



The Alabama Baptist

Toll free 800-803-5201
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August 13, 2020

Vol. 185, No. 32
Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

INSIDE



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JESUS 2020

Campaign-style movement points people to Christ

By Lanell Downs Smith
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

With fall elections on the horizon and COVID-19 not yet in the rearview mirror, Martha Sikes knew she could no longer remain silent.

With a burden to share the light of Christ in her community, Sikes asked her Sunday School class at Sampey Memorial Baptist Church in Ramer what they could do to ignite a spark in the darkness.

From her inspiration was born the Jesus 2020 campaign — a movement to lead Christians in prayer for revival in America.

“Our country needs Jesus more than ever before,” Sikes said. “The Lord laid it upon our hearts that we couldn’t continue to hide our light under a bushel.”

Fellow Sampey member Joyce Hubbard developed a patriotic red, white and blue campaign-style sign, with a theme emphasizing America’s need for Christ.

“Everyone is so disheartened and in despair,” Hub-

bard said. “We wanted to put something in our yards. As I worked on the design, I realized the answer is simple — we need Jesus. We need to campaign for Jesus. I had no idea what it would be like when we started this. The excitement it has brought to people has just lifted them up.”

Momentum building

With Sampey as “Jesus 2020” campaign headquarters, the movement gained momentum and the church

commissioned signs through a local printer, Wells Printing in Montgomery.

Within two weeks, the historic south Montgomery County church had distributed more than 750 signs.

“You see [the sign] when you come in and out of the driveway,” Hubbard said. “Shut-ins can look out their window and see it. People driving down the road can see it. It’s a ministry we’re not having to gather to do.”

In fact, the church reopened from pandemic closure in

May, with an average attendance of fewer than 20. Since Jesus 2020 began, Sikes said three new people have visited the church.

Positive responses

“We’ve had very positive responses from churches and an unbelievable response in our community,” Sikes said. “People who don’t go to church are telling us that this is just what they need. I think [the campaign] has given people a ray of hope for
(See ‘Prayer,’ page 11)



Photo courtesy of Martha Sikes

Sampey Memorial Baptist Church serves as Jesus 2020 campaign headquarters. The South Montgomery County church hopes to ignite a beacon that leads Christians to pray for revival across America.



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Simple ways you can help us expand our reach

Read TAB Day is just a few weeks away — Sunday, Aug. 23 — but we’re doing something a little different this year: Our Read TAB Day emphasis is actually going to stretch until the end of 2020.

Our goal is to double our engagement by Dec. 31. It sounds like a lofty goal, but we believe we can do it with your help.

The idea is to play on the “each one, reach one” concept, which is why we’re asking each of our supporters to share at least one part of what TAB Media offers with someone not already connected to us.

Current engagement

As of Aug. 1, the total number of people we can count engaged with us in some form is 97,220 — that includes print subscribers, digital subscribers, followers on all of our social media platforms, podcast listeners, website visitors and more.

To double our engagement, we’ll need that number to be 194,440 by Dec. 31. Think we can do it?

TAB works each day to inspire, inform and connect believers across Alabama, the nation and the world, but it’s the support of our readers that makes our efforts possible.

Grow with us

By sharing us with friends and family, you are connecting your loved ones with a publishing ministry focused on sharing news in a fresh way while also helping believers grow in their faith journeys.

But that’s not all — you also will be playing a vital role in the life of this ministry.

TAB wants to stand the test of time and continue to grow and adapt with each changing season.

Ways you can share TAB

► **Help** someone obtain a subscription to the print edition — which comes with an enhanced PDF digital edition and an all-access pass to our online platforms as well as discounts on events and workshops sponsored by TAB for those interested.

► **Share** our social media platforms with family members so they can follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn.

► **Subscribe** to the TAB Media Group channel on YouTube.

► **Visit** our blog for young adults at theropetab.com.

► **Subscribe to and share** our weekly podcasts with friends and family.

► **Subscribe** to TAB Highlights, a Monday–Wednesday–Friday email newsletter with the latest headlines in the world of faith and a link to the latest podcast. Sign up on our homepage at tabonline.org.

Be thinking about what you might share with someone, and let us help you in the effort. Call us at 800-803-5201, ext. 118, or email us at support@thealabamabaptist.org.

You also are welcome to reach out to us through any of our social media platforms. (TAB)

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)

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

Website: www.thealabamabaptist.org

Email: news@thealabamabaptist.org or subscribe@thealabamabaptist.org
Periodicals postage paid at Hattiesburg, Miss.

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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

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The crossword puzzle can be found on page 17.

MY RASHIONALE

By Jennifer Davis Rash
President and Editor-in-Chief

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Who's on your school prayer list? How's your church reaching out?

School administrators, teachers, parents, students and governmental officials on all levels continue struggling to find common ground regarding how school will operate for the entirety of the 2020–2021 school year.

Most decisions have been made about how to reopen and what the first nine weeks will look like, but what to do beyond that remains fluid.

A school administrator friend said about the time she thinks she has a plan in place, something significant changes and she's back to square one.

Everyone has an opinion and legitimate concerns, but the reality is there likely isn't a "best" solution — all options bring consequences of some type.

I'm thankful for the leaders willing to do the proper research, ask the tough questions and attempt to make the best decision they can with the information they have.

I'm thankful for the countless, dedicated servants truly trying to find a workable solution.

So instead of tossing in more noise, I'm going to trust they will work to do the best they can in this most unusual time.

I'm praying for wisdom, discernment, energy, strength, restorative rest and confidence in their calling.

And I'm praying for all the parents making tough decisions related to their children's physical, mental and emotional health, even as they attempt to balance their own job situations

related to the changes in how schools operate.

We talked in late July about selecting students, teachers, administrators and others who work in the school systems and committing to pray for them.

I made my list right away and decided to focus on immediate family and close friends — one preschool teacher, one kindergarten teacher, one special education teacher, one lunchroom attendant, one school principal and one college professor.

Also, three college freshmen, four high school students, one

elementary school student and one preschool student all have a large piece of my heart, so I added them to the list as well.

And among our TAB Media staff, we have spouses, children, siblings and other close family members who are educators or work in the educational system in some way.

I'm guessing you have someone close to you working in education as well.

And what about your pastor and church staff? Do they have family members working in the school system? Maybe one or

more of your church leaders are co-vocational and serve as teachers themselves.

If your pastor has school-aged children, then this month (and actually this year) would be a good time to show him grace and lots of encouragement.

And do remember that school officials have families and inconvenient life issues happening to them as well.

Share your list with us and/or a note about how your church is reaching out to schools at news@thealabamabaptist.org or call 800-803-5201, ext. 118. 🙏

AND IN OTHER NEWS ...



Your Voice



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

What to ask yourself before posting online

By **Brandon Porter**
Editor, Kentucky Today

Everywhere I turn, people are talking. In some places, they're even talking about how people are talking.

Have you heard it? I hear people say things like:

- ▶ Everyone is looking for a reason to be offended.
- ▶ People are so volatile right now.
- ▶ Why are so many people angry?

Maybe it's the stress of a pandemic and the disruption of our routines and expectations.

Another factor may be how we're using social media. Short, direct and snippy comments seem to be common on many social media platforms I visit. I'll admit that I rarely leave social media feeling encouraged or built up.

A 2017 article at Forbes.com called "A Run Down of Social Media's Effects on our Mental Health" said, "The more we use social media, the less happy we seem to be."

The article pointed to a study that showed the more a person is on social media, the more isolated he or she feels.

If you're using social media, let me offer you a way to help people rather than hurt them before you hit send.

A short verse in the New Testament says, "... whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things" (Phil. 4:8, ESV).

Not only should our thoughts be guided by these principles, but our words should be as well.

As you consider your next post, ask yourself these questions before posting:

- ▶ Is what I'm posting true?
- ▶ Is what I'm posting honorable to myself, God or others?
- ▶ Is what I'm posting right and fair?
- ▶ Is what I'm posting free from defilement or impurity?
- ▶ Is what I'm posting inspiring?
- ▶ Is what I'm posting something I'd recommend to others?

There are benefits to social media as we're able to connect with distant family members and friends. But we must be mindful of the cost.

Is what you're posting on social media helping those who will read it or contributing to the uneasiness in today's society?

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TAB staff members help double our reach

I purchased a subscription to the print edition for my mom.
James Hammack
Digital services manager

I invited 20 of my Facebook friends to like TAB's Facebook page and 10 of my friends to join the Beyond the Headlines Facebook group. I also asked my sister to subscribe to the print and digital edition and asked my family to subscribe to the TAB Highlights email newsletter.

Sarah Gill
Digital services associate

I purchased a subscription to the print edition and the digital edition for a family member in north Alabama.

Jennifer Davis Rash
President and editor-in-chief

Hey, TAB readers! Read more on page 2 about our goal for Read TAB Day.

Then share how you are helping us double our reach by calling 800-803-5201, ext. 118 or emailing support@thealabamabaptist.org.

Letters to the Editor

The July 30 Back to Campus issue is one of your best overall papers this year. Thank you for covering the topic so well and for providing it in full color. Everything from the front page to the table of contents to the various features were very appealing to the eye.

Sue Rash
Cairo, Ga.

I've been a longtime reader and supporter of TAB, but I am really loving it recently. You are focused on things that are relevant and applicable to us as believers. A great recent example was the article on build-

ing connections in the July 16 issue — extremely timely. What you are doing with the content in TAB is a great combination of the spiritual and the practical — an equipping of the church.

Terry Newberry
Douglasville, Ga.

Great articles about going back to school in the July 30 issue of TAB. You suggested we think about and plan intentional prayer times for "our students." I will be praying, as my five grandchildren will all be in college this year.

Margaret Smith
Trussville, Ala.

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“Even if you forget today’s date, remember to praise God for making this day available.”

KAREN MOORE

Author, “Got 10 Minutes?”

What will be your driving purpose and legacy? Anything less than seeking and advancing God’s kingdom falls short of your divine design.

Jay Wolf, retiring pastor
FBC Montgomery

When the church sees itself as the goal, it becomes a powerless, and I would dare say an idolatrous, thing.

Pastor Jeff Christopherson
Co-founder, SEND institute

Stop spending so much of your time worrying about who doesn’t like you. God LOVES you. Stay focused on His purpose. He’ll take care of the battle.

Pastor Jarman Leatherwood
House of Hope and Restoration
Huntsville

Everyone in your church has baggage. When they come to church, they bring their problems with them.

They get sick. They have financial problems and family issues. They struggle with addictions.

Good churches and ministers recognize this and biblically address these needs to help people deal with their problems.

Daniel Wilson
Evangelism director
Alabama Baptist State Board
of Missions

Grace dies when it becomes us versus them.

Philip Yancey
“What’s So Amazing About
Grace?”

I believe God’s intent for the church was not to be an institution but a movement, as initiated in the opening chapters of the book of Acts.

An institution is a fixture, an established (fixed in place) organization. Or a place of confinement (as asylum). Either way, I do not believe God ever intended His New Testament Church to be an institution.

A movement is the activities of a group of people to achieve a specific goal. For the New Testament Church, would that mean every step we take is to fulfill the Great Commission as Jesus stated?

George Yates
Church health strategist
Alabama Baptist State Board
of Missions

From the *Twitterverse*

@EdLitton

This is a bad time to be a church weak in prayer.

@brocraige

The distractions of the world are screaming for our attention, yet the power of the preached Word prevails. Thanks to the preachers whom God used today to proclaim the truth and drown out the world.

@MattSmethurst

If you take liberties with sin, sin will take liberties with you.

@hershaelyork

Everyone is ... tired. Or worried. Or angry. Or sad. Or fearful. Or hurting. Or something. You be the one who lowers the volume and calms the situation, who smiles kindly, who says “I’m sorry” with

no sarcasm, who shows them grace. You be the face of Jesus to them.

@Kathrynclang

There is a difference between conviction and guilt. #Conviction makes way for change. Guilt condemns to darkness.

@BenMandrell

Reading Nehemiah 1. Reminded that vision from God begins with an intensity in prayer. Nehemiah’s burden for change fueled his inner pursuit of the Lord.

@mljquotes

Are you a man of the world or are you a man of God? It is one or the other. — Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

@DustinBenge

God’s essence, character, and at-

tributes cannot change. He does not develop. He does not get wiser. He does not grow holier. He does not increase. He does not decrease. God does not change.

@richardblackaby

Society keeps shouting that it doesn’t need God, yet the results suggest otherwise.

@trillianewbell

Christians: One day, we’ll see clearly. We’ll understand what was right and wrong. We’ll know Truth and understand justice. We’ll also worship together. We’ll love — true, pure, righteous love. That day will come. Until then, let’s pray for each other.

@GaryFenton07

Our motives for prayer will reveal more than the words of our prayers.

Splashdown

After 45 years, astronauts landed in the drink again.

It was the first ever Gulf of Mexico space capsule landing. The event garnered lots of news coverage.

As in the old days, viewers held their breaths as the flying/floating Tesla descended.

Then a sigh of relief as the thing plopped in and bobbed in the Gulf.

What does the Lord think about the renewed hullabaloo regarding space exploration?

Possibly Psalm 8 gives a clue: “When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and stars, which You have ordained. ...” (v. 3).

The psalmist believed the Lord wanted humans to “consider [His] heavens.”

Astronauts do just that. Some profess faith in God.

Apollo 8 astronauts read from Genesis. Buzz Aldrin took communion. Jim Irwin became an evangelist in his post-space days. Tammy Jernigan gave a testimony from space. Shannon Lucid took a minister’s sermon to the Russians on the Mir space station.

John Glenn’s observation says it all: “To look up out at this kind of creation and not believe in God is to me impossible.”

Surely the Lord approves of humans learning all we can about His creation. He might say, “Go ahead, find out all you can about Me and My universe, and you will know Me better. And I am pleased by that.”

God wants to be known. Splashdown in the knowledge of His marvelous work. No life vest needed. He’s a rescuer.

Darryl Wood
“A Personal Word
from a Retread Pastor”
Facebook blog

EDITOR’S NOTE — Find a compilation of accounts of astronauts practicing and sharing their faith in space at tabonline.org/space.

8 TIPS

for leading your family in worship

Enthusiasm, discipline, interaction set example during livestream services

By JD Thorne

Pastor, Point Mallard Parkway Baptist Church

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused many Christian families to find themselves in an odd place on Sunday mornings: home.

With many churches choosing to cancel their gatherings in favor of livestream services or family worship guides, here are a few tips for parents wanting to make the most of their worship at home.

1. Teach the importance of corporate worship.

Children need to know that worship on the Lord's Day is no less sacred in their living room than it is in a church building. Corporate worship is so vital to the life of a Christian that we should utilize whatever technology is available to stay connected to the body of Christ, to be encouraged by our faith family and to be taught by the word of God.

2. Limit distractions.

The living room presents more distractions than the sanctuary. Put away toys, phones, pets and anything else that might distract from listening and participating in worship. Instruct children to use the bathroom before you start. In doing this, you can prepare an environment where worship and study can take priority.

3. Manage expectations.

While we want to limit distractions, they are bound to happen, and we cannot be angry or discour-



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aged when they do. Be flexible. Embrace the awkwardness. Keep the mood light. Don't let one child with a bad attitude ruin the moment for everyone else.

4. Open your Bible.

It's tempting to sit back on the couch and passively listen to the livestream like it's a movie. Instead, stay engaged with the sermon by opening your Bible and following along, just as you would if you were sitting in an auditorium. Make sure family member have their own copy of God's word in front of them.

5. Take notes.

Watching a livestream service in your living room provides an

opportunity to show your children how to take notes during a sermon. It is much more difficult to teach young children to take notes in a full sanctuary without distracting those around you. At home, however, you can instruct them to answer questions such as:

- ▶ "Who is speaking?"
- ▶ "What are you learning about God?"
- ▶ "What was your favorite song and why?"
- ▶ "What was confusing?"

These notes could lead to a good family discussion after the service ends.

6. Dad, take the lead.

As the spiritual head of the household, this is a great opportunity for you to lead your family. Be the one who gathers everyone together. Show a genuine excite-

ment about worshipping in a new way. Sing loudly. Ask good questions. Encourage everyone to participate.

7. Read along.

Pray along. Sing along. Just as the Sunday gathering of the church is an interactive time, not a performance, so is participating in a livestream service. Make a joyful noise, even if it's off-key. Bow your head and close your eyes when someone is praying. Read along in your Bible during the sermon.

8. Long for the return of God's people gathered together.

Allowing your children to hear how much you miss the Sunday gathering of the church will help them see the importance of corporate worship in the life of a believer.

In a small way, it will mirror the longing that all Christians have for the day when we will gather together with the Lord Jesus to be with Him forever.

With a little planning and intentionality, this temporary season of isolation could be used to grow your family closer to one another, closer to your local church body and closer to God.



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"Pray along. Sing along. Just as the Sunday gathering of the church is an interactive time, not a performance, so is participating in a livestream service. Make a joyful noise, even if it's off-key."

JD Thorne

EDITOR'S NOTE — JD Thorne is pastor of Point Mallard Parkway Baptist Church in Decatur. This article originally appeared in the ERLC's Light Magazine titled "Ministry in Uncertain Times: A Special COVID-19 Issue." To view the free online edition, visit erlc.com/light. ✝



PRESCHOOL & CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

in challenging times

Creativity, planning helpful for kids, parents amid changes in programs, worship

By **Michael J. Brooks**
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

According to a recent study by LifeWay Research, only 12% of Protestant churches currently are holding small groups for children. While some churches are planning to start back in September, 57% of pastors surveyed said they are undecided when to resume children's programs during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The topic was the focus of a recent webinar, "Preschool and Children's Ministry in Challenging Times," hosted by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

"We certainly need God's wisdom in this time, and we want to offer some encouragement and suggestions and a few resources," said Patty Burns, Vacation Bible School strategist in the SBOM office of Sunday School and discipleship.

Next steps

Burns used an acrostic, "SIMPLE," as a guide for preschool and children's ministry leaders as they consider their next steps.

S — Say what you mean and mean what you say. "We need to be clear in our communication," Burns said.

I — Information overload. "Some of our people are scared and some are tired, so we must be sure we've thought through every situation and our policies are clear."

M — Move forward. "We can't be stagnant," she said. "What worked before? Maybe that's what we need to do while altering a bit for this virus."

P — Pray and plan with purpose. "Prayer is the foundation of all we do, so the first thing we must do is pray," Burns said. "Colossians 3:23 tells us to do our work 'heartily' to the Lord, so we need His direction. ... Planning means to keep leaders fully involved as we move toward reopening."

L — Love people and lead well. "This is always in order, but especially so in this time of uncertainty."

E — Engage families. "Parents should be involved in their children's spiritual education," she said. "And there are a number of resources available to help them."

In addition to resuming small groups for children, leaders are looking for creative ways to help children who may be staying in worship services for the first time — and their parents. Belinda Stroud, who provides leadership for childhood discipleship and Bible Drill for the SBOM, recommended several tips and resources.

'Kid's kits'

To help children engage in worship, Stroud said bags of crayons for small children can be a good idea.

"You can ask them to draw a picture of the worship service or Bible lesson, and give it to the pastor after the service," she said. "Then they could be displayed the next Sunday. A small snack in the bag might be appropriate."

Burns said she has used "kid's kits" for years.

"The children's worksheets can be more worship-related, such as 'Who had the opening prayer?' or 'What was the sermon about?'" she said. "Sometimes children wiggle

and squirm a bit in worship, but often this isn't so noticeable.

"Adults can wiggle and squirm too!" she said with a laugh.

Stroud recommended the book "Parenting in the Pew."

"Churches can purchase copies and provide them for their parents," she said.

Another helpful resource is "Mr.

Find ministry resources for children and preschoolers at kidzlinkal.org.

View upcoming SBOM training events and resources for all ages at pinnaclealabama.org.

Mark's Classroom" on the web and on Facebook, Stroud said.

The SBOM has two websites for ministry leaders: pinnaclealabama.org and kidzlinkal.org. Both have a number of resources for ministry leaders, some taught by LifeWay staff members, Stroud said.

Free ebook

Stroud also cited a free ebook from LifeWay, "6 Considerations for Reopening Your Kids Ministry," and noted LifeWay has downloadable safety posters for children's areas.

To access these and other LifeWay resources, visit lifeway.com/en/special-emphasis/coronavirus-resources.

View upcoming SBOM training events at pinnaclealabama.org/events.



THIRD IN A SERIES

In their OWN WORDS:

Alabama Baptists and the COVID-19 pandemic

Staci Thompson on parenting — ‘This was the best time we’ve had as a family’

By Staci Thompson
Special to The Alabama Baptist

My name is Staci Thompson. I’m 28 years old. We recently moved from Gardendale to Morris. I’ve been married for seven years; I’ve known my husband since I was 17. We have four kiddos: Braden, 6; Kinsleigh, 5; Bradley, 3; and Kendall, 2. We have a dog, Sam, who just turned 7.

We’re a busy family. We attend Gardendale First Baptist Church, and we’re really involved there. My kids love it so much. Anytime they’re doing something, we’re there. And we play ball also. Both of my boys play baseball, so we’re on the go a lot. We just enjoy being on the go.

When I heard, “All this is cancelled; you’re going to stay home all the time,” I thought, “How in the world are we going to be at home all the time? We are never at home.”

At first, I was a little nervous about that. Obviously, more important things were going on to be worried about, but for us and our family, I didn’t have a good attitude about it.

Time together

Then, as time went on, it really turned out to be the best time we have ever had as a family. Being at home — we’ve had the most time together that we’ve ever had before. Playing baseball in the yard, riding bikes, taking walks and eating all three meals around the table together every day turned out to be the sweetest memories.

I know I’m going to look back and say, “That was the best time we had as a family because we were together all the time, making sweet memories together, cooking together.” It really ended up being such a blessing.

But buying groceries was a challenge. We are a family of six — a



Photo courtesy of Staci Thompson

Staci Thompson and her children enjoy reading and art activities. The Thomp-sons home-schooled before the pandemic and plan to continue this fall.

little bit bigger than your normal family size. A grocery trip for me looks like what a stockpile would be for others, which I’m sure everybody faced — going to the grocery store and not being able to get the amount of food you would normally get. That was a little bit stressful, just wondering, “Am I going to be able to have enough food? Am I going to have enough toilet paper? Diapers? Wipes?” Those are things I’ve never had to worry about before.

Also, we decided to put our house on the market in the middle of a pandemic. We decided to sell

our house and move. It was something we had talked about, but we weren’t really planning to do it right now. But we figured, “Why not? In the middle of a pandemic, let’s sell our house.”

For 15 days we were on the market. We had 21 showings in that time frame. We sold it after 15 days and found another house not too far away in that time.

Schooling at home

We were already home-schooling before the pandemic. My oldest just completed kindergarten, so he will be a first grader. We are going to continue home-schooling for now.



Photo courtesy of Staci Thompson

Staci Thompson (center) says slowing down during the pandemic has meant special time with her kids: Braden, 6; Bradley, 3; Kendall, 2; and Kinsleigh, 5.

“I think my faith has definitely grown during this time with everything being so uncertain and things just being new.”

Staci Thompson

I think my faith has definitely grown during this time with everything being so uncertain and things just being new. This is obviously something we've never dealt with before; we've never walked through anything like this. It can be scary; it can be really uncertain.

But God is sovereign; He is faithful, and He has proved that to us over and over. As I look back on my life — in my short 28 years — I can always see the theme of my life as God's faithfulness. Once again He has proved Himself through that; He has taken care of us. We've learned that we might not know what is going to happen tomorrow, what we're going to wake up to and see happening on the news, but God is still in control. We're really just relying on that.

A verse I've held on to is 2 Corinthians 4:16 when we are told: "Do not lose heart. Outwardly we're wasting away, but inwardly we're being renewed day by day." Every morning I get up before my kiddos. They are not allowed to leave their rooms until 7:00 a.m. That way, I can have my quiet time with Jesus ... taking that time to sit down with Him to be refreshed and be renewed. Then, we don't have anywhere to go; everything was canceled, so we don't

have to get up and be anywhere during the mornings. But still taking that time to get up early and spend time alone with Him is really a sweet time, even more so when there is no schedule, no agenda to keep.

God is faithful

Another verse is Galatians 6:9, which has always been a verse I love: "Do not grow weary in doing good." It's easy to be weary when you look around, when you watch the news or hear something on the radio or social media. It's so easy to become weary. I really just rely on the fact that God is faithful, and He has proved that over and over. That's who He is. He's going to continue to be faithful.

I don't know how much my children will remember of this time, but in 10 years, I would like to be able to say, "When you were younger, there was a time we couldn't leave the house because of a scary virus, but look how God brought us through it!"

I hope they see His faithfulness!

EDITOR'S NOTE — As told to Margaret Colson. In Their Own Words is an oral history of Alabama Baptists during COVID-19. The interview has been edited for clarity and space.

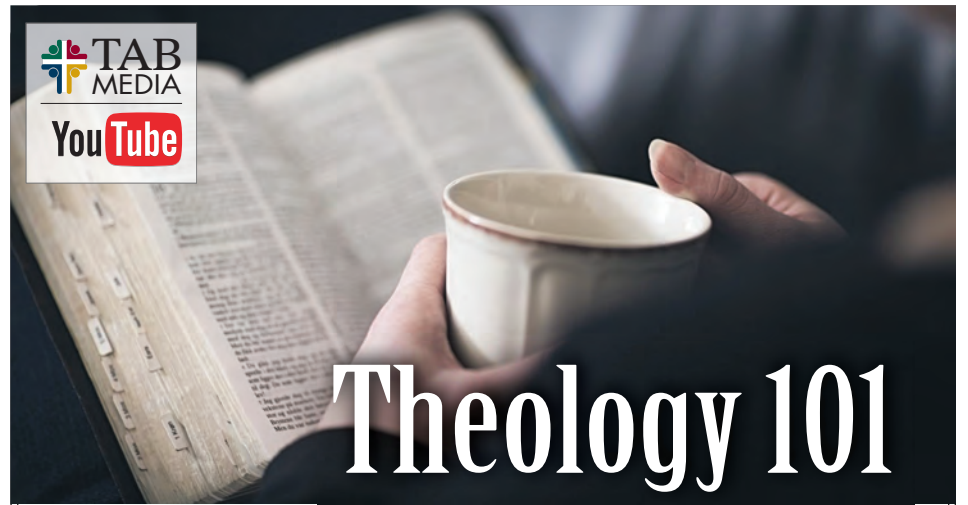


Photo courtesy of Staci Thompson
Staci Thompson has held on to 2 Corinthians 4:16 as her family has navigated changes brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.



Photo courtesy of Staci Thompson

Baseball normally keeps the Thompson family busy. This summer, they replaced baseball games with bike rides, walks and meals together around the table.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

The Holy Spirit in Figures

Wind

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

In previous weeks, Theology 101 has used biblical figures of speech that refer to God the Father and Christ the Son. This week attention is given to those related to the Holy Spirit. They are suggestive of truths that relate to the person of the Spirit and His work in the Christian life.

This week's feature is wind. Wind was associated with the Spirit's coming at Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2:2: "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting."

In the story of Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus in the third chapter of John, Jesus made an association between wind and the Spirit. He explained, "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8).

What is it about the wind that suggests truths about the Spirit?

Sovereignty of the Spirit

Like the wind, the Holy Spirit is sovereign. As Jesus noted, wind blows where it wishes. The Holy Spirit shares the divine attribute of sovereignty. He operates according to the divine will, not our will. We may deeply desire and earnestly ask for some action of the Spirit, but granting or withholding is the Spirit's prerogative.

From our human, earthly, time-bound vantage point, the purposes and ways of the Spirit's working

are unsearchable. Jesus reminded Nicodemus that he could hear the sound of the wind but could not see where it came from or where it was going.

In addition, the Spirit is mighty in His working, comparable to a rushing, mighty wind, as reported on the Day of Pentecost. On that day, the Spirit's work was that of filling the gathered believers. All who were in the house were "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4).

Enabling power

Out of His fullness, the Holy Spirit possesses enabling power. On the day of His outpouring, those gathered were enabled "to speak with other tongues." As a result of the fullness, they spoke of "the wonderful works of God" so all who heard could understand in their own language or dialect (v. 11). The Spirit's fullness of power enabled Peter to so preach the gospel that 3,000 believed and were baptized in a single day (v. 41).

Thus, with the wind as the illustration, we can affirm that the Holy Spirit is invisible, sovereign, unsearchable, mighty, filling and enabling.

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.





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Journey Church, 435 Sheila Blvd., Prattville

In a godless culture, we need to meet some critical needs for our young men. In this in-person one-day event, we will build up teen guys and show them how to find Christ-centered character. Our goal is to rise above society's confusing messages about "masculinity" and equip young men with a biblical approach to their identity.

Due to health and safety guidelines, seating is limited.

Prayer, call to repentance part of the movement

(continued from page 1)
our country. When people see that sign it's a reminder of putting Jesus first in our lives every day."

"This is not political, partisan or denominational," Hubbard said. "Jesus is for all the sinners. He's not a winner; He's THE winner. You see signs for all these things that are supposed to make your life better, but you don't see Jesus everywhere. We are just promoting Jesus."



Photo courtesy of Martha Sikes

As the presidential election approaches, Sikes said she knew it was the right time to promote a renewed focus on Christ.

Jesus 2020 points toward The Return, a Sept. 26 National Day of Prayer and Repentance rally in Washington, Sikes said.

Prayer initiatives begin 40 days before the presidential election and rally organizers plan to call the people of America to repentance and a return to God.

"We want Jesus to be a part of this election," she said. "We want to pray for revival, for people to turn to Jesus and for Christians to be on fire for Jesus. The Bible tells us to go out and reach others for Him, so we want to draw in unbelievers also."

"In our world today, everything is acceptable. We need to turn our eyes on Jesus and what the Bible says."

Each Jesus 2020 sign includes a scan code for the campaign's Facebook page, where viewers can find information about ordering the signs and a link to The Return rally.

Sampey volunteers have distributed signs to churches in Montgomery, Bullock and Autauga counties.

Neal Hughes, Montgomery Baptist Association director of missions, is helping Sampey members spread the word throughout the association, and organizers hope to share the vision statewide.

"Many of our pastors have taken signs," Hughes said. "They're not only putting



Photo courtesy of Martha Sikes

(L to R) Martha Sikes, Susie Halse and Joyce Hubbard remind Christians to pray for revival across America.

them in their own yards, they're asking church folk to put them out too. It's so beautiful, easy and simple, and I think it has the potential to go from local to global. Churches can produce these themselves to spread the word."

T-shirts, stickers and car magnets are available along with the signs and may be

ordered from Wells Printing or through Sampey.

Sikes said everyone is invited to be part of the Jesus 2020 campaign, which ultimately is about hope. "We believe we are all craving something positive to give us hope," she said. "God is speaking to many hearts through this mission."✝

Signs, T-shirts, stickers and car magnets may be ordered from Wells Printing or through Sampey. For ordering information, visit facebook.com/JESUS2020SIGNS.



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- ❑ 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

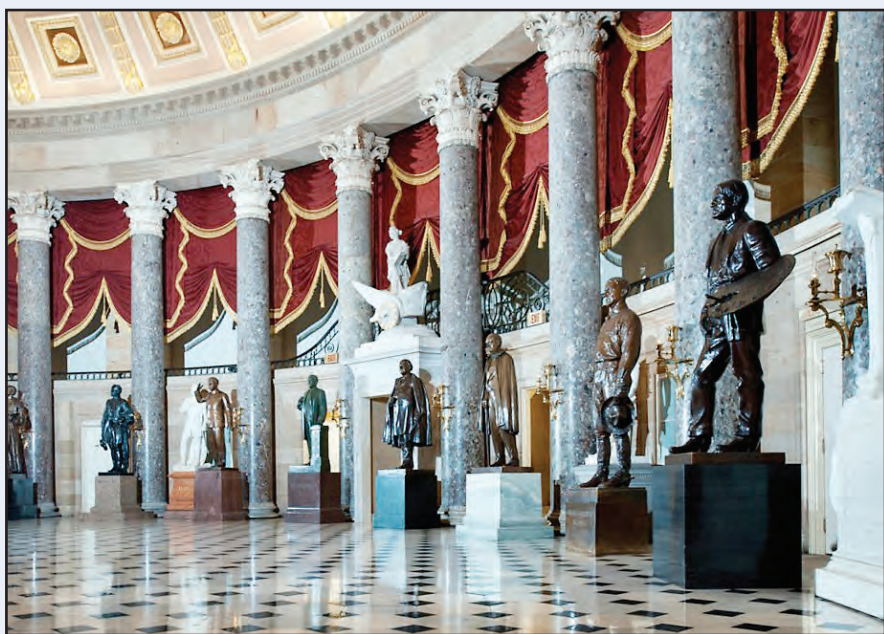


Photo by Architect of the Capitol/Creative Commons

A statue of evangelist and North Carolina native Billy Graham will be installed in the U.S. Capitol's Statuary Hall collection (pictured above) sometime next year, replacing a statue of Charles Aycock (1859–1912), a former North Carolina governor and white supremacist. A North Carolina legislative committee has approved a model of the statue depicting Graham. The Statuary Hall collection consists of 100 statues of prominent people — two from each state. (RNS)

Current online church services get thumbs up

More than 90% of U.S. adults responding to a new Pew Research Center survey said they are “very” or “somewhat” satisfied with the online religious services they’ve been watching.

The survey also finds that 30% of those watching online services are watching multiple churches’ services, and 29% are watching a different church’s service from their own congregation.

Of those responding, 25% said they are only watching their house of worship’s online offerings.

And of those currently watching online church services, 49% reported this was not a new experience for them, that they had watched services online prior to the pandemic.

For more information about the survey, visit pewforum.org. (TAB)

LifeWay Women events go online, expand reach

LifeWay Christian Resources is doubling down on their efforts to connect women through the gospel by moving three scheduled LifeWay Women events online.

Cultivate Online will be broadcast Sept. 12, followed by Living Proof Live Simulcast with Beth Moore on Oct. 10. The first event, LifeWay Women Live Simulcast, was broadcast Aug. 8.

The October Living Proof Simulcast with Beth Moore continues a longstanding tradition of annual virtual events; the inaugural Living Proof Live simulcast was in 2003.

Organizers say the virtual events will likely engage more women than would have been possible through the physical gatherings.

Information on the events is available at lifeway.com/en/events/women. (BP)

— NEWSBRIEFS —

Longtime Alabama Baptist music minister Glen Jennings dies at age 82



Longtime Alabama Baptist music minister Glen Jennings died July 29. He was 82.

Jennings began his ministry singing in Reform before attending Samford University. During his 60-year ministry, he served on staff at Oakland Baptist, Green Acres Baptist, Raleigh Avenue Baptist and Tenth Avenue Baptist, all in Birmingham; Westmeade Baptist, Decatur; First Baptist, Winfield; Orchard Baptist, Navco Baptist and Seven Hills Baptist, all in Mobile; Memorial Baptist, Citronelle; Shiloh Baptist, Priceville; Kushla Baptist, Saraland; and Haven Woods Baptist, Semmes.



JENNINGS

Jennings is survived by his wife, Becky, who throughout his ministry was either at the organ or piano. He is also survived by three daughters, Melody, Celeste and Marsha; one son, Darrell; 14 grandchildren; and 13 great-grandchildren. (Grace Thornton)

WMU announces retirement plan options amid financial concerns



In response to a decline in sales due to COVID-19, national WMU announced Aug. 5 it is offering a voluntary retirement plan to all full-time and part-time staff who meet the criteria for retirement.

Over the past four years, WMU has cut 34% from its budget, which will equal \$5.2 million beginning in October for 2020–21. Sales of curriculum for missions groups are WMU’s main source of revenue and, with uncertainty related to the pandemic, curriculum sales have dwindled.

“This year we were strategically poised for growth, and then COVID-19 hit our vibrant ministry with a force unequal to anything we’ve seen in recent decades,” said Sandy Wisdom-Martin, executive director of national WMU.

WMU responded by providing numerous resources online but still lost income due to decreased sales. With diminished revenue and uncertainty of when it may rebound, WMU leaders decided to contain costs and present a balanced budget for 2020–2021.

The consideration period for those eligible for

the voluntary retirement offer closes on Sept. 21. At that time, WMU leaders “will determine how much of a deficit in the budget remains and how to proceed from there,” Wisdom-Martin said. (WMU)

River Bend, Lowndesboro, pastor Mark Raughton dies at age 59



Mark Raughton, pastor of River Bend Baptist Church, Lowndesboro, died July 29. He was 59.

A native of LaGrange, Georgia, Raughton earned a bachelor’s degree from the Baptist College of Florida in Graceville. In addition to serving at Riverbend Baptist, he served as pastor of six other churches over the past 36 years, including Enon Baptist, Grampion Hills, and Catoma Baptist, Montgomery.



RAUGHTON

Raughton is survived by his wife of 38 years, Lou Ann; son, Matthew; daughter, Amanda; and three grandchildren. (Grace Thornton)

— ALABAMA NEWS —

Southern Christian Writers Conference expands reach with virtual participation

For the first time in the 29-year history of the Southern Christian Writers Conference, leaders and participants didn't meet in person. But that didn't keep anyone away.

Although the conference was held completely virtual via Facebook Live on July 24–25, more than 175 people participated.

“Our virtual writing conference was a big success,” SCWC director Cheryl Wray said.

“The event was months in the planning, and I oftentimes wasn't sure if my vision would work. But God blessed our efforts.”

The conference — usually held in-person at First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa — included remote keynote speakers, workshops, breakout sessions and a Q&A panel.

And just like any other year, the conference included door prizes and writing awards.

First place award winners:

► **Nonfiction, newspaper article** — Lanell Smith for “Alabama church feeds Birmingham homeless,” originally published in TAB and later picked up by Baptist Press

► **Nonfiction, magazine article** — Karen

Allen for “It's not easy, but it's everlasting,” *Home Life*

► **Nonfiction, letter to the editor** — Susan Jenkins for “Concern how older adults presented healthcare plans,” *Jasper County News*

► **Blog post** — Sharon Davis for “Losing Mama”

► **Fiction, short story** — Kaci Lane Hindman for “Destiny in Disguise.”

To view the full list of winners and read their submissions, visit tabonline.org/SCWC-winners.

Adapting the conference may have been a challenge for Wray and her team, but God always has a plan, she said.

“Our writing conference ... was a totally different experience than what we've had for almost 30 years every summer,” Wray said. “But I've discovered that God can use creativity to help you visualize a brand new thing.”

TAB Media is a co-sponsor of the conference and partners with SCWC to bring the Southern Christian Book Expo to Birmingham each year.

For more information about SCWC, visit the group's Facebook page. (TAB)



Facebook photo
Terry Wilhite leads a workshop on podcasting during the 2020 virtual Southern Christian Writers Conference.

Persecuted church

Uzbek efforts to draft new religion law slow, shrouded in secrecy

TASHKENT, Uzbekistan — The drafting of a new religion law by Uzbek officials has yet to happen and the process appears to be shrouded in secrecy.

The proposed draft was announced May 20 but has yet to be presented to the country's parliament or posted as required on the government website. Officials who have been asked about the draft have refused to discuss it.

Uzbekistan requires state permission for religious entities to exist. Current law requires a group to get 100 signatures to register and then to give advanced notice of meetings, topics of discussion and participants.

When the Religious Affairs Committee last changed the registration procedures in May 2018, it added two new restrictive requirements for seeking legal status.

The number of raids, fines and jailings to punish the exercise of freedom of religion or belief has fallen in recent years, but the system of state control has not changed.

In 2017, the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief said Uzbekistan needed a new law compatible with Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Uzbekistan is No. 18 on Open Doors' World Watch List 2020 for places most difficult to be a Christian. (Forum 18)

News near you

COOSA RIVER ASSOCIATION

► **Blue Eye Baptist Church, Lincoln**, will hold homecoming services Aug. 16 at 10:30 a.m. The Appointed Quartet will sing. Jacky Morgan is pastor.

LIMESTONE ASSOCIATION

► **John Crocker** is the new associate pastor for men, missions and evangelism at **First Baptist Church, Athens**. The church voted on Crocker in-person, online and by phone. Crocker formerly served as minister of missions at Whitesburg Baptist, Huntsville. He and his wife, Suzanne, also served 10 years with the International



CROCKER

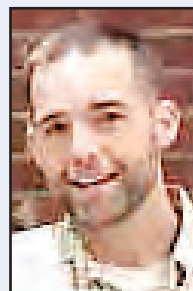
Mission Board in Togo. The Crockers have four children. Joel Carwile is pastor.

MADISON ASSOCIATION

► **Willowbrook Baptist Church at Madison** will hold “Help! I'm a Homeschool Mom!” on Aug. 15 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Registration includes lunch. Register through Aug. 13 at willowbrook.ccbchurch.com.

MARSHALL ASSOCIATION

► **David Kizziah** is the new pastor of **First Baptist Church, Arab**. A Tuscaloosa native, he earned his bachelor's degree at University of Mobile and his master's degree at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He has previously served as a pastor in Kentucky, South Carolina and North Carolina, and he and his wife, Katie, have served two terms in Africa with the International Mission Board. They have five children.



KIZZIAH

MOBILE ASSOCIATION

► The annual Walk for Bibles and International

al Ministries 5K will be held Oct. 17 at Medial of Honor Park, Mobile. The sponsored 5K will begin at 9 a.m. For more information, go to facebook.com/International-Ministries-MBA or im.mobilebaptists.org.

MONTGOMERY ASSOCIATION

► **Mark Bethea** is the new pastor of **First Baptist Church, Montgomery**. He previously served as the church's associate minister of evangelism and outreach. A Montgomery native, Bethea earned a bachelor's degree from Auburn University and an M.Div. from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He served as a summer youth intern at First, Montgomery, in 2007 and 2008 before serving as student and media pastor at Christ Community Church in Montgomery, acquisitions and digital editor at New Hope Publishers and pastor of Argo Baptist Church. He and his wife, Brittany, have three children — Micah, Helen Ann and Nora. 🇺🇸



BETHEA

Volunteers pack food bags to be distributed in western Etowah County through the newly opened Mount Olive Missions Center.

Help with the essentials



Photo courtesy of Etowah Baptist Association

Missions Center brings new life to former church building in Etowah County

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Standing in the parking lot of what used to be Mount Olive Baptist — a very rural church — Craig Carlisle knew he was a long way from a grocery store.

But he felt the weight of that distance even more when three senior adult women in a borrowed car rolled up in need of food.

“They had borrowed a car just to get there,” said Carlisle, director of missions for Etowah Baptist Association. “In this rural area, there’s a lack of transportation, and it’s a food desert too.”

The western fringes of Etowah County — the Altoona and Walnut Grove communities — are “almost like a wilderness, in some regards,” he said. The area is bookended by Dollar General stores, and it’s an even longer way to a Walmart or supermarket, especially when you don’t have a car.

Bringing help closer

That’s why, when Mount Olive Baptist voted to close its doors earlier this year, it didn’t take Carlisle long to come up with an idea for the building — the Mount Olive Missions Center, an annex of the association’s already existing center.

“Coming 20 to 25 miles to the association’s ministry center is prohibitive for them,” he said. “The Lord has given us an opportunity to get a presence out there.”

And on July 30, they had their first food distribution — that’s where Carlisle met the women in the borrowed car. He and Emily Hamilton,

the association’s compassion ministry director, and other volunteers made other connections that day too.

“We were able to minister to nine families who needed food and one little boy who needed underwear,” Carlisle said. “Underwear and socks are one of the greatest needs for children out here.”

Food is too, just like with the adults. The elementary school in the area is one of the poorest in the country, he said — the percentage of children on free or reduced lunches is in the 90-plus percent range.

“One of the greatest ways we hope to connect is with the children,” Carlisle said.

Hamilton said she’s ex-

cited about the opportunity to get to know the area and figure out how best to meet needs there.

New adventure

“This is an incredibly rural area,” she said. “Getting to work through what that’s going to look like and who the people resources are — that’s been a fun and challenging adventure we’re still trying to figure out.”

But churches in the area are on board, Carlisle said — from the very beginning of the idea he met with pastors there to see how they could best partner together.

Having their members help out with the ministry center also provides the churches with a new way

to get involved in their own community.

Hamilton said getting to work together with them is a blessing.

“I’m really excited to see how all those pieces come together and see the body of Christ work together in the

community,” she said. “Our ministry focus right now as an association is ‘this is my neighborhood,’ and this is one way we can equip these small, rural churches to meet the needs right around them. It’s a really crucial opportunity.”

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ISAIAH 41:10



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Revitalization: FBC Chickasaw makes hard decisions

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

When Reid Guy left his church in Mississippi to become pastor of First Baptist Church, Chickasaw, he had one main prayer request — that the church would still be open in six months.

Decades ago, the church's massive sanctuary held around 1,200 people on Sundays. But when Guy preached his first sermon there in August 2019, he preached it to 28 people gathered in the fellowship hall.

"I had studied the church, I had studied the community, and I knew what I was walking into for the most part," Guy said.

Before accepting the call, Guy talked extensively with Thomas Wright, executive director of missions for Mobile Association, who had been assisting the small congregation's pastoral search committee. Wright and the committee had looked at the church's long legacy, the deep need of the community, the dwindling size of the church and the massive cost of keeping up their existing building.

And they had weighed all their options and decided to stay, Wright said. "The leaders sought the Spirit and confirmed their central location still needed a congregation with effective evangelistic ministry. They accepted revitalization would be an intentional and difficult process."

At around the same time — "just the right time," Wright said — God led Guy to reach out to Mobile Association to learn more about the possibility of planting a church in the area. His wife, Lori, had been commuting from Hattiesburg, Mississippi, to her job as a professor at the University of Mobile for five years, and they had just had a baby.

That made her nearly two-hour one-way commute even tougher, Guy said. "We knew we weren't going to be able to sustain that."

So she started looking for work in Hattiesburg, and he started looking for opportunities in Mobile, and they

"left it up to God," he said.

That's when Wright told Guy he had something in mind for him, and it wasn't a church plant — it was a revitalization. And really, that fit — Guy was just wrapping up his doctorate at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and had done extensive research on reviving struggling congregations. He'd just always thought he'd do consulting — he hadn't imagined becoming a pastor of a church right on the verge of closing its doors.

High expenses

If he said yes, he wasn't sure they'd be open in six months. The overhead for the massive building was overwhelming. The pool of aging members who could give was getting smaller. And outside the church, 60 percent of the neighborhood lived below the poverty line.

"We knew it would be difficult," Guy said. "Honestly, we did everything we could to say no."

But God just kept throwing the doors wide open, and one night in tears, he and his wife realized they could only say yes.

"We knew this is what God had for us," he said. "He's been with us, and He's been with the church every step of the way."

Guy and his family moved there in August 2019, and by the time COVID-19 restrictions happened in March, the church was running about 70 on a Sunday morning. As they

moved to meeting online, it gave them a new opportunity to reach out. They even baptized a young woman who heard the gospel through their ministry on Facebook. Guy baptized her one day at the church in a small group setting, then they played the video back during the church's livestreamed Sunday service.

And now that they've been meeting in person again over the past several weeks, they've had new guests coming every Sunday. The church has been consistently working to find ways to reach out to its neighbors, like offering GED classes



Photo courtesy of FBC Chickasaw

First Baptist Church, Chickasaw, members put on a Mardi Gras parade for the children in the community as part of their ongoing outreach.

and job education workshops for single parents in the area, as well as tutoring and music lessons for their children.

"It's been incredible to see what the Lord has done in our church, in the people's lives in our community," he said. "It's just been a lot of stepping out and faith and seeing what God has planned."

Those steps of faith have happened as the church has had to make tough decisions about their massive facilities, Guy said.

"For our church campus, they began a huge building campaign that started in 1952 and ran until the mid 1980s," he said. "At that particular time when they began, the church was running 1,200 on a Sunday. That was right in the height of the Sunday School era. We had facilities galore."

Facility issues

And over the past 30 years, those facilities have slowly gotten emptier and in a greater state of disrepair.

"Our biggest issue was the roof on our sanctuary," Guy said. "It's a beautiful sanctuary built for 1,400 people, and the roof was leaking, and part of it was caving in."

The estimate to fix it was more than \$400,000, and he was looking at the faces of a congregation of several dozen aging members who would have to foot that bill.

"At that point, our trustees sat down and said, 'OK, if we're going to have to pay this, then we need to step back and figure out what the

future of our church is going to be,'" Guy said.

He reached out for help, and the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions got him in touch with an architect who could consult with them about what to do.

Next steps

"Essentially we looked at all our options," Guy said.

Should they demolish the campus and start over? If they repaired everything they had, how would they pay for it?

After much prayer and conversation, they arrived at a next step — demolish the office and fellowship hall. That one move would save \$80,000 on roofing costs, and it would cut the utility bills down.

They started that in early August.

Now they're looking at ways to pay for the sanctuary roof.

Guy has applied for grants and pinched pennies every way he knows how.

And for now, they're just taking a step of faith, believing that God still has a purpose for First, Chickasaw.

"We've more than doubled attendance on Sundays, we're baptizing people and reaching our community in ways that haven't been done in years and years and years," he said. "We've had the opportunity to just sit back and be amazed at what God is doing. And we know He still has more to do here."

For more information on the church, visit fbcchickasaw.com.



Photo courtesy of FBC Chickasaw
Demolition begins on First Baptist Church, Chickasaw's, office and fellowship hall.



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

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Here's what's coming up the rest of August!

PinnacleAlabama.org

SUNDAY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Preschool

Choosing the Best Curriculum for Your Preschool and Children's Ministries, Tuesday, August 25, 6:30-8 pm

All Around the Room, Thursday, August 27, 6:30-8 pm

Using Sensory Boxes to Teach Biblical Content, Saturday, August 29, 8:30-10 am

Preschool Sunday School Is Not Just Childcare, Sunday, August 30, 2-3:30 pm

Children

Discipling Our Children, Tuesday, August 18, 6:30-8 pm

The Use and Misuse of Technology with Children, Thursday, August 20, 6:30-8 pm

Nothing Less, Saturday, August 22, 9-10:30 am

Safety First, Sunday, August 23, 2-3:30 pm

Youth

Championing Their Walk: Making Sunday School Drive the Individual Walk with Jesus, Saturday, August 15, 8:30-10 am

Getting My Questions Answered for Leading Students Today - Panel Discussion, Sunday, August 16, 2-3:30 pm

CHURCH ADMINISTRATION

Personnel Management

Tuesday, August 18, 10 am-12 pm

DISCIPLESHIP

Lunch and Learn with Kie Bowman, Thursday, August 27, 12-1:30 pm

EVANGELISM AND APOLOGETICS

Five Talking Points for a Pro-Life Discussion, Monday, August 17, 1-2 pm

MISSIONS DISCIPLESHIP LEADERCONNECT

Preschool, Tuesday, August 18, 6-7 pm

Adults, Tuesday, August 18, 7-8 pm

Children, Thursday, August 20, 6-7 pm

Students, Thursday, August 20, 8-9 pm

WMU Directors and General Leaders, Saturday, August 22, 9-10 am

WOMEN'S MINISTRY

LeaderConnect: Women's Ministry, Thursday, August 20, 7-8 pm

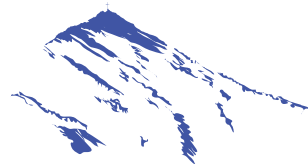
MEN'S MINISTRY

A Plan for Discipling Men, Thursday, August 20, 6:30-8pm

MUSIC LEADERSHIP

Survival Kit for Children's Music, Wednesday, August 19, 6-7:30 pm

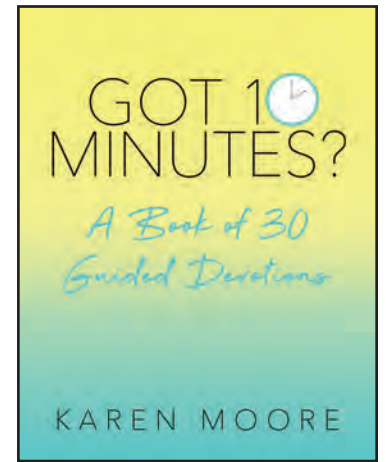
All times CST



For webinar descriptions or to register, visit PinnacleAlabama.org.

These training opportunities are free and made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.

GOT 10 MINUTES?



By Karen Moore

Special to The Alabama Baptist | ©2020 Karen Moore | got10minutesforgod.com

When Life Is Upside Down

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.”

R O M A N S 8 : 2 8 (N I V)

Devotional Moment

We love it when life is working out well. We're grateful to be accomplishing our goals, enjoying some simple successes and spending our days with a sense of optimism.

The problem is that when the world turns upside down, we're taken by surprise, and we don't understand. We wonder if God knows what is happening to us or even if He

cares. We wonder because we're suddenly feeling lost, like everything is out of control.

The truth is that nothing we experience is a surprise to God. He knows the details of our lives, the ups and downs, because He's intimately acquainted with us.

If you want to turn your world upright again, spend time with your

Father in heaven. He sees you and knows what you need right now. Allow Him



MOORE

to work in all your circumstances and He will guide you forward. When you invite God to work with you, then all things work together for your good.

Prayer

Lord, I confess I feel anxious when life gets a bit crazy and everything feels upside down. I know I need to draw closer to You. Help me lean on You today. Thank You for Your steadfast love and Your bountiful grace and mercy. Amen.

Action Step

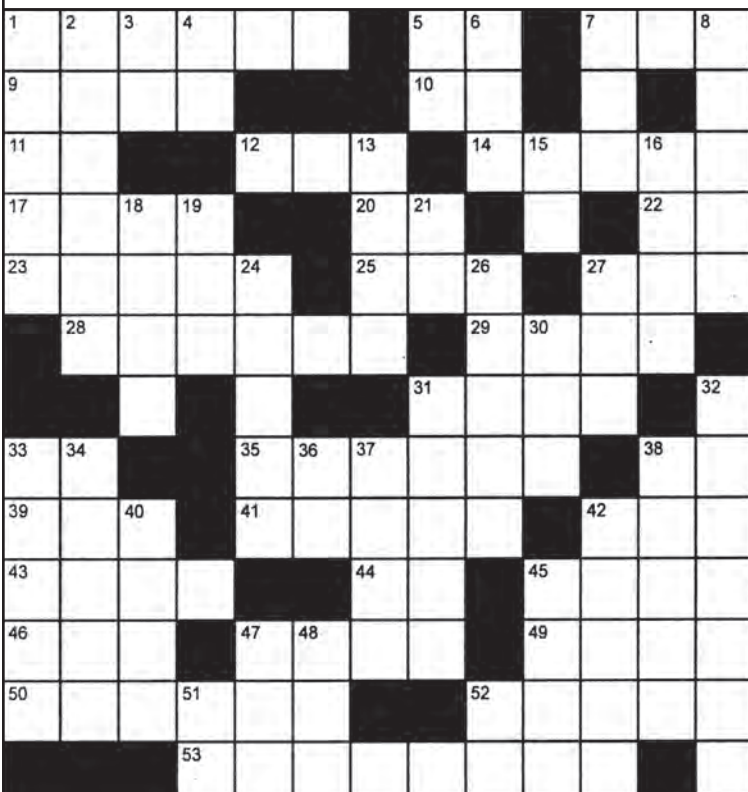
Write one thing you can do today to raise your spirits and the spirits of those you know. Give yourself extra points if you actually do what you wrote down.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Karen Moore is the author of over 100 inspirational and devotional books. She loves to spend time with God every morning.✝

“The truth is that nothing we experience is a surprise to God. He knows the details of our lives, the ups and downs, because He's intimately acquainted with us.”

Christian Crossword

By Beverly Barnes Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- By their ___ ye shall know them. (Matt. 7:20)
- Jesus loves ___.
- Lean ___ unto thine own understanding. (Prov. 3:5)
- Bad grammar.
- ___ are of God, little children. (1 John 4:4)
- Intensive Care. (abbr.)
- The beginning and the ___. (Rev. 21:6)
- A little ___ than the angels. (Heb. 2:7)
- I will never leave ___. (Heb. 13:5)
- Each. (abbr.)
- Delaware. (abbr.)
- I am meek and lowly in ___. (Matt. 11:29)
- American Medical Association. (abbr.)
- Let thy words be ___. (Eccles. 5:2)
- Opposite of “brave.”
- Unto us a child is ___. (Isa. 9:6)
- The head of the ___, the church. (Col. 1:18)
- Postscript.
- Opposite of “depart.”
- ___ be it.
- A hot cereal, ___ meal.
- ___ him, and let him go. (John 11:44)
- A bicycle's handle ___.
- A little bird.
- Missouri. (abbr.)
- Leave these out of your diet.
- Cause thine ___ to hear. (Ps. 10:17)
- A has ___.
- A continent.
- A type of digit on the human body.
- Jesus saith unto her, give Me to ___. (John 4:7)
- ___ evil with good. (Rom. 12:21)

Down

- The just shall live by ___. (Gal. 3:11)
- I will give thee hidden ___. (Isa. 45:3)
- United Nations. (abbr.)
- ___ is finished. (John 19:30)
- The Lord is ___ shepherd. (Ps. 23:1)
- Moray ___.
- If any man be in Christ, he is a ___ creature. (2 Cor. 5:17)
- ___ stones at him. (2 Sam. 16:13)
- Was ___, and is alive again. (Luke 15:24)
- Ohio. (abbr.)
- God sent him forth from the garden of ___. (Gen. 3:23)
- Charity ... toward ___ other. (2 Thes. 1:3)
- Period of time in history.
- I ___ the way. (John 14:6)
- The ___ of your faith. (1 Pet. 1:7)
- Every perfect gift is from ___. (James 1:17)
- To cook in a skillet.
- Musical poem.
- Buffalo.
- He will not fail thee, neither ___ thee. (Deut. 31:8)
- All ___ is given unto Me. (Matt. 28:18)
- Abram took ___ his wife. (Gen. 12:5)
- Rule out. (abbr.)
- All Jews to depart from ___. (Acts 18:2)
- Silk and ___.
- Sea bird.
- Famous musician, Count ___.
- Old MacDonald had one.
- Nickname for Beverly.
- Before. (poetic)
- ___ ye and teach all nations. (Matt. 28:19)
- ___ all to the glory of God. (1 Cor. 10:31)

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For August 16

Explore the Bible

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



FINDING HONOR Proverbs 31:10–16, 23–31

Commitment to Her Husband (10–12)

The climax of the Book of Proverbs is a poem in praise of the ideal woman. She is a role model. The “wife of noble character” demonstrates the qualities and purposes God had in mind when He divinely designed the woman in Genesis.

“Noble character” refers to a wife of strength and great value. She is more precious than costly jewels. The family with a noble, godly wife and mother should treasure her far more than even the most valuable material possessions.

The husband of a noble wife entrusts himself and his future to her as his exclusive partner and helper. Uniquely, this is the only place in the Bible that commends trusting anything but God. There is no inconsistency, however, because this wife is a godly woman who fulfills her God-given design. This godly woman graciously submits herself to the leadership of her own husband, but she participates actively in work that benefits her family. She faithfully honors her lifelong covenant to her husband.

Wise in Her Work (13–16)

In these verses we observe the godly wife’s diligence. In the culture of ancient Israel, women had to stay busy in their spare time spinning wool and making clothes. Doing this faithfully was a feminine virtue, and this woman is faithful. She “works with willing hands.” Literally, she works “with the delight of her hands.” She takes pleasure in creating something of beauty and usefulness.

She adds variety to the lives of her family by trading goods produced at home for food and merchandise the household cannot provide for itself. She serves her husband and family well by moving her household from a subsistence economy to a mercantile economy.

Arising before dawn implies that she is not slothful. She rises early and prepares food for her family and portions for her female servants. She

fully understands the work and abilities of each person in her care.

This wife of noble character has both a good head for business and personal initiative. With her keen business sense, she has managed to save enough money to purchase a field. And not just any field. She researches the field’s condition and potential for her family before making the purchase of the property. She is wise in her work and her ways.

Sure in Her Reputation (23–27)

With a wife like this, it is no surprise that her husband is respected by the leaders of the city. Those who gather at the city gate transact legal and judicial affairs. The wife’s honor is well-known among them, and she enhances her husband’s prestige rather than overshadowing him.

She not only has fine clothing and furnishings for herself and her household, but she also has manufactured enough to sell the excess for a profit. She is skillful and industrious enough to supply merchants with luxury items like linen garments and belts.

Being a woman of strength and character, she does not fear whatever may come. She is a skillful teacher and well acquainted with wisdom. By the grace of God, she righteously applies true knowledge. She instructs others in wisdom from a loving heart. This wife of noble character does not indulge in laziness.

Honored through Fearing God (28–31)

This ideal wife and mother receives the appreciation she deserves as her family acknowledges how she has blessed their lives. Her children call her “blessed,” implying she sees her calling in life as a gift from God, not as an intolerable burden. Her positive approach and passion for life inspire her husband to echo the children’s praise.

The Book of Proverbs concludes with a closing summary of the type of woman a godly man should pursue as his wife. She “fears the Lord.” Godly character counts most.✚

Bible Studies for Life

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



WE ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER Ephesians 4:17–32

Put away sinful habits. (17–22)

One of my mentors, Haddon Robinson, summarized one of the Bible’s “big ideas” by saying: “You can’t live the life you used to live because you aren’t the person you used to be.” That is a fine way of summarizing this passage, by its contrast between the old self with its way of life and the new self with its radically different way of life.

Gentiles were known by early Jews and Christians for their immoral lifestyles, especially marked by sexual license and greed.

Ignorance, darkened understanding, hardness of heart and callousness were the root problems. They reflected sexual license and eagerness (or “greediness”) to engage in other kinds of immorality inspired by the human heart’s enslavement to the pursuit of pleasure, rather than subjection to the Spirit of God.

Paul distinguishes between the “before and after” of Christian experience: the “old self” (or old person) with its “former way of life,” and the new life in Christ and the power of the Spirit, as it is described in verses 17–22. The following verses describe the new life, with the capacity it brings to live in a new, God-honoring way.

Encourage others to live consistent with their new life in Christ. (23–28)

Coming to faith in Christ results in the renewing of minds that were previously darkened (comparing v. 23 with vv. 17–18). Paul alludes to Genesis 1:26–27 when he describes the Christian’s “new self” as “created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” The image and likeness remain in fallen humanity, but it is distorted until we are made new creations in Christ.

Paul’s point is that we are redeemed to reflect God’s original intention in creating us in His image: that we would reflect His “true righteousness and holiness.”

Believers, having experienced

new life in Christ and by the presence and power of the Spirit, must refrain from any tendency to deceive, manifesting instead a commitment to the truth.

We must not let any anger result in sinful outbursts but learn to deal with anger in healthy ways. Note that Paul does not promote some phony ideal of never getting angry. Sometimes we are right to be angry, but it is never right to let anger lead us to sin.

The devil would like to leverage our simmering anger to harm us and our community, and we must recognize the danger that unresolved anger presents.

Stealing must give way to legitimate work so that we help those in need rather than depriving others of what is rightfully theirs.

Take every opportunity to encourage others with your words. (29–32)

Paul says we must avoid harmful talk. We are to build up the body of Christ with words that are helpful rather than harmful, encouraging rather than destructive.

Just as we work in order to give to or share with people “in need,” we are to use our words to encourage those “in need,” giving grace to those around us. To act in any of the ways Paul tells us to reject would be to “grieve the Holy Spirit of God” who empowers us to act in the positive ways Paul urges us to emulate instead.

That we have been “sealed for the day of redemption” indicates God’s ownership and protection assuring our arrival to our ultimate redemption. In the meantime, we must (and, by God’s grace, can) reject those community-destroying attitudes and behaviors listed in verse 31 and imitate God (“as God ... forgave you”) by emulating grace-filled, encouraging attitudes and ways of speaking to each other listed in verse 32.

We should recognize our need to be encouraged by others and that others need just as much encouragement from us.✚



Media reviews

MUSIC

Casting Crowns to hold drive-in concert in North Alabama on Aug. 18

By **Carrie B. McWhorter**
The Alabama Baptist

When Casting Crowns' lead vocalist Mark Hall was a youth pastor in Daytona Beach, Florida, a local drive-in held church each week — a concept Hall says has been stuck in his head for years.

So when the idea was floated to have live concerts at drive-in theaters while indoor venues remain closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Hall thought, "We could totally do that!"

"We put this together and God's really been using it," Hall said.

The Drive-In Theater Tour concert series by Awakening Events features three tours. TobyMac headlines one tour, while Michael W. Smith, Steven Curtis Chapman and Mac Powell headline a second.

And then there's Casting Crowns, now in the middle of a 28-city trek through the Midwest and several Southern states, including an Aug. 18 stop at the Blue Moon Drive-In in Guin, Alabama.

Hall said he and his Casting Crowns bandmates are thrilled to give families an opportunity to come out for a night of music and worship.

"It's been really cool," he said. "People are sitting on the backs of trucks, vans are open, with everybody staying in their little parking area."

The drive-in concert is a different experience than a typical concert venue, Hall said. For one thing, the crowds are much more spread out to adhere to so-



Photo courtesy of High Ground Media

CASTING CROWNS

cial distancing requirements. And though fans must stay in their designated areas, they can sit in lawn chairs or on blankets, which most do, he said.

"We'd say, 'Beep your horn!' and it took a minute because they'd have to get back in their cars," Hall said.

And despite the summer heat and unusual conditions, Hall said his crew is happy to be working.

Industry hurting

"The music industry and production industry are really hurting," he said. "The crew guys are thankful to be out here doing what we're doing. Most bands are not able to do this."

Like everyone else, Cast-

ing Crowns has had to adjust to the new normal of the pandemic. In early 2020, the band had just started a tour with Matthew West. They heard news out of China

about the coronavirus, but when the NBA canceled games, Hall knew things were serious.

"We were set up in New Jersey ready for a concert and had to pull it that night," he said. "We knew we were not going to be the next event where an outbreak happened."

And for Hall, who is in his 25th year in youth ministry as student pastor at Eagle's Landing First Baptist Church in Atlanta, more than the concert schedule was affected.

"I just let go of the Crowns thing because we

had enough worries about church stuff," he said. "We had to figure out what we were going to do as a church."

Looking back, Hall believes the Church has stepped up in positive ways during the pandemic.

Breaking the mold

"To me, it feels like it was one of the better things that has happened for the Church in a long time," he said. "We had a routine and a mold, and everything fit into this mold of Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights. When that mold was

broken, we had to reach out and be the Church in different ways."

Hall said he turned into a circuit preacher, often sitting in the front yard or on the porch with students to see how they were coping. He connected in small groups online and had students lead devotions on Instagram. They did art projects and food deliveries — engaging with each other and reaching out to enforce a common lesson Hall teaches.

"I tell students all the time, 'You're not a pond, you're a river. You're not just soaking it up. God's got to be flowing through you.'"

"It's not just, 'How is God going to get me through this?' but 'How can God work through me to get somebody else through this?'"

That's true in church ministry and for Casting Crowns' ministry, Hall said.

"As much as Casting Crowns is music and a business, it's also our ministry. It's how we get to people. And if this (drive-in concerts tour) is the only way we're going to get to our people for a while, that's fine with me."

For tickets and information, visit driveintheatertour.com/castingcrowns. Read more from Mark Hall at tabonline.org/mark-hall.

"It's not just, 'How is God going to get me through this?' but 'How can God work through me to get somebody else through this?'"

Mark Hall
Casting Crowns



'Jesus means EVERYTHING'

Faith, brother with special needs inspire former NFL player Stacy on field and off

By Bill Sorrell
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

No matter what team Zac Stacy has played for, there has been one constant.

"I have always been a guy who never really looks at accolades or stats. It has always been about putting my team first, being professional (and giving) glory to God. For any recognition or accolade that I have, He gets all the glory," said Stacy, a Centreville native who played football at Bibb County High School and ranks among the top rushing and scoring leaders in Alabama prep history.

Influential family

Learning how to point to God for his achievements came from his family.

"Everybody has different views of Jesus, but to my family, He means the world. Everything

as far as my faith is comes from my family."

At Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church in Centreville, Stacy gave his life to Christ as a young boy and was baptized there.

His grandmother, Lula Beatrice Cottingham, and his mother, Barbara Stacy, were instrumental in his faith development.

'Heavy praying family'

"It was instilled in me at an early age, and I still carry it to this day in regard to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I come from a Christian, heavy, heavy praying family," Stacy said. "Jesus means everything."

His mother continues to send him verses daily, and he reads different apps for spiritual encouragement.

Jeremiah 29:11 is his favorite verse: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

He wants that for his 22-year-old brother, Justin Stacy, who has Down syndrome and has provided inspiration for Stacy at every level.

"I play for him," he said.

An ambassador for the National Down Syndrome Society, Stacy has sponsored two Zac Stacy National Down Syndrome Society All-Star Clinics at Vanderbilt University in Nashville.

The clinics include football drills and other activities and promote health and fitness in daily lifestyles.

"It is important for these kids to have the best quality of life," Stacy said. "(The camp) is a way to give back to the community and to the people who inspire you your whole life. That is what I strive for; to make sure they are getting everything they need in everyday life. We are blessed as professional athletes in numerous ways, financially, physically."

A graduate of Vanderbilt with a degree in special education, Stacy played the 2013 and 2014 seasons for the St. Louis Rams and then for the New York Jets in 2015. He broke his ankle that season.



Photo by National Down Syndrome Society

Zac Stacy's 22-year-old brother, Justin Stacy (right), provides inspiration for Stacy at every level. The brothers are shown here at a 2019 football clinic.



Zac Stacy

Wikimedia photo

Stacy retired from football in 2017 but played preseason with Saskatchewan in the Canadian Football League in 2018.

In 2019, Stacy played for the Memphis Express in the Alliance of American Football. He became the league's first 100-yard rusher. In eight games he rushed for 317 yards, three touchdowns and caught 18 passes for 138 yards and a touchdown. He currently is a free agent.

Doing special things

Memphis running back Anthony Manzo-Lewis said of Stacy, "He realizes football can go a long way and especially with his brother and the community in general. He uses his platform to do special things." 🙌