



# The Alabama Baptist

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

July 9, 2020

Vol. 185, No. 27  
Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

## INSIDE



17-year-old ministers to foster children by crafting hair bows

◆ Page 6



Judson celebrates graduation, investiture of Tew as college's 23rd president

◆ Page 7



Faith & Family — Talking to children about racism

◆ Page 15



Photo courtesy of Brenda Gantt



Cooking with Brenda Gantt Facebook photo

Brenda Gantt — shown here with William and Banks, two of her five grandchildren — has more than 413,000 followers on her Facebook page, *Cooking with Brenda Gantt*, after a video of her cooking biscuits went viral. She says all of her grandchildren love biscuits.

## 'The best *biscuits*'

### Alabama grandmother gains social media following with cooking show

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

Chris Harwell said it was mostly just a joke, but he was always kind of serious.

He really wanted there to be a Saturday afternoon that he could drop his wife off at Brenda Gantt's house so Gantt could teach her how to make biscuits.

"My wife, Reagan, bakes

very well, but biscuits were one thing we had never ventured into," Harwell said.

The couple was from the Pensacola area, and while that's not too far away, they'd never seen the likes of Southern cooking the Andalusia area had waiting for them when he got a job there after college.

"When we moved, one of the big things we knew would

be important for us would be to get plugged into a church and find a body of believers we could walk alongside and build relationships with," Harwell said.

#### 'So many great people'

That led them to Bethany Baptist Church, where they met "so many great people," including Gantt and her husband, George, who sat directly across the aisle. They wel-

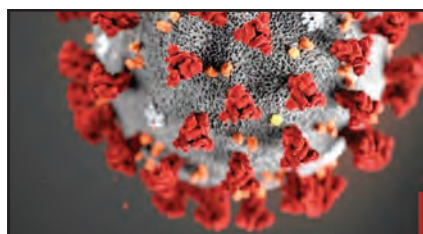
comed the young couple into their church and into their home — and that's where Harwell met those biscuits.

He'd heard about them before — he'd been told on many occasions that Gantt made "the best biscuits."

And he wasn't the only one asking about them either. Gantt said several of the young men in the church had (See 'Southern,' page 11)



Find us on  
**Instagram**  
TAB Media  
[instagram.com/tabmediagroup](https://www.instagram.com/tabmediagroup)



# COVID-19

See pages 8-9 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



Brad Doss leads a Bible study for Life Church, Foley, which is currently meeting at Friendship Baptist, Bon Secour.

Photo courtesy of Brad Doss

## Baldwin County churches work together in season of change

Brad Doss said when he and his wife, Connie, moved to the Alabama coast after 27 years of ministry, they didn't have a plan. They just knew God was calling them there to do something different.

"I sat down with Rick Ellison (director of missions for Baldwin Baptist Association) to talk about ministry opportunities, and he asked me if I would consider planting a church," Doss said. "Our first response was, 'I don't really know,' but then God got a hold of us."

Fast forward about a year, and they're leading Life Church, a church plant in the Glenlakes area of Foley. The church is based around Bible study groups who meet on Tuesday and Thursday nights and gather for worship on Sunday nights.

"Before COVID-19, we were rolling along pretty well and had good numbers considering we were new," Doss said.

But then the RV resort clubhouse where they met closed, and that allowed someone else to be a part of what God was doing — Friendship Baptist Church, Bon Secour.

Doss picked up the phone and called Charles Inman, pastor of Friendship Baptist, their watch-care church with Baldwin Association.

And Inman said come on. "We have a large family life center that they're now using for worship," Inman said.

At Friendship Baptist, they've got ample facilities and have been praying for a new season, he said. Ever since he first read articles about church revitalization in *The Alabama Baptist*, he's been leading his church to look for ways to move toward revitalization — including partnering with a church plant.

"We're excited about having them here," Inman said.

Doss said he's been grateful for the graciousness of Friendship Baptist — it's allowed them to keep meeting and prepare to start their home-based Bible studies in July.

Their help, along with the incredible assistance of Baldwin Association and Rick Barnhart, director of the office of associational missions and church planting for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, have made a massive difference in what they've been able to do, Doss said.

"We're thankful for all the support and training," he said. "We're focusing on evangelism and discipleship and getting people in a place where they can hear the gospel. And God is at work." (Grace Thornton)

For more information, visit [LifeChurch316.com](http://LifeChurch316.com).



The crossword puzzle can be found on page 17.

## 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](http://www.thealabamabaptist.org)

Email: [news@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto: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

Haley Piersol  
Client Coordinator

James Hammack  
Digital Services Manager

Deb Lowery  
Financial Assistant

Sarah Gill  
Digital Services Associate

Richard Maddox  
Computer Services

Sarah Gill  
Digital Services Associate

### 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

## Back to Campus special issue

Shout out to Boyce College at Southern Seminary, Samford University, University of Mobile, Baptist College of Florida, Luther Rice College and Bob Jones University for reserving a spot in TAB's Back to Campus issue.

# MY RASHIONALE

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

[jrash@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:jrash@thealabamabaptist.org)  
[@RashionalThts](https://www.instagram.com/RashionalThts)



## Commencement address to Judson College graduates

**G**raduates, the nugget I want to leave with you today is the importance of holding on to the capability to learn.

As the Class of 2020, you are being touted as the class above all classes because of what you experienced during your final semester. You know, that little pandemic thing.

You've proven you've got what it takes.

You learned in only a few months what most of us had the luxury of a few decades to learn — how to adapt and still flourish when life doesn't work out like we planned.

But with this praise comes a great deal of pressure and responsibility, which can be managed with success if you maintain a spirit of teachability.

The ability to continue learning at every step of your journey will always serve you well.

Some days, good enough truly is good enough, but most days should be about excellence, no matter how insignificant the tasks of the day may seem.

Part of being excellent is owning up to mistakes.

Mistakes are part of the journey so being mature enough to own yours will lighten the load for everyone involved, including yourself.

It's also important to learn from them — yours and others.

One mistake we all make at some point is to believe the world revolves around us.

And while today is rightfully all about each of you — most days are not.

In fact, the more we focus on helping others instead of ourselves, the more at peace we will be.

Being a graduate of a religious institution of higher learning means you know a bit about the Bible, so you already know Scripture teaches our greatest commandment is to love the Lord with all our heart, mind, soul and strength.

And the second greatest is to love our neighbor as ourselves.

As you leave the college nest and prepare to tackle the world, clinch tightly to those commandments.

And recognize that to achieve both, you must also love yourself.

Scripture is clear that each one of us is created in the image of our Father, the almighty God, so humbly loving ourselves reflects our love for Him and teaches us how to love others.

You only have one life to live here on earth, and you've started well.

I urge you to commit today to also finish well — with confidence in who you are and assurance of Whose you are.

The fact is, we need you.

We need your light. We need your kindness. We need your smarts. We need your energy.

And we need your teachability.

### A few ABCs for the road ...

**A** — Always be honest but be kind in the process, and always give people the benefit of the doubt as your first response.

**B** — Be forgiving and able to let go of past hurts.

**C** — Calm the chaos around you by giving more than you take and being part of the solution.

Congratulations, Class of 2020. You are beautiful. You are valued. You are loved. You are strong.

And remember, we need you — the very best version of you God has in store. 🌈

## TAB Media's Jennifer Rash granted honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Judson College



Judson College president Mark Tew (left) confers the Doctor of Humane Letters on TAB Media's Jennifer Davis Rash (center) during Judson's June 27 commencement while Judson board of trustees chair Joan V. Newman (right) prepares to present her with the official hood. The surprise move took place prior to Rash delivering the commencement address. View a gallery of photos from the day at [tabonline.org/judson-graduation-2020](http://tabonline.org/judson-graduation-2020).

Photo by Tracy Riggs

# Your Voice



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

## Worry drains, distorts; prayer sustains faith

By Dan Britton

Chief field officer, Fellowship of Christian Athletes

Throughout history, we have encountered disease and sickness that ravage families, friends and community; however, there is a greater danger that threatens to kill us from the inside out. It attacks our minds and controls our behavior. We begin to listen to the lies we tell ourselves instead of speaking the truth to ourselves. This enemy is called worry.

Worry is the absolute faith that God is not in control. In Philippians, the Apostle Paul gives us a com-

mand: “Don’t worry about anything” (Phil. 4:6).

Worry is our greatest enemy, and it attacks everything. Worry has no redeeming value at all. It rots and destroys our minds. It drains and derails our emotions. It paralyzes and binds our present. It perverts and distorts our future.

Worry is derived from the German word “worgen,” which means “to strangle, to choke.” Worry will choke out [our faith life] because our hearts and minds get strangled with the worries of the world.

Worry always asks the question,

“What if?” The “what if?” question can plague us and keep us from living our lives with purpose, power, meaning and mission. What if I get sick? What if I can’t play sports again? What if I lose my job? What if my business fails? What if the results come back positive? What if I lose my friend?

We cannot control the future. If we knew with certainty what the future holds for us, we wouldn’t need to trust God.

The Apostle Paul also gives us the antidote to worry: “Pray about everything.” Prayer conquers worry and increases faith. Prayer reminds us that we cannot control the future, but we can trust the One who does. Prayer grounds us and gives us a rock-solid foundation.

No matter what the situation, we can turn to God with prayer! Prayer unlocks faith.

Whenever I travel to various countries, I am always challenged and stretched by our Fellowship of Christian Athletes leaders who rely on prayer — it’s as if their lives depend on it. They call upon the God of the universe to do the impossible and miraculously show up to transform lives. When I hear their prayers drenched in hope, deliverance and devotion, my faith grows.

Prayer and faith go hand in hand. How are we going to stop worrying?

Let’s cultivate a rich prayer life. Pull the weeds of worry. Plant seeds of faith through prayer in every part of your life: friends, teams, family, marriage, work, relationships and church.

Worry about nothing. Pray about everything. We don’t need to worry. God is in control.

“Worry weighs a person down.”

**Proverbs 12:25**

We will continue to seek an America where vulnerable persons, including unborn children and their mothers, are seen as precious, not disposable.

**Russell Moore**  
**President**

**Ethics & Religious Liberty**  
**Commission**

Parents, the dinner-table conversation ... needs to instill in the hearts and minds of our children the glorious truth now denied by the dogma of our society: they have a Creator, transcendent purpose, a high calling.

**James White**  
**via Twitter**

In student ministry, our entire ministry is built around the concept of transitions. ... [Our] job is to transition students from one age range, one group to the next. ... We want to see them seeking out church community when they begin to connect to their college campuses.

**Cleve Mallory**  
**Student pastor**  
**Eastmont Baptist Church,**  
**Montgomery**

## Letters to the Editor

In the June 18 issue of TAB, you included an opinion column about dealing with sexual sin in the church.

The writer, William D. Jones, wrote about forgiveness and letting a known sex offender work with children as proof he or she is forgiven. The opposing article by psychologist Diane Langberg says an individual should not even be allowed in the church and suggests we should take the church to them.

If a brother was an alcoholic, would we put him into a room full of alcohol? If a sister was a kleptomaniac, would we put her in charge of counting the money? No! Then why would we put our repentant brother in a place where temptation has beat him so many times? We should love him enough to protect him and

keep him from falling back into his former sins.

In the same manner we should also love our children enough to protect them from the danger of a forgiven predator. The church is a place full of forgiven sinners, but we should love each other and keep each other from the sins that so quickly entangle us. Jesus would protect the children and protect the forgiven sinner.

**Sethany Hagel**  
**Wetumpka, Ala.**

Jennifer Davis Rash, your gift of writing is refreshing and such a joy to read. Prayers for each article you craft to share. May you feel His presence through every word.

**Gayle Glenn**  
**Trussville, Ala.**

“Worrying doesn’t empty tomorrow of its sorrow, it empties today of its strength.”

CORRIE TEN BOOM

*Dutch Christian whose family became famous for its heroic efforts during the Holocaust*

The “will of God” to which Peter refers in 1 Peter 4:2 is not some mysterious set of things someone is supposed to do (buy that house or marry this person), but God’s moral and missional will: those things God has spelled out as the guiding values, commitments and priorities of those who follow Christ.

**Roy Ciampa**

**Sunday School lesson commentary**  
*The Alabama Baptist*

Many of the religious leaders of Jesus’ day defined righteousness only by the book. They never exceeded the speed limit, never took incorrect change and never watched a lewd show. They wore proper clothing, damned cussing, put down sinners, accused the younger gen-

eration of gross immorality and preached against all those corrupt politicians.

These leaders of the faith kept the rules and kept them well, but their relationships were full of empty arrogance and toxic judgments. They could precisely define sin but redemptive love was far from them.

Love is the well spring of true righteousness. Only as we move in unselfish love can we be truly holy, actually righteous.

**Bob Adams**

**Retired pastor**

Suffering shame for Jesus (whether the milder version of simple embarrassment or the deadly variety of intense persecution) is never an end in itself. When the Lord asks

His children to stand up under such a barrage from the enemy, He always has something big in mind — something, which we need to add with emphasis, He rarely tells to the faithful one suffering for His name. We will do it by faith or not at all.

**Joe McKeever**

**Pastor and author**

Every child deserves a family. Our states and communities have both a legal obligation, and the privilege, to care for our nation’s most vulnerable children. The best foster care system is one that is not needed in the first place.

**White House Executive Order on Strengthening the Child Welfare System for America’s Children**

## From the *Twitterverse*

**@johnnymhunt**

“They who pray in the family do well. They who read and pray do better. But they who sing and read and pray do best of all.”

— @MatthewHenry\_

**@micahfries**

We are soon to enter what will almost certainly be a stressful, divisive and at times anger-filled presidential election season. Christian, let’s commit to have convictional opinions but ones that are shared with grace, a commitment to truth and love for those we disagree with.

**@brocraige**

“We live on promises not explanations.” — Warren Wiersbe

**@drtonyevans**

Don’t try to change others if God can’t even change your heart. Unity starts with you. Each of us plays a part in healing our racial divide.

**@davesnyder82**

It’s not too late today to spend time with the Lord. Before your head hits your pillow, open up the Word, enjoy the privilege of prayer and remind your soul of the treasure of Jesus.

**@MichaelCatt**

I want to: Love God without question. Love my neighbor without conditions. Be Kingdom minded, gospel centered and bibliocentrically faithful. I want to pray more,

witness more and serve more. I want to be prophetic without being arrogant. I want to be true to my calling.

**@lecrac**

Prayer is power.

**@PaulTripp**

God will tear down what you’ve built, not because He’s angry at you, but because He loves you and is laying down a better foundation upon which to build.

**@bellevuepastor**

Christian, you don’t have to defend yourself. You have the Almighty Protector.

## What Would Jesus Do?

When considering what we as the Church and as Christians could and should be doing about the injustice on both sides of the bigotry issue and what is going on today, I can’t help but think of a saying from my teen years, “What Would Jesus Do?”

As a Church, we recognize Jesus is the head of the Church and as such should be the One to lead us in the right response to what is going on. As a Christian, we should be led in all we do by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Bigotry and hatred are not new and were certainly around when Jesus walked this earth.

So what did He do about it? He sat quietly with a Samaritan woman at a well and told her about living water. He used a Samaritan as the hero of one of His parables. I don’t remember Him joining a protest against the cruelty of the Roman soldiers. I don’t recall where He ever advocated the Samaritans stand up for their rights.

Yes, I know God’s word tells us to seek justice. We should always treat others, no matter who they are or what they have done or said, with the same justice we ourselves want. How to do this is the question we all must prayerfully answer.

I am not saying peaceful protests are wrong or we shouldn’t speak out against the injustices of our society. But is that what our main objective, as a Church is to be?

Protests, the calling for the removal of statues, the banning of movies and books, renaming places to more acceptable names — is this going to really change the heart of man?

Jesus is the only One who can change a man’s heart. He is the only One who can replace the hatred in a heart with love. All of us must pray and decide what our personal reaction to all this is to be, but for me, there is but one answer: Jesus.

**Danny Cotton**  
Lincoln, Ala.

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

# 17-year-old ministers to foster children by crafting hair bows

When Lindsey Wood was in the sixth grade, two things happened to her around the same time — she learned about foster care, and she learned how to make hair bows.

“One of my best friends was adopted through foster care, and her mother and older sister actually work at the Alabama Baptist Children’s Homes,

so I got to learn about how the foster care system works and what the needs were,” said Wood, a member of First Baptist Church, Thorsby.

She learned how many children entering the foster system leave their homes with nothing but a few toys or clothes in a garbage bag, if they carry anything with them at all.

“Around that time, I also learned how to make hair bows from a YouTube video,” Wood said. “It was really just God putting that together at the exact same time.”

## 10,000 bows and counting

She started crafting bows, selling them and giving the proceeds to ABCH and other foster care agencies. At first, she only sold them to friends and cheerleading squads, then she got into some local stores in Thorsby and Clanton.

Now between those outlets and selling them via Facebook and Ins-

tagram, people all over the country are wearing the more than 10,000 bows she’s made since the sixth grade.

The ministry is named Bows that Bless, and Wood — now 17 — has raised more than \$12,000 to buy clothes and other necessities for children in the foster system.

She’s now working on adding a scholarship fund to help children who have been adopted out of the foster system before the age of 14 to go to college, since they don’t get as much financial assistance from the government.

“I hope to train some younger girls and boys to learn how to create their own things so they can raise their own money for children in foster care too,” Wood said. “I plan to teach some of them how to make hair bows and bow ties.”

Chilton Baptist Association also got behind her effort too, providing her some seed money a few years ago to help her expand her efforts, according to Larry Felkins, recently retired director of missions.

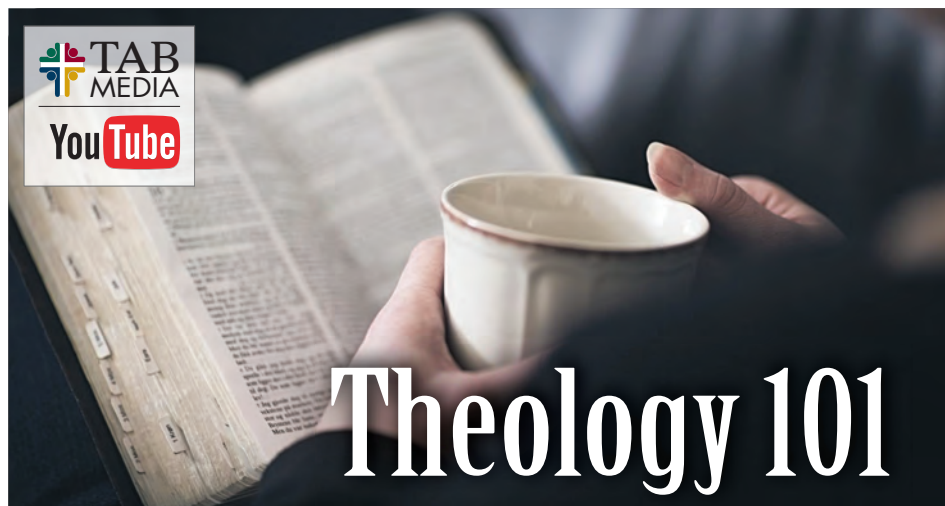
“Some of the youth and adult ladies have gotten involved in her ministry too, and we felt some money from the vision fund could help her upgrade to do even more,” Felkins said. (Grace Thornton)



Photo courtesy of Lindsey Wood  
Lindsey Wood has raised more than \$12,000 to buy clothes and other necessities for children in the foster system through her ministry called Bows that Bless.

*“I hope to train some younger girls and boys to learn how to create their own things so they can raise their own money for children in foster care too.”*

Lindsey Wood  
Bows that Bless



## Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

### Christology Through Figures

## Light

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

As we noted in prior weeks, Jesus once summarized His teaching with the statement, “I have spoken these things to you in figures of speech” (John 16:25). A few weeks ago, Theology 101 adopted Jesus’ description of speaking in figures of speech to think about the person and work of Christ. Our focus in doing so is on the Gospel of John, in which a number of such figures are connected with Christ.

Through the lens of these selected figures, we seek to remind ourselves of insights about the biblical doctrine of Christology.

This week we let some of the properties or characteristics of light point us to truths about Christ’s person and work. Such a list might include the characteristics of shining, illuminating, revealing, warming, reflecting and dispelling darkness. Let’s focus on two of these properties of light as ways of thinking about what Christ is and what He came to do.

### Light reveals

Light is valuable in that it possesses a revealing ability. The flip of a switch illumines a porch light to reveal who is knocking on one’s door at night. Unable to see an item dropped in the dark, we turn on a flashlight which quickly reveals where it landed.

The figure of light as applied to Christ suggests He illumines what otherwise we might miss.

In His person, Christ came to reveal God on humanity’s level of seeing and understanding. He as-

serted on one occasion, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

Second Corinthians 4:6 reminds us, “It is God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” As the Light of the world, Christ came to reveal God more fully than had ever before been the case.

### Reflectors of light

In His saving work, Christ came to dispel the spiritual darkness that beclouds every individual, in that all of us are sinners both by nature and by choice.

Christ spoke to those around Him, saying, “While you have the Light, believe in the Light, that you may become sons of Light” (John 12:36). The Bible speaks to us as Christians, declaring, “You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord” (Eph. 5:8).

God’s plan in Christ is not only to give us the light of understanding about Himself but also to make us reflectors of that light to others. Hence, Jesus said, “You are the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14).✠

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.





Photo by Tracy Riggs

Judson College graduates celebrate commencement on June 27. The ceremony was held on the lawn of Jewett Hall because of COVID-19 concerns. Graduates sat in chairs spaced six feet apart, and their family members spread out at a safe distance across the lawn.

# Fortitude and perseverance

## Judson celebrates graduation, investiture of Tew as college's 23rd president

**W**hen Judson College's 23rd president W. Mark Tew started his new role in fall 2019, he was uniquely qualified, said Joan V. Newman, chair of Judson's board of trustees.

Tew's three daughters — Elyse Weeks, Clara Owenby and Nicole Bean — are all Judson graduates.

"He's been on both sides of every college letter, every grade report, every student activity," Newman told the crowd present for Judson's spring commencement on June 27.

The commencement service doubled as an investiture ceremony for Tew, whose April inauguration was postponed because of COVID-19.

"When the board of trustees began to assemble the search committee ... we first sought God's guidance on who would serve. We all realized that

identifying God's choice to lead Judson College into the future was a tremendous responsibility and a heavenly task," Newman said. "While his first year as president has had more than its share of trials and challenges, he has consistently proven that his selection was the answer to all those prayers."

After Newman presented him with the president's medallion and honored him and his wife, Ann, Tew told those present that he would "take seriously" the words inscribed on the medallion — God, authority, responsibility and accountability.

"I will place God first in all that we do," Tew said, adding that he would be accountable "to everyone who believes there should always be a Judson."

He then shifted the focus to the recipients of the 61 degrees conferred that day and challenged grad-

uates to continue the "tremendous legacy" passed on to them.

### Unlimited potential

"You are limited only by the extent of your imagination, your ambition, your creativity and most importantly, your dependence upon the leadership of God and the Holy Spirit that is willing to work daily in your lives," Tew said.

During the service — held outside on the lawn of Jewett Hall because of COVID-19 concerns — graduates sat in chairs spaced six feet apart, with their family members spread out at a safe distance across the lawn.

Newman congratulated the class of 2020 for finishing well in the

face of a senior year "that none of us could have imagined."

"We applaud your fortitude and your perseverance in completing your degree and overcoming what I know was a very challenging end to this year," she said.

Jennifer Davis Rash, president and editor-in-chief of TAB Media, served as commencement speaker, the first time a TAB editor has served in that role in 45 years. Before she spoke, Tew surprised Rash by presenting her with a doctor of humane letters, calling her "an individual who has worked tirelessly for Alabama Baptists, for Southern Baptists and for the kingdom of God." (TAB)

To view photos of the event, visit [tabonline.org/judson-graduation-2020](http://tabonline.org/judson-graduation-2020).



Photo by Travis Frontz

Judson faculty, staff and guests on the platform lead the graduates in the procession prior to the commencement.



Photo by Travis Frontz

Judson College President Mark Tew (right) receives the president's medallion from Joan V. Newman (left), chair of Judson's board of trustees, during his investiture ceremony on June 27. Tew's wife, Ann, joined him for the presentation.

***"You are limited only by the extent of your imagination, your ambition, your creativity and most importantly your dependence upon the leadership of God and the Holy Spirit that is willing to work daily in your lives."***

**W. Mark Tew, president, Judson College**

Project Hopewell volunteers distribute weekend boxes of nonperishable food for hungry Birmingham-area children during COVID-19 school closures.

*Summer*

# FEEDING PROGRAM



Photo courtesy of Ava Wise

## Schools, churches work together to feed children throughout the summer months

By Lanell Downs Smith  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

**W**hen the COVID-19 pandemic forced schools to close in March, school systems across the state mobilized to feed children who depend on school meals.

Danielle Turk, a specialist in child nutrition programs for the Alabama State Department of Education, said school systems switched immediately to the U.S. Department

of Agriculture summer food service program, Break for a Plate Alabama. The effort distributed more than 7.2 million “grab and go” meals from schools, churches and other community sites between March and May.

### In need of food

Ava Wise of Project Hopewell, a Birmingham-based community nonprofit serving residents through a variety of social and education programs, said her team realized the need for food distribution as soon as

schools closed. They began to spread the word, Wise said, and soon 17 Birmingham churches had joined the effort.

In a normal year, between 2.5 and 3 million meals are served to children each summer through Break for a Plate. Turk expects greater numbers for 2020 due to the pandemic.

“Children and parents are used to getting two meals from school daily whether they were free, reduced or paid,” Turk said, noting many paying families needed assistance this year after losing employment during the pandemic.

The summer food service program feeds all children 18 and under, regardless of income. USDA guidelines mandate onsite meal consumption for summer programs, but waivers were allowed this year for distribution of grab and go meals.

“The USDA waivers have really helped,” said Kellie Grubbs, child nutrition director for Cleburne County Schools in east central Alabama. Even prior to COVID-19, “eating on site was a deterrent for some families who didn’t have time to sit to eat their meals,” she said.

Alabama churches often serve as summer feeding sponsors or distribution sites, providing meals and activities for children through Vacation Bible School, day camps or other programs.

Church closures and meeting restrictions limited some church partnerships in March, Turk said, but

many churches coordinated food distribution to families who couldn’t get to a school for meals.

“The schools were able to (distribute meals) effectively and feed more children while maintaining social distancing,” Turk said. “We got all the schools up and running to serve the children immediately. Some private nonprofits like Alabama Food Bank Association and Feeding the Gulf Coast were ready to switch gears early, but some of the other sponsors were in the midst of other things. Churches available to feed children were partnered with schools or one of the nonprofits to serve as distribution sites.”

### Delivering meals

And in some cases, church volunteers took food to the children.

“Our neighborhood kids are bused to school,” Wise explained. “It’s not convenient for them to walk to school to eat. Many of the churches have driven to the areas where kids are to deliver meals.”

The effort helps families and introduces them to the local church — in this case, Hopewell Missionary Baptist Church-Hillman Station, Birmingham.

“People are saying they are going to come back when this is over and worship with us,” Wise said. “People want to stay connected because they realize that when things were at their worst we cared enough to see about them.” ✝

## Schools partner with Baylor, USDA to feed children this summer

**M**ore than 30 Alabama school systems are currently participating in Emergency Meals to You, a collaborative effort between Baylor University, the USDA and local school systems.

The program delivers two weeks’ worth of shelf-stable food to qualifying families who receive free or reduced school meals.

Emergency Meals to You began in 2019 to help feed rural Texas children through the summer break and expanded this year thanks to the Cares Act. The program’s goal is to bridge the nutrition gap during COVID-19.

Jeremy Everett, executive director of Baylor’s Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty, said by May 30, the program had distributed 443,700 meals to more

than 14,000 children in more than 6,800 Alabama households.

Everett estimates the effort has sent 10 to 12 million meals to children in 40 states so far, and expects to send 30 to 40 million throughout the summer.

He also encourages churches to partner with a local summer food service program this year.

“This is a great time for congregations to be both about the faith community and the larger community, loving our neighbors as ourselves,” Everett said. “In this perilous time of unrest on every corner there is no better time to be that witness of faith, to walk alongside our neighbors to provide spiritually and physically by making sure children have food throughout the summer.” (Lanell Downs Smith)

*For more information about summer feeding programs through the Alabama Department of Education and local child nutrition programs, or to find a local distribution site, visit [breakforaplate.com](http://breakforaplate.com).*

# ALL HANDS ON DECK

*are needed*

## Alabama food banks adjust, prepare for more challenging days ahead

By Shawn Hendricks  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

For Deann Servos, the daily routine at Prodissee Pantry in Baldwin County has been anything but business as usual in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

And the executive director of the food pantry in Spanish Fort doesn't see things returning to normal anytime soon. Since the food pantry began implementing social distancing guidelines, Servos has had to work with a skeleton crew team of about 50 (they normally operate with 150–200) volunteers.

While businesses continue to open up and get back to a new sense of normal, food banks continue to operate under a busier than normal demand — and all hands on deck are needed.

“We normally see in about a month 1,000 families,” she said, “and so if you do the math ... we're seeing three times the families in a month.”

### Challenges in a crisis

Since mid-March, her team has had to deal with several challenges. Nearby highway construction meant shifting their Tuesday drive-through food distributions to a high school parking lot. They've also started interviewing people in their vehicles. And in addition to working with a smaller team, social distancing simply takes up a lot more space.

“We have a 50,000 square-foot facility,” she said. “But you start mapping out this social distancing, it gets small very quickly.”

One positive is that cash donations are currently going a lot further, Servos said. The food pantry can buy a lot more than the average shopper, so even small donations help.

“It doesn't matter if it's \$5, \$10. A five-dollar bill is \$20 of groceries in our hands because of our buying power, the amount we're buying and the private partnerships that we've come up with in order to normally do what we do,” Servos said.



Photo courtesy of Prodissee Pantry

Monetary donations are far less labor intensive than sorting and quarantining donated food, she noted, and those gifts also will come in handy in the months to come.

“Once the pandemic unemployment goes away and there's no more stimulus money, we are anticipating seeing a higher volume of families in need,” she said. “We're anticipating and preparing for that.”

Prodissee Pantry isn't alone. Food banks of all sizes are operating under a new set of guidelines that often include social distancing, masks, lots of hand sanitizer and moving their operations outside.

For Janice Scheitlin, Baptist Service Center director for Calhoun Baptist Association, adjusting to a “no touch policy” with clients and “curbside service” hasn't been easy — even though they've tried to make it more convenient for those they help.

“They just pop their trunk, and the people that bring the food will set it in their trunk and they drive off,” Scheitlin said.

While keeping a six-to-10-foot distance can be challenging, it's allowed the service centers to help more people.

“We've had some that would call

and say, ‘I need food, but I'm scared to come out there.’ And I said don't worry about that because you're not going to get out of your vehicle, and we're not going to touch you or your ID or anything. So that made others, especially the older people, feel at ease.”

The ministry also has had to shift away, for now, from offering clothes.

“Right now, we're not doing any clothing,” she said. “Because people would have to come in, look at sizes and all that kind of thing, so we're not offering any clothing at this time. We're hoping all of this will be relaxed or released before winter.”

### Donations are down

Most food banks, she noted, naturally haven't been receiving the donations they normally receive since the coronavirus response first began.

“The U.S. Postal Service always does a big [Stamp out Hunger] food drive, ... [and] it may not even happen this year,” she said. “A lot of agencies receive donations like that. ... Those kinds of things are a blessing to us when we receive them. This year, we're not receiving that.”

Still, optimism remains.

For the Polaski campus of Whites-

burg Baptist Church in Huntsville, the traffic for their benevolence ministry has been picking up since they've returned to full staff. And the sandwich board sign advertising free food hasn't hurt.

“It's really big, and I put it outside, then we started getting a lot of people swinging in here when they saw what we were and what we had,” said Tom Williams, who oversees the ministry.

The real reward for Williams has been those who have made professions of faith in Christ through the ministry.

“We've had two this month,” said Williams, noting his desire to impact younger generations. “The younger people have a lot of fear. ... They're scared of the future. They haven't lived long enough. I'm 77, and I've lived through a bunch of stuff. I was in Vietnam, ... raised four kids, financial crisis, stock market crash, 9/11. I know the Lord is in charge, but these young people, they do have a lot of fear and uncertainty.”

### ‘Pray for us’

“If I remain optimistic [in] the Lord,” he said. “I think it is a good example for other people. Because your attitude is everything.”

Servos hopes people will continue to pray for these ministries in the months to come.

“We always tell people the first thing is to pray for us,” she said. “The amazing things we have seen have come from the power of prayer.”

She acknowledged she misses her “family” of older volunteers who have decided to stay home and quarantine since March.

“I'm heartbroken for the volunteers we can't have here right now,” she said. “They are all part of my extended family. It's hard when I can't say, ‘Well, come on in. Come have a cup of coffee. Come on in and help me sort and do this paperwork and let's chat.’ ... [But] we want them to be here next year when we need them again.”

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



# Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering

*Week of*  
**Prayer**  
FOR STATE MISSIONS

YOUR GIFTS HELP SUPPORT THESE  
**GREAT COMMISSION MINISTRIES:**

ALABAMA WMU

DISASTER RELIEF

CHURCH PLANTING

PARTNERSHIP MISSIONS

CHURCH REVITALIZATION



**SEPTEMBER  
13-20 • 2020**



[MyersMallory.org](http://MyersMallory.org)

**State Goal: \$1,200,000**

# Southern hospitality

To view Gantt's videos, visit [facebook.com/cookingwithbrendagantt](https://www.facebook.com/cookingwithbrendagantt).

## Biscuit tutorial goes viral, leads to video series on 'old-time' home-cooking recipes

(continued from page 1) asked her to teach their wives to make biscuits. A lot of the next generation doesn't know how to cook things like biscuits "the old-time way," she said.

For her, cooking was second nature. She had made biscuits for her husband, George, all through their 50 years of marriage, right up until he died in 2018. She still cuts them out with a cut-off Chef Boyardee can she started using right after they married — a "prized possession," she said.

And over the years, Gantt

has prepared biscuits in bulk too, ranging from early morning meals for families at her bed-and-breakfast, the Cottle House,



Photo courtesy of Brenda Gantt  
Brenda Gantt's Facebook page offers videos on how to make fried pies and lots more.

all the way to making around 900 biscuits in one day at a fundraiser breakfast at her church.

She had the process down to an art.

"So one Sunday I was going to make biscuits, and I thought, 'I might as well video

this and put it on Facebook and these guys can show their wives,'" Gantt said.

She held her phone in one hand and made biscuits in a bowl with the

other hand, and then she uploaded that to her Facebook page. Within a week, the Harwells were buying White Lily flour and giving it a try themselves.

### 'It was a shock'

And as it turns out, they weren't the only ones. Between the lack of old-time cooking knowledge and the fact that everyone in the country was indoors trying new recipes because of COVID-19, it wasn't long before Gantt's video had more than a million views.

"It was a shock," she said. "I'm still in shock. This happened completely by accident."

It wasn't long before she started getting requests for more video tutorials — dumplings, fried pies and a bunch of other things. With the help of her son-in-law, she set up a Facebook landing page — Cooking with Brenda Gantt — and be-



Cooking with Brenda Gantt Facebook photo

At Brenda Gantt's bed-and-breakfast, the Cottle House, she serves meals like creamy cheese grits and an egg omelette stuffed with cheese, peppers and mushrooms, along with a fried apple or blueberry tart and fresh fruit.

gan posting more. Recent recipes include ham potpie, homemade french fries and stuffed zucchini.

### Loves to cook

As the page grew — more than 413,000 people now follow Gantt — she said she was "as nervous as a cat on a hot tin roof" be-

cause she's "not an actress" — she just loves to cook.

But people are drawn to her food and her Southern hospitality — something Harwell said is completely true to life.

"What you see on Facebook, that's her," he said. "She's a wonderful person." 🌟

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



FM 101.1 AM 850  
BIRMINGHAM  
WXJCRADIO.COM

THE MOST POWERFUL BIBLE  
TEACHING SIMULCAST IN AMERICA



ChildrensAL.org

(Still)  
Serving  
Children  
Safely



Children's  
of Alabama®

It has always been our priority to ensure the safety and well-being of each child in our care — and that remains our commitment as we continue our mission during the Covid-19 pandemic. Here's how we have redesigned our operations to keep our patients and their families as safe as possible:

- ❑ All visitors are screened immediately for signs of illness and fever.
- ❑ We follow Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting our facilities.
- ❑ Our staff practices safe hand hygiene.
- ❑ We are wearing masks for your safety. Thank you for wearing your face covering.
- ❑ All visitors to campus are required to wear masks.
- ❑ Waiting rooms have been reconfigured to accommodate social distancing guidelines.

# 3 stories

## you should know



Screenshot

Israeli regulators on June 28 announced they ordered U.S.-based evangelical broadcaster GOD TV's 'Shelanu' channel taken off the air, saying the station hid its missionary agenda when it applied for a license. Regulators said 'the channel appeals to Jews with Christian content' rather than specifically targeting 'the Christian population.' The station was given seven days to stop broadcasting. The station's management said it would reapply for a license. (AP)

### Alabama AG urges law enforcement support

Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall was one of 11 state attorneys general who sent a letter to congressional leaders on June 22 in support of America's law enforcement personnel.

The letter called on Congress to temper "anti-police rhetoric that is jeopardizing the safety" of law enforcement officers, stating it is possible to both oppose racism and support law enforcement:

The letter asked leaders to "discourage disinformation" and help "restore the country's faith in ... law enforcement officers who perform their jobs honorably and bring stability to our cities and states."

The letter disputed claims that law enforcement is systemically racist or structurally biased.

To read the full letter, go to [tabonline.org/AG-letter](http://tabonline.org/AG-letter). (TAB)

### Supreme Court strikes down LA abortion law

The U.S. Supreme Court has struck down a Louisiana abortion law that placed strict limits on abortion access.

The case, *June Medical Services v. Russo*, involved a Louisiana law passed in 2014 that required doctors who provide abortions to have admitting privileges at a hospital within 30 miles of their clinic.

The law is virtually identical to one struck down by the court in 2016, which found that the admitting privileges law in Texas was medically unnecessary and significantly limited access to abortion.

Justice John Roberts was part of the 5-4 majority decision announced on June 29. Roberts wrote his own opinion on the ruling, however, citing precedent in concurring with the court's four "more liberal" justices. (TAB)

## — NEWSBRIEFS —

### Mizzell recognized, named pastor emeritus of Hopewell, Marion

Joe Bob Mizzell was named pastor emeritus of Hopewell Baptist Church, Marion, on June 28 during the church's annual "God and Country Day," which he instituted while serving as pastor.

In a special service dubbed "Red, White, Blue and Joe Bob too," Mizzell was honored for his service to Hopewell, as well as to Alabama Baptists and the United States.

Mizzell has long been a presence in Alabama Baptist life.

He served 21 years as director of Christian ethics for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. He also served as pastor at Hillcrest Baptist Church, Maplesville; Titus Baptist Church; First Baptist Church, Guin; First Baptist Church, Childersburg; and Alberta Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa.

Mizzell served as a chaplain in the U.S. Army National Guard, where he served as state chaplain

for two years and from which he retired as a colonel. Mizzell also served as a disaster relief chaplain with Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief.

Mizzell is a graduate of Howard College (now Samford University), the University of Alabama and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

He and his wife, Peggie, have two children and four grandchildren. (TAB)



MIZZELL

### SCOTUS says religious schools must be allowed in scholarship program

The U.S. Supreme Court has upheld a state tax credit scholarship program that includes religious schools, thereby maintain-

ing its recent support of the right of faith groups to participate in government programs.

In its June 30 decision, the high court voted 5-4 to overturn a Montana Supreme Court decision that invalidated a state program that provides a tax

credit for donations to a student scholarship organization benefiting students at private schools.

The Montana high court invalidated the entire program in a 2018 opinion because the law includes religious schools. (BP)

### Ivey extends COVID-19 restrictions; ADPH releases risk dashboard

Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey has extended the state's Safer-At-Home public health order through July 31. She announced the extension June 30.

The current public health order includes several provisions, including requirements that employees of restaurants, gyms, salons and other businesses wear masks when interacting with the public and prohibiting all non-work gatherings that cannot maintain a consistent 6-foot distance between persons from different households.

The Alabama Department of Public Health also issued a new color-coded map of Alabama counties designating each county in one of four risk categories, from low to very high.

In very high-risk counties across the state, ADPH recommends avoiding gatherings of 20 or



Library of Congress photo

— ALABAMA NEWS —

# Organizers hope public Montgomery altar will ‘draw people to God’

For three days starting July 2, a simple wooden altar will sit in Court Square in Montgomery, open for anyone and everyone to come and pray for repentance.

William Owens, a traveling evangelist based in Montgomery, said a while back God gave him a vision to take the altar from the church out into the streets and meet people there. So he had the wooden altar constructed and plans to take it around the country, starting with his hometown.

“The driving force behind this is letting the altar draw people to God,” Owens said. The display isn’t meant to be a revival, he explained — there will be no pulpit or preaching. People

are simply invited to pray, and an evangelist will be on hand around the clock to talk with people or answer questions.

Terry Veazey, another Montgomery evangelist and a member of Eastern Hills Baptist Church, is partnering with Owens in the effort.

“My heart has been especially burdened for

our nation during the last several months,” Veazey said. “It seems to me that there has been a lack of genuine repentance in the American church and in the general population of the nation.”



Photo courtesy of Terry Veazey  
Evangelists William Owens (left) and Terry Veazey place a temporary altar in Montgomery’s Court Square, a former slave-trading site, on July 2.

Montgomery’s Court Square, where the altar will sit until July 5, was once a slave-trading site. The altar will go to Selma on July 8, then Birmingham, then make its way to other cities around the country.

“People are desperate for hope, and we have the solution — we, the Body of Christ, have the solution,” Owens said.

According to his website, the purpose of the altar is to lead

people “to cry out to God in repentance and the forgiveness of sins against God and others.” His hope is that this show of humility will bring healing to the nation and ethnic groups.

For more information, visit [americasaltar.org](http://americasaltar.org). (Grace Thornton)

# Persecuted church

## Firing of Azerbaijan parliament staffer upheld by appeals court

BAKU, Azerbaijan — An appeals court in Azerbaijan declined on June 10 to reinstate a Christian who said he was fired from his parliament job because of his faith.

Rahim Akhundov would meet friends and relatives at his Baku home for worship and Bible study, according to Forum 18. Prior to his firing, Akhundov said State Security Service secret

police surveilled those meetings, and on one occasion an SSS officer attended one on false pretenses. The secret police also allegedly recruited a meeting participant to spy on Akhundov.



Photo by Rahim Akhundov

Akhundov was fired from his job in December 2018 but did not receive his dismissal letter until October 2019. One parliament staffer claims Akhundov’s firing was over two mistakes he made 18 years ago in translating, which Akhundov disputes.

In Azerbaijan in 2017 and 2018, police and SSS secret police surveilled and sometimes raided religious meetings held by Christians, Muslims and other faiths; the courts fined many religious leaders and participants. (Forum 18)

more people and working remotely if possible.

View the ADPH county risk dashboard at [tabonline.org/alabama-counties-covid](http://tabonline.org/alabama-counties-covid). (TAB)

## TAB Media garners four awards from Alabama Press Association



TAB Media brought home four awards during the recent 2020 Alabama Press Association Media Awards virtual presentation.

Competing with newspapers of similar size and scope across the state in APA’s Division 3, TAB Media staff members earned two writing awards and two design awards.

► First place for Best Editorial — Jennifer Davis Rash — “Is it really fair to claim ‘it isn’t fair’ in the life of a believer?”

► Second place for Best In-Depth News Coverage — Martha Simmons — “Border crisis”

► Third place for Best Layout and Design — Lauren C. Grim — *The Alabama Baptist* newspaper

► Third place for Most Improved publication — TAB Team — *The Alabama Baptist* newspaper. (TAB)

# News near you

## BIBB ASSOCIATION

► **Bibbville Baptist Church, Woodstock**, will celebrate homecoming July 12 at 10 a.m. Special music will be provided by Awakened. Jeff Hughes is pastor.

## LIMESTONE ASSOCIATION

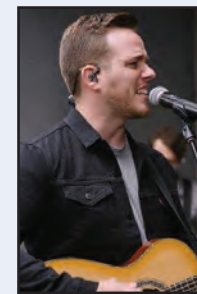
► Several churches are partnering to assist with facility work at House of Hope and Restoration in Huntsville where Jarman Leatherwood is pastor. Call 256-232-0017 for information. Kevin Ward is director of missions.

## TUSKEGEE LEE ASSOCIATION

► **Salem Macon Baptist Church, Notasulga**, will celebrate homecoming July 19 at 10 a.m. The Gospel Strings Quartet will sing. Former pastor Bobby Carpenter will speak. A covered dish meal will follow the service. For

more information, call 334-539-2072 or 334-740-1044. Greg Pate is pastor.

## EAST CULLMAN ASSOCIATION



JERNIGAN

► **Nathan Jernigan** is the new worship pastor at **Northbrook Baptist Church, Cullman**. He is married to Meagan. Keith Warden is pastor.

## STATEWIDE

► **Samford University’s Ministry Training Institute** will offer classes at extension

centers across the state beginning in late August. For more information or to find a location near you, visit [samford.edu/programs/ministry-training-institute/](http://samford.edu/programs/ministry-training-institute/).

## STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS

► **Uplink on the Road**, a one-day training for youth ministers and volunteers, will be held Aug. 20 from 5 to 9 p.m. at **First Baptist Church, Trussville**. Caleb Farrow and Terrence Andrews will speak. Zack Hollingsworth will lead worship. For more information, email [skellum@alsbom.org](mailto:skellum@alsbom.org). ☠

# SBC Executive Committee actions bring back-and-forth responses

Recent accusations of procedural and ethical improprieties within the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee have resulted in numerous back-and-forth statements from individuals and groups within the denomination.

A June 24 blog post by EC member Jared Wellman, pastor of Tate Springs Baptist Church in Arlington, Texas, set off the flurry of statements and counter statements.

## Concerns outlined

In his blog post on the SBC Voices website, Wellman outlined his concern with how new EC leaders were elected during the June 16 meeting, noting that four of those new leaders also sit on the steering council of the newly organized Conservative Baptist Network.

Wellman described serving both organizations in leadership positions concurrently as a “conflict of interest” and

called on the four leaders to resign their EC leadership positions.

The Conservative Baptist Network was formed in February 2020 “to cultivate the momentum needed for a course correction” in the SBC, according to a press release from the group.

In response to Wellman’s post, the EC released a June 26 statement explaining that its members held a conference call June 25 to discuss Wellman’s accusations.

After full discussion, EC members determined by poll there was no impropriety in the nomination and election of the EC officers.

Also released on June 26 was a written apology from newly elected EC chairman Rolland Slade and a written acceptance of that apology from outgoing EC chairman Mike Stone.

Other EC members offered public denials of any conflict of interest for the four newly elected EC officers to serve concurrently on the steering

council of the Network.

In a previous exclusive interview with *The Alabama Baptist*, Chuck Kelley, president emeritus of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, described the potential of a conflict of interest as “outlandish.” Kelley, who retired to Alabama, serves on the Network’s steering council.

## Regret for confusion

On June 27, SBC Voices, the blog site where Wellman published his concerns, acknowledged the EC statement but said “we stand by what we published.”

On June 30, Stone released another statement to Georgia’s *The Christian Index*. He expressed regret for “any confusion created” regarding the timing of the election of new EC officers who are also Network steering council members.

Read more about the ongoing discussion at [tabonline.org/CBN-statements](http://tabonline.org/CBN-statements). (Margaret Colson)

## TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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

### CHURCH POSITIONS

#### WORSHIP PASTOR

Redeemer Community Church is seeking a full-time worship pastor. Redeemer Community Church is a 5-year-old church plant in Oneonta, Ala. Please email resumés, references and links of worship videos to: [matt@redeemerononeonta.org](mailto:matt@redeemerononeonta.org).

#### WORSHIP LEADER

Macedonia Baptist Church, a rural church in Bullock County, Alabama, near Union Springs, is seeking a part-time worship leader. We are prayerfully seeking someone who is capable of leading our congregation in a well-blended service of hymns and new worship songs. If interested, please email resumé to: [scgarnett@gmail.com](mailto:scgarnett@gmail.com) or call Pastor Steve Garnett at 706-773-2214.

#### 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](mailto:weems1969@aol.com) or call 205-617-1277.

#### ASSOCIATE PASTOR & STUDENT MINISTER

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 resumés and/or questions to: [fbcs206@aol.com](mailto:fbcs206@aol.com).

### 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.

### SIGNS

#### NEED A NEW CHURCH SIGN?

Reliable Signs Services, a full-service sign company located in Alabama for 26 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](http://www.reliablesigns.com). Give Danny, Stephanie and the rest of the team a call 1-800-729-6844 or 205-664-0955.

### TRAVEL/VACATION

#### LOG CABIN RENTAL

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

#### 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](http://www.gulfshorescondos.com).

#### 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](mailto:cashley945@earthlink.net).

**IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR OUR STATE.**

**COMPLETE YOUR CENSUS AT [MY2020CENSUS.GOV](http://MY2020CENSUS.GOV)**

PAID ADVERTISEMENT



## LEEDS STAINED GLASS & CHURCH FURNITURE

SINCE 1995

Toll-free: 888.699.9679

AL local: 205.699.9679

Call for **FREE** on-site consultation

Ask for Terry Barnes, Owner

[information@LeedsStainedGlass.com](mailto:information@LeedsStainedGlass.com)

Visit [www.LeedsStainedGlass.com](http://www.LeedsStainedGlass.com)

for an online gallery of windows and church furniture!



# Talking to children about racism

## Tips for having thoughtful gospel-centered conversations on race, equality

By Lisa Keane  
Special to The Alabama Baptist

On Sunday, as we watched church online from our couch, my 8-year-old daughter asked a very important question. An elder from our church had just spent a great deal of time in prayer about racial unity, healing and reconciliation. As the prayer was concluded, my daughter asked, “What was that prayer all about? Why was he talking about race?”

In our family, we do not have the news on, and we do not talk about the news around our young children, so for her this was new information.

She has learned about the civil rights movement in school, and she knows that her dad is pursuing a doctorate to help those who do not have as much privilege as we do. But in her mind, she could not reconcile that what she has learned in civil rights history could still have work that needs to be done today.

### Explaining, praying

Her exact words were, “Why are people still having to fight for their rights?” This broke my heart.

As a family that afternoon, we watched the Sesame Street Town Hall special on racism. We had thoughtful conversations, and both of our children asked wonderful questions.

As Mister Rogers said, “Anything that’s human is mentionable, and anything that is mentionable can be more manageable. When we can talk about our feelings, they become less overwhelming, less upsetting and less scary. The people we trust with that important talk can help us know that we are not alone.”



123rf.com

We did just that. We talked about upsetting things, sad things, and made them all mentionable because as parents, this is where we allow our children to become aware and make changes for future generations.

We defined racism and civil rights. It was good and serious, and then later that night we prayed about all that we had learned.

Talking that afternoon opened up the opportunity to engage in some great spiritual, gospel-centered conversations around injustice, race and equality.

We reminded our kids that all people were created in God’s image (Gen. 1:27). We talked about how we treat others like we want to be treated no matter the color of their skin (Matt. 7:12). We dis-

cussed how God has called us to help the oppressed and those who might not have the same privileges we have (Prov. 31:9).

My prayer is that these truths will always reign true in both of my children’s hearts and those truths will be a guiding star for the way they treat people. We are praying they stand up for what is right and pray for those who oppress others.

As a therapist, I commend parents all around our country who are having these hard conversations with their children around their dinner tables or while driving down the street.

It is good for us to mention and talk about things with our children, as that action takes away the secrecy or taboo nature around a topic that often makes children more anxious.

Taking this step allows children to know you are a safe person, one they can trust to tell them the truth and process hard feelings with.

If you find yourself struggling to talk with your children about racism and civil rights, consider what may be stirring in your heart that may be holding you back from having these important conversations.

Personally speaking, there was a part of me that did not want to introduce a hard conversation out of fear I would ruin some sense of innocence in my children.

### No. 1 faith-trainers

But the reality is, they will hear about it, experience it and eventually be introduced to the conversation.

As their parents and No. 1 faith-trainers, I want my kids to hear the right gospel messages from us, their parents. We are all image bearers of God, and we are called to stand with those who are not being treated as such.

For additional resources on talking to children about the gospel and racism, visit [tabonline.org/children-and-racism](http://tabonline.org/children-and-racism).

*EDITOR’S NOTE — Faith & Family is a bimonthly look at important spiritual, cultural and relational issues facing today’s families.*

*For more articles on contemporary topics like these, visit [PathwaysProfessional.org/blog](http://PathwaysProfessional.org/blog).*

*Lisa Keane (MAMFC, LPC-S, NCC, Registered Play Therapist Supervisor) is clinical director of marriage and family for Pathways Professional Counseling, a sister ministry of Alabama Baptist Children’s Homes & Family Ministries.*



ONEMISSION: The Great Commission ONEPROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANYMINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries



What once was THE SUMMIT: For Church Leaders, held each August at Shocco Springs, has now become a premier virtual training website called **PinnacleAlabama.org**.

To partner with our churches during this time of crisis, virtual training will be offered through multiple live webinars, and church leaders will be able to interact with experts in various fields of ministry.

goes virtual!  
**PinnacleAlabama.org**

In the weeks ahead, visit **PinnacleAlabama.org** for more information and to register for the webinars. Questions? Contact **Jamie Baldwin**, (334) 613-2240 or [jbaldwin@alsbom.org](mailto:jbaldwin@alsbom.org).

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

## UPCOMING WEBINARS

To register, visit [alsbom.org/events](http://alsbom.org/events)

### 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.

As churches begin to reopen their preschool and children's ministries, what will nursery, Sunday School, children's worship and other programs look like in the days to come? Patty Burns and Belinda Stroud, state missionaries for preschool and children's ministries,

will be leading a discussion about the "new normal" in this area. We will discuss children's ministry in a socially distanced world, how to provide a clean and safe environment for children and preschoolers, ways to involve children in your worship service, and many other great ideas on how your church can minister to and disciple children, preschoolers and their families. Join us for this conversation!

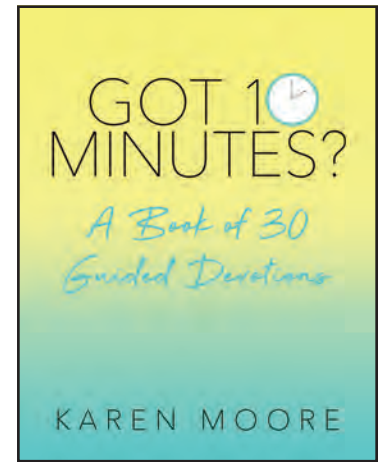
### MISSED A WEBINAR?

Visit [alsbom.org/events](http://alsbom.org/events) to register

Great Commission  
conversations

Alabama WMU's Great Commission Conversations are 30-minute online Zoom gatherings featuring dialogue and prayer with missions partners from North America and around the world. Held every other 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. Visit **AlabamaWMU.org** to sign up.

# GOT 10 MINUTES?



By Karen Moore

Special to The Alabama Baptist | ©2020 Karen Moore

## Spending 10 Minutes with God

*“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”*

M A T T H E W 6 : 3 3 ( N I V )

### Devotional Moment

You probably like things to be organized. You make lists of what you plan to get done and check things off when you're finished. You

set your intentions to help you meet your goals.

The fact is, God likes it when you put things in order, and He likes it best when you make Him the first order of business for your day.

Why? Because He loves you and since He knows already what you want to accomplish, He is prepared to help you set things in motion. God wants you to seek His advice, His direction

and His blessing every day.

Imagine you have the opportunity to talk with the Creator of the whole universe, the One who knows you better than you will ever know yourself, and you can ask Him anything you want.

All you have to do is show up, take 10 minutes to share your heart and mind and seek His counsel. You don't even have to make an appointment ahead of time because He's

already there, waiting for you to arrive.

Just seek Him first and He will take it from there.

### Prayer

Lord, I pray You will help me to seek Your face for 10 minutes each morning. Help me to listen for Your voice so I can learn

more about what it means to walk with You each day. Amen.

### Action Step

Begin a journal and write one sentence each time you meet with God for 10 minutes. See what you learn about yourself or your situation this month. 🙏



MOORE

**EXCLUSIVE FOR TAB READERS**  
**Save 50%**  
*“Got 10 Minutes for God?”*  
**AND**  
*“Got 10 Minutes for God: 30 Guided Devotions”*  
 Retail Value \$25, **Now \$12**  
 For details, email [Got10Devotions@gmail.com](mailto:Got10Devotions@gmail.com)

*“The fact is, God likes it when you put things in order, and He likes it best when you make Him the first order of business for your day.”*

## Christian Crossword

By Pamela Jensen 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	

### Across

- Your sins are \_\_\_\_ (1 John 2:12)
- Ye shall be \_\_\_\_ indeed. (John 8:36)
- \_\_\_\_ to pray. (Matt. 14:23)
- I have \_\_\_\_ by experience. (Gen. 30:27)
- Turnpike. (abbr.)
- South-southwest. (abbr.)
- River in Switzerland.
- Thin cornmeal cake.
- Tennessee. (abbr.)
- A weasel.
- And \_\_\_\_ with her suburbs. (1 Chron. 6:75)
- Right. (abbr.)
- The children of \_\_\_\_ (Jer. 2:16)
- In the \_\_\_\_ of Jordan. (Mark 1:5)
- Bone from the elbow to the wrist.
- Set up our \_\_\_\_ (Ps. 20:5)
- One \_\_\_\_, a prophetess.

- Cable News Network. (abbr.)
- Sixteenth letter in Greek alphabet.
- They did eat \_\_\_\_ (Ex. 16:35)
- The name of the well \_\_\_\_ (Gen. 26:20)
- Symbol for element Platinum.
- Abraham and Sarah were \_\_\_\_ (Gen. 18:11)
- The desert of \_\_\_\_ (Num. 27:14)
- Symbol for element Lithium.
- From \_\_\_\_ lips. (Ps. 120:2)
- King of the \_\_\_\_ (Matt. 2:2)
- Symbol for element Tin.
- \_\_\_\_ of the Chaldees. (Gen. 11:28)
- There was a continual \_\_\_\_ given him of the king of Babylon. (Jer. 52:34)

- With hands on the hips and elbows bowed outward.
- Greek island.
- Peace from God the \_\_\_\_ (2 John 3)
- We have therefore \_\_\_\_ (Gal. 6:10)
- His sons were Ulam and \_\_\_\_ (1 Chron. 7:16)
- Greece. (abbr.)
- \_\_\_\_ came to pass. (Josh. 1:1)
- There is none \_\_\_\_ (Isa. 45:18)
- He is a \_\_\_\_ creature. (2 Cor. 5:17)
- Gold and \_\_\_\_ (Matt. 2:11)
- Ribonucleic acid. (abbr.)
- Poetic: ever.
- Garden of \_\_\_\_ (Gen. 2:15)
- A straw beehive.
- And of sweet \_\_\_\_ (Ex. 30:23)
- A small buffalo of Celebes and the

- Philippines.
- \_\_\_\_ not to the right. (Prov. 4:27)
- Frogs ... into thine \_\_\_\_ (Ex. 8:3)
- From the \_\_\_\_ even to the husk. (Num. 6:4)
- Hemoglobin. (abbr.)
- Royal Society. (abbr.)
- Lane. (abbr.)
- They were \_\_\_\_ (Job 32:15)
- The \_\_\_\_ of his eye. (Deut. 32:10)
- Abraham was old, \_\_\_\_ well stricken. (Gen. 24:1)
- \_\_\_\_ trees and precious stones. (2 Chron. 9:10)
- Before rulers and \_\_\_\_ (Mark 13:9)
- Archaic: certainly, assuredly.
- I wrote them with \_\_\_\_ (Jer. 36:18)
- Symbol for element Rubidium.
- Truck. (abbr.)

# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For July 12

## Explore the Bible

By Jay T. Robertson, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



### PURSUING WISDOM

Proverbs 8:6–21

#### Valuable (6–11)

Wisdom is valuable because it comes from God. It is the gift of God (Prov. 2:6) as an individual fears the Lord and lives in relationship with God.

The Book of Proverbs is not a book of moral principles that anyone can apply in his or her life. It is a book of principles Christians are empowered to live out in the power of the Holy Spirit. There is no wisdom apart from Christ (Col. 2:1–3).

Wisdom cried out for people to “listen.” We should listen to the Lord’s wisdom because all the words of His mouth are completely true and morally excellent. God has never said anything He had to be ashamed of or take back.

The issue for us — He is willing to tell us hard things, things we need to hear but do not want to hear. He does not flatter us, and He can be blunt. So we must decide whether we will listen to His wisdom so we can be changed into the image of Christ.

The Lord speaks “noble things.” Nothing degrading is in the gospel. The gospel raises our standards and lifts us above the vulgar. In our current culture of self-indulgence, that helps. His words may come with a bite, and we may have to swallow hard, but no bitter aftertaste lingers.

Verse 9 is an interpretative key. “All of them are clear to the perceptive, and right to those who discover knowledge.”

In other words, the Bible is open to the open person. You need to understand this about yourself. How you experience the Bible reveals yourself to you. If your own mentality is biased in favor of self, the Bible will leave you feeling misunderstood and underappreciated, and you will reject its truth.

For this reason we must approach the Bible with the pre-commitment to obey humbly whatever God commands.

Verse 10 presents a dilemma. Will we accept instruction and wisdom, or will we pursue silver and gold? It is an either/or choice because

whatever we take takes us. We will love either wisdom or money. We cannot live for two different ultimate goals at the same time. Serve Christ with your money or you will end up serving it without Christ.

#### Powerful (12–16)

Wisdom is powerful because it has broad relevance to life now. The perfect son of wisdom, Jesus Christ, declared that the people He blesses join Him in fearing the Lord and hating pride, self-importance and sneakiness. These are the very sins to which gifted people are prone.

But God’s wisdom has the market cornered on counsel, resourcefulness, insight and strength.

Godly wisdom provides both strategies that succeed and the strength to execute them and not give up in the face of hardship.

Godly wisdom is spiritual wisdom. It is practical and it works. But the wisdom of Christ belongs only to people who humble themselves because they want to live to glorify Him.

The wisdom of Christ is the secret to success in the realm of human leadership. Godly wisdom is able to get things accomplished with versatility and competence.

#### Obtainable (17–21)

“I love those who love me, and those who search for me find me.” Here we see the language of love. Godly wisdom is not impersonal principles. Godly wisdom is found in the person of Jesus Christ.

The indwelling Christ grants us wisdom as we abide in Him. If we seek Him with diligence, with intentionality, we will find Him. God honors an earnest heart.

The Lord offered “riches and honor” to those who truly seek Him. If we love and seek money as our prize, it will ruin us. But if we love and seek Christ as the prize of our hearts, He will supply all the treasure and honor we will need to love Him and serve Him according to His plan for our lives. ✝

## Bible Studies for Life

By Roy E. Ciampa, Ph.D., S. Louis and Ann W. Armstrong

Professor of Religion, Samford University



### THE CULMINATION

OF OUR HOPE

1 Peter 5:5b–11

#### When we humble ourselves, God exalts us. (5b–7)

Peter uses the metaphor of getting dressed to describe the need to act humbly. We are to put on humility as though it were clothing we put on at the beginning of each day. It is not just some who should demonstrate humility — all are to be humble to each other.

All of verses 5b–7 may be understood as an application of Proverbs 3:34, quoted at the end of verse 5. We are in constant need of God’s grace, and since God gives grace to the humble, we are wise to be humble toward God and others.

Although the proverb doesn’t refer explicitly to Christ, Peter undoubtedly has Christ’s own experience in mind as an example of one who demonstrated perfect humility and who, after suffering crucifixion at the hands of the proud, was exalted by God in His resurrection and ascension to God’s right hand.

In light of our knowledge of God and His commitment to those who humble themselves before Him and others (that is, knowing He cares for us), those who submit ourselves in humility before Him are free to cast all our cares and anxieties on Him.

#### When we resist Satan, we can remain firm in the midst of suffering. (8–9)

The main theme of verses 5b–7 is reiterated in verses 8–11, namely that faithfulness in the midst of suffering will ultimately be followed, as was the case of Christ our Lord, by restoration, exaltation and glory.

Many Christians around the globe are experiencing persecution merely for choosing to follow Christ.

We are accustomed to a much lesser form of suffering, namely that of being shamed and marginalized by a secular society. Peter reminds us that our adversary, the devil, is always looking for opportunities to destroy us. That destruc-

tion can come in the form of physical persecution or suffering or in other kinds of attacks.

But Satan’s goal is not merely to cause us to suffer but instead to turn us away from our Lord. That is why Peter’s greatest concern is not that we avoid suffering but that we “resist him” and remain “firm in (our) faith,” defeating our enemy’s purpose.

Our resolve to persevere in the midst of suffering is strengthened when we remember that we are not alone: our brothers and sisters around the globe also are suffering, usually bearing the brunt of more severe persecution.

#### When we have suffered a little while, God will restore us to His eternal glory. (10–11)

Peter reminds us that for a follower of Christ, suffering is always temporary (just as it was for our Lord). In fact, although Christ’s experience isn’t explicitly mentioned in verses 10–11, the pattern described clearly reflects both Prov. 3:34 (quoted in v. 5) and Christ’s experience (compare Heb. 2:9–10): temporary suffering is followed by “eternal glory.” The temporary suffering may well continue throughout one’s earthly life (or it may be more brief), but it will be followed by eternal glory.

Peter piles up verbs to describe God’s help in our suffering: He will “restore, confirm, strengthen and establish” us. That is, He will strengthen and establish us even in the midst of great suffering so that by His grace we can endure to the end and not give our spiritual enemy the victory he desires (see Peter’s own experience in Luke 22:31–32).

Peter’s thought climaxes with the doxology in verse 11: “to God be the dominion, forever and ever.” Believers may suffer in the dominions of this world, but God’s reign will prevail. Those who suffer in faithfulness to Christ will possess glory rather than shame at the end of their story. ✝



# Media reviews

MUSIC

## GAWVI shows confidence in Christ, artistry on new album

By Tracy Riggs  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

**B**y many standards, GAWVI is not a typical Christian musician. But that doesn't mean he isn't just as committed to getting the message of Jesus out to the world.

The Grammy-nominated producer and six-time Dove Award winning artist released his third studio album, "Heathen," in April.

Though each of his three albums has a different message, all have Jesus at the center.

GAWVI'S first album, "We Belong," was based on King David — a man after God's heart who was broken and questioning, GAWVI said.

His second, "Panorama," explored his personal struggle with depression and a call to action to help those who are hurting.

"Heathen" was inspired by GAWVI's newfound confidence of his place in the Christian music industry — a place where he is okay not looking or sounding like mainstream Christian artists.

GAWVI knew the title "was going to be a bold and weighty word and kind

of scary for Christian culture."

But after thinking about it, he decided it was the perfect fit.

"If you miss church on a Sunday, your friends would be like, 'Hey, you heathen!' and you'd all laugh about it. There's a serious aspect to it where 'heathen' can really become your identity ... [after] one mistake you made in your life," he said. "If you look at the root of that word, it's just describing someone where

they are in life, culturally or biblically a Gentile or someone who is just a sinner.

And at the end of the day we are all sinners, saved by God's grace."

GAWVI said he wants listeners of this latest album "to be able to champion that. When they hear the word heathen now, to understand where they're at and whatever identity they are, their story is not far at all from God."

Growing up a preacher's kid in the Latino community, GAWVI, born Gabriel Alberto Azucena, was in church all the time. As he got older, he started looking for things to do.

"I started hitting on the drums;

I started playing on the piano because I was bored. That boredom turned into passion and curiosity. Friends would be at football practice, but I was home making beats and working on music."

"Around the age of 9, my mother tells me, that's when music was everything I wanted to do 24/7," he said.

Though raised hearing the gospel, it wasn't until his teens that his faith became his own, thanks in part

to the influence of his youth pastor.

Comparing his spiritual journey to dieting, GAWVI said someone can tell you how to lose weight and you can believe it, but until you start doing it, you won't see the effects.

### 'Journey and passion'

"[In high school] was my moment where I understood who Jesus was in my life. So ever since then, that's been my journey and my passion — to spread that message of Jesus in my music and in my culture."

Just 20 years old when he started his professional music career, GAWVI said he felt a lot of pressure to make music to satisfy others.

However, after gaining experience in the industry — he's now 31 — he feels free to create his own style of music. It's a lesson that has implications for music and for the

To find out more about "Heathen," go to [tabonline.org/GAWVI](http://tabonline.org/GAWVI) or visit [GAWVI.com](http://GAWVI.com).



Photo courtesy of Christina Garvin

Christian life, GAWVI explained.

"[Nothing's] going to be easy. It makes me think about how Jesus told His twelve disciples, 'Hey, you need to leave your family and leave your fishing life' — something that they were so comfortable about, right? People usually think that when you follow Jesus, everything is going to be a fairy tale, but when you see how Jesus speaks to His disciples, you can see that, hey, it's about to be a journey.

I'm taking you out of your comfort zone right now."

GAWVI has learned so far in his music career that it may not be comfortable, but as long as he keeps Jesus at the center, "Just being out of the box, being different ... that's okay." ✝

*"People usually think that when you follow Jesus, everything is going to be a fairy tale, but when you see how Jesus speaks to His disciples, you can see that, hey, it's about to be a journey."*

GAWVI

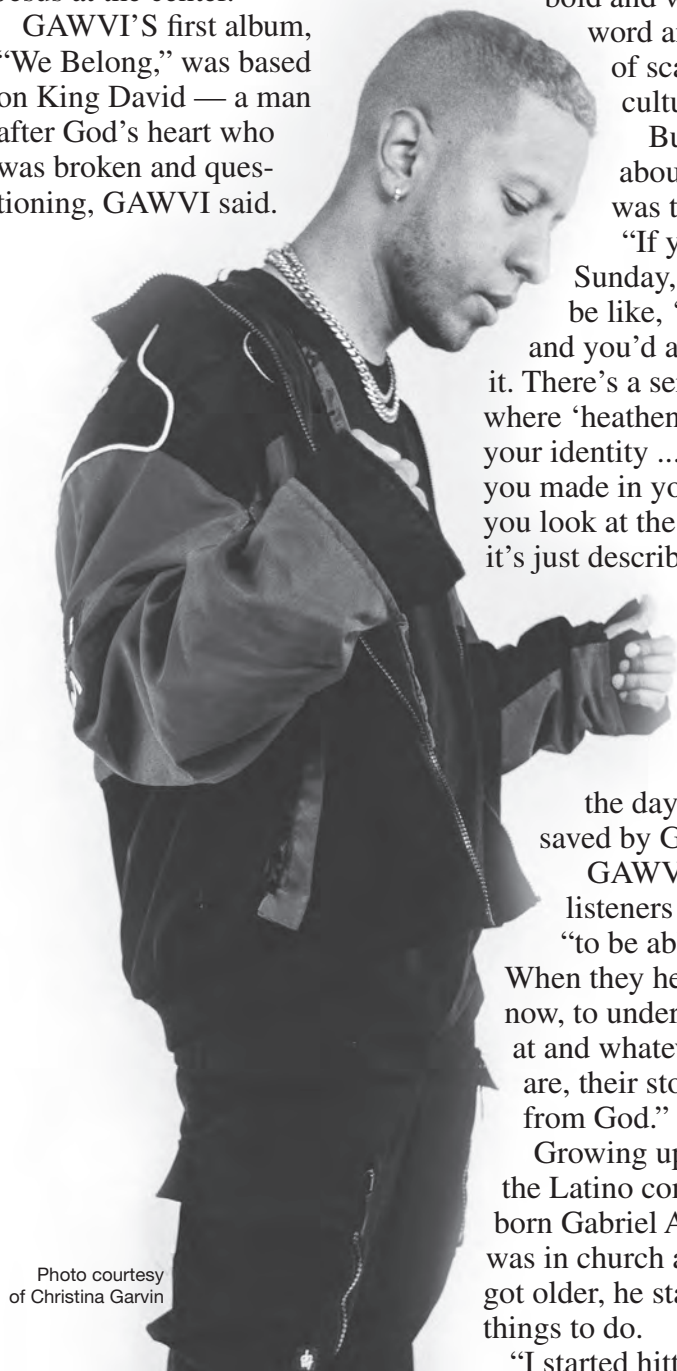


Photo courtesy of Christina Garvin

# Hungry for the Word

## IMB missionaries see gospel spread among truck drivers in West Africa

In West Africa, truck driving is a dangerous and stressful job. Drivers face cultural and linguistic barriers, job insecurity, the threat of being robbed and extortion from corrupt policemen as they take imports from the coast to landlocked countries farther east.

So when Christians offered to pray for Ahmed one day as he prepared to leave the port and transport his next load, he didn't mind, even though he was Muslim.

As he continued on his route though, he was amazed that the police never harassed him, just as the Christians had prayed for.

The next time he saw the believers at the port, he gathered a group of his friends and went over to them. The last time, the Christians had asked him if he would listen to a story, but he had been in a hurry to leave.

Now, he wanted to know more.

"God answered their prayer," he told the whole group. "Now, we're going to listen to their story."

### Hearing the stories

Each time Ahmed returned to the port, he found the believers and asked to hear another story. As the months passed, he understood his sin and his need for a Savior, and he put his faith in Christ.

He's just one of many truck drivers in the last decade who have heard and believed the gospel through a ministry to truckers International Mission Board missionary Katee Sheppard helped start.

When Sheppard moved to Togo in 1998, her job as a logistics coordinator kept her crisscrossing all



IMB missionary Katee Sheppard witnesses to a trucker at a truck stop in West Africa. For more than 10 years, she has watched God move in the hearts and lives of truckers.

over West Africa helping other missionaries with practical needs.

As she traveled throughout the region, she began to notice the drivers, and she realized they were spreading more than just imports.

Historically, Islam spread in Africa from Muslim people groups in the east to other people groups in the west through trade routes. As goods were exchanged along the routes, so were cultures.

Today, the trucking routes are modern equivalents of those trade routes. Truck drivers bring their culture with them as they travel, just like the traders did.

Sheppard could see evidence of that as she noticed more and more mosques appearing in the cities she knew were truck driving hubs.

The drivers, Sheppard theorized, were a major source of the spread

of Islam throughout the region. She had a vision to change that.

"I thought, why can't they spread the gospel instead?" she said.

More than a decade later, that seed of an idea has borne much fruit. Ministry among West African truck drivers has begun in five countries and is still expanding.

A network of 70 local believers has formed to support it. New believers have been baptized, and churches have formed in a few ports and capital cities that are trucking hubs.

### A simple approach

All of this started with a very simple approach. Truck drivers come to the ports for work. Sometimes, they have to wait days or even weeks for loads.

Because of that, the ports really function like small cities. The drivers eat there and congregate together to pass the time.

Sheppard and some national believers began going to the port in their city and just asking the drivers if they had time to hear a story.

Many African cultures are oral cultures. They have long traditions

of passing knowledge from generation to generation through sharing stories with each other.

Bible storying is often the most effective way to help the gospel come alive.

Sheppard said she's been amazed at the responsiveness from the drivers.

"I don't think I've ever had someone refuse to share a story," she said. "They're waiting for someone to come and share with them. It's an amazing thing."

### Seeing lives changed

Leah Givens, another IMB missionary who helps with the trucker ministry, said drivers are often just glad someone is taking the time to come talk to them.

"I'm amazed at how hungry they are to hear the Word," Givens said. "It really is a ripe field."

Because truckers are so transient, discipling those who convert can be challenging. They also might face stiff persecution in their home countries.

Through the years though, a network of national believers has developed to support the ministry.

When drivers are receptive to hearing stories, they're given a business card with contact numbers of people along the trucking routes they can call to connect with and hear more. These connections become a support system for drivers who trust in Christ.

Though much has changed in the years since Sheppard first began to pray for God to work among West Africa's truck drivers, her vision remains the same.

"My dream from the beginning was, and still is, that West African truck drivers will carry the gospel to the ends of this part of the world," she said.

"It's God's word that changes people and nothing else." (IMB)

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

***"I don't think I've ever had someone refuse to share a story. They're waiting for someone to come and share with them. It's an amazing thing."***

**Katee Sheppard, IMB missionary**