bullseye.

But this unique genre has a new entry, and it’s as good as any of the others on the list.

Titled “Selfie Dad,” it tells the story of a husband and father named Ben who gets fired from his job as

a television program editor and then tries to make a living by posting funny handyman videos online. His how-to videos always go horribly wrong — and they quickly go viral too.

Getting serious

The plot turns when he gets serious about his Christian faith and mentions the Bible in a video, leading to a plunge in his subscriber base (and in his income).

The film stars Michael Jr. in the lead role and Chonda Pierce as the outspoken star of the reality show he edits. Both are hilarious.

Thankfully, “Selfie Dad” also includes plenty of positive messages about family (Ben learns to be a better father), prayer (Ben’s wife prays for him often) and breaking the cycle of sin (Ben’s father was a womanizer — a trait Ben



‘Selfie Dad’

Photo courtesy of Kappa Studios

wants to work to avoid).

“Selfie Dad” contains no violence or language but does contain a few suggestive elements. (A woman at a party makes a joke about taking her clothes off; later, she texts him but he tells her never to contact him again). It’s rated Rated PG.

“Selfie Dad” originally was scheduled to debut in theaters. Because of the coronavirus outbreaks, it debuted June 19 on video on demand.

► **“Jesus in Athens” (Prime)** — The European migrant crisis led to roughly 1 million individuals fleeing oppression, slavery and poverty, often through Greece. It also led to countless migrants, including former Muslims, finding Christ. This powerful documentary tells that story.

Because of mature subject matter, “Jesus in Athens” is probably best for older children. It entered the Prime lineup in recent weeks

► **“Spy Kids” and “Spy Kids 3-D” (Hulu)** — These 2001 and 2003 live-action children’s films are a cross between a PBS cartoon and a James Bond film. Superhero-like detectives fight the bad guys and save the world. Rated PG for action. (The first film has a couple



of OMGs and a “shiitake mushroom” said way too slowly.) Available June 30.

► **“American Gospel: Christ Alone” (Netflix)** — It’s a documentary critique of the prosperity gospel featuring interviews with its critics, including Paul Washer, Marshall Brandon, Michael Durham, Julius

Kim, Matt Chandler, Jackie Hill-Perry and Bryan Chapell. Rated TV-PG. It entered the Netflix lineup in recent weeks.

► **“Where’s Waldo?”: Complete Season 1 (Hulu)** — This animated reboot of the 1990s cartoon features the same problem-solving and educational background from the original. Season 1 takes children to locations such as Costa Rica, Scotland, Australia and Greece. Rated TV-Y.

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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.

'My life is given'

Missionary faces pandemic without fear after war, genocide, coups and terrorist attacks

In the 32 years he's been on the missions field, Cole Elbridge has ministered during a war, a genocide, two attempted coups, a civil war, a political insurrection and terrorist attacks.

He's stood up to armed bandits, ministered among Christian communities facing religious persecution, chose homelessness in order to minister to the destitute, was evacuated due to increased rebel activity and survived cancer.

Elbridge has lived through famine, floods and cyclones. He's survived a meningitis epidemic and most recently is navigating new ways of ministering during the global pandemic caused by COVID-19.

Suffice it to say, Elbridge has weathered his share of crises — enough to span multiple lifetimes.

What is largely absent from his retelling of these monumental disasters — fear.

What has kept Elbridge from living in fear?

Deliberate choice

Elbridge shared a story about how he drove into an area in South Asia where a genocide of Christians was occurring. Local leaders had standing orders out for people to kill Christians. Homes of Christians had been marked and gas cylinders were thrown into some of the homes.

Elbridge made the deliberate choice to go to this area, telling his national partner he was renting a car to go into the area to bring supplies for 9,000 families and encourage and train the persecuted Christians.



Cole Elbridge looks at photos from his years of ministry. He has served on the missions field more than 32 years, experiencing enough crises to span lifetimes. IMB photo

"Am I going by myself or are you going with me?" he asked. His national partner hopped in the car with him.

Because of Elbridge and his national partner's courage, they were able to train leaders and 78 house churches started. One of the persecuted Christians, who had hidden in the jungle surviving on leaves and grass, learned how to share his faith, and he shared the gospel with people who had previously attacked Christians.

Elbridge's life has been threatened on more than one occasion.

He's told would-be attackers, "I've come to help you, what you do is upon you. ... You can't take my life; my life is given."

Fear was a battle Elbridge already fought before he moved to the missions field. When Elbridge was in the process of moving overseas as a short-term worker, he prayed and told the Lord he'd "go anywhere but Africa." He was afraid of Africa, and that was the last place he wanted to go.

However, that's exactly where the Lord led him.

Removing conditions

"God, I said anywhere but Africa," Elbridge prayed. "I realize I made a condition. I'm removing the conditions. I'll go anywhere You send me, but give me the assurance that You're with me wherever I go."

The Lord answered and honored his prayer of trust.

"From that point forward, I can't really remember a time when I have been fearful," Elbridge said.

Elbridge said crises have opened doors into difficult-to-reach areas.

A tsunami in South Asia opened doors into fishing communities who previously had no interest in Jesus.

In the wake of the tsunami, Elbridge drove up and down the coastline, sleeping in his Jeep, providing

disaster relief to the communities. During this time, he also was able to train Christians how to plant churches. During the next two and a half years, 1,386 house churches started, 12,000 people committed their lives to Christ and 3,600 people were baptized.

When crises come

Sometimes, God's plans aren't evident when crises come.

When Elbridge was diagnosed with cancer and then several of his teammates had to be evacuated because of medical emergencies, he questioned why.

"God was showing us, even when you pull back, the Lord keeps going. It wasn't our work. You also have to trust God with the seeds that you have sown," Elbridge said. "In the midst of circumstances and trials, whether something is good or bad, or even how things happened to you, good or bad, ultimately it still falls on us to guard our hearts."

When his country went under lockdown due to COVID-19, Elbridge recognized this as another time to seek the Lord's leading on how he could be a witness.

Elbridge said the COVID-19 lockdown made him slow down and evaluate the ways he spent his time. He realized he had been so focused on his ministry projects, he'd been walking right past his neighbors. He's now spending time getting to know the guards near his residence, at a socially acceptable distance, and brings them biscuits and eggs.

Elbridge offered words of encouragement for Christians during these uncertain times.

"Whatever that is happening ... good, bad, ugly. The only way we are able to come out on the other side with our witness and testimony is we have to keep our eyes on the author and finisher of our faith." (IMB)

EDITOR'S NOTE — Names have been changed for security reasons.

"Whatever that is happening ... good, bad, ugly. The only way we are able to come out on the other side with our witness and testimony is we have to keep our eyes on the author and finisher of our faith."

Cole Elbridge, missionary