



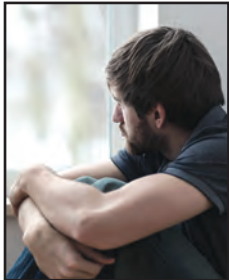
The Alabama Baptist

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

September 17, 2020

Vol. 185, No. 37
Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

INSIDE

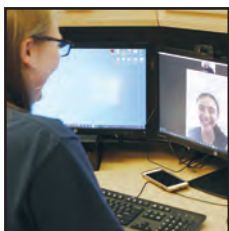


First in a series
— COVID-19 and
mental health:
Facing depression,
anxiety

◆ Pages 6–7

**Alabama Baptist
State Convention
annual meeting
will not be held
in 2020; current
officers to remain
in place**

◆ Page 2



**Virtual campus
ministry connects
distance learners
to fellow students**

◆ Page 9

Volunteers from Valleydale Church, Birmingham, and Mount Hilliard Baptist Church, Birmingham, deliver backpacks full of school supplies to Oxmoor Valley Elementary School. Working together, the churches filled 336 backpacks for schools in their community.



Valleydale Baptist Church Facebook photo

Right: A volunteer from FBC Carbon Hill packs reusable baskets full of goodies and writes notes of encouragement for teachers. **Far right:** Volunteers from churches in Russell Baptist Association prepare bags for teachers.

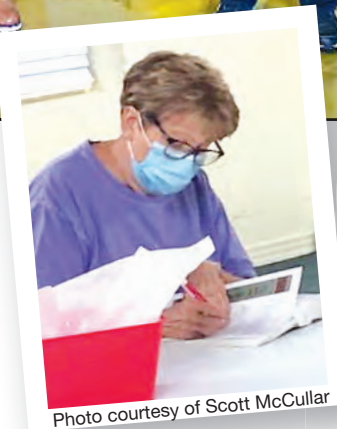


Photo courtesy of Scott McCullar



Photo courtesy of Marty Holley

Showing support

Churches help schools, students as needs change during pandemic

By Lanell Downs Smith
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Alabama families are navigating the return to school amid the COVID-19 pandemic, and many local church-

es are ministering to struggling families by supporting their community schools.

When Arab City Schools announced a hybrid split-time schedule from Aug. 20 through Sept. 8, Gilliam Springs Baptist Church stepped in to assist families of K–6th grades students by hosting a Monday/Tuesday or Thursday/Friday program designed to mirror the local school schedule.

Volunteers in the Virtual

Assistance program walked students through completing school-assigned videos and classwork.

Volunteers also incorporated extra reading and math activities, along with recess, art, snacks, Right Now videos and Bible study.

New opportunities

The church charged a weekly fee of \$50 per child but offered no-cost options for

low-income families.

“[Virtual Assistance] has definitely opened up opportunities for us to build better relationships with school systems, administrators and teachers,” said Theresa Mayo, Gilliam Springs preschool and children’s director.

“Most exciting, it has given us a chance to remind the parents that we are here — supporting them and praying (See ‘Churches,’ page 13)



Find us on
YouTube

TAB Media

youtube.com/tabmediagroup

Update on annual meeting

Decision made not to hold 2020 gathering

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Alabama joins the nearly 20 state conventions adapting or not holding an annual meeting in 2020. A special online State Missions Celebration will take place on Nov. 17, however.

The executive committee of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions made the decision Sept. 10 during a special called meeting. The committee was authorized to make the decision during an Aug. 14 regularly scheduled meeting of the State Board.

In a statement released by Rick Lance, executive director of the State Board of Missions, and Tim Cox, president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, the leaders explained the unanimous decision was made “after months of careful and prayerful consideration of the effects of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic in our state. ... The decision was made after receiving input from the medical community and from our legal counsel.”

IMB Sending Celebration

The 2020 annual meeting had been scheduled for Nov. 17–18 at First Baptist Church, Montgomery, and was to include an International Mission Board Sending Celebration.

IMB president Paul Chitwood,

who was scheduled to speak during the Tuesday evening session of the annual meeting, said the Sending Celebration would still take place but would be switched to a virtual celebration, much like what they did earlier this year, also because of COVID-19 concerns.

“The primary reason we wanted to host the Sending Celebration in Montgomery is that Rick Lance, the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and its member churches are among the most generous supporters of the cooperative mission work of Southern Baptists and, of course, the IMB,” Chitwood noted.

“The pandemic may have stopped an in-person gathering this year but, due to the ongoing support of Alabama Baptists and Southern Baptists across the country, the mission to make disciples of all nations has not and will not pause.”



DANIELS

Pastors Conference

Also being adapted is the Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference, which traditionally takes place the day prior to the annual meeting.

Nathan Daniels, president of this year’s pastors conference, announced the conference will continue as scheduled on Nov. 16, but it will take place virtually with no in-person gathering.

“In agreement with the executive committee of the State Board of Missions, there will not be an in-person gathering for the Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference this year,” said Daniels, lead pastor of Bethany Baptist Church, Andalusia. “In an effort to lower the risk of spreading COVID-19, we will move all the sermons to an online format. ... We invite any and all Alabama Baptist pastors to view all the speakers and sermons as they premiere on Monday, Nov. 16, 2020. Tune in online as our lineup of speakers will preach on the same theme of ‘One Another.’ I am

confident God will still move powerfully through these sermons and preachers.”

Find more information and access to the online pastors conference offerings at albaptistpc.com.

State Celebration

The virtual State Missions Celebration will follow the next day, Nov. 17, from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m., but no business will be included.

Links to State Missions Celebration and IMB Sending Celebration will be available soon.

“In accordance with our state convention bylaws, no acts of business will be transacted at this time, such as voting on a budget or election of officers,” according to the statement released by Lance and Cox, senior pastor of Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea.

“Legal counsel Jim Guenther has assured us that our current state convention officers and State Board of Missions officers can remain serving until the 2021 annual meeting. Additionally, the trustees and commissioners of boards and commissions, as well as state convention committees, will remain in their current positions until the 2021 state convention meeting.”

Vice presidents serving with Cox as convention officers are: Buddy Champion, first vice president, and Morgan Bailey, second vice president.

Next meeting: Nov. 2021

Officers and commissioners of individual boards of trustees that are not voted on by convention messengers will be able to rotate on the routine schedule, but any position or action that requires the vote of convention messengers will remain as is until the next time convention messengers meet, which is now set for November 2021.

If you have questions about how this affects your group or work, contact the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions at 800-264-1225.



COX



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

(ISSN 0738-7741; USPS 011-080)

© The Alabama Baptist, Inc.

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

Website: www.thealabamabaptist.org

Email: news@thealabamabaptist.org

or subscribe@thealabamabaptist.org

Periodicals postage paid at Hattiesburg, Miss.

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

Group Rate per subscriber per year — \$16.25
(Check with your church or group to find out if it has a TAB group account)

Individual — \$34.95 per year (50 issues)

JENNIFER DAVIS RASH EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Cynthia Watts
Executive Assistant

Carrie B. McWhorter
Content Editor

Maggie Evans
Special Assistant

Janet Erwin
Copy Editor

Debbie Campbell
Director of
Communications

Grace Thornton
Special
Assignments Editor

Linda Harrison
Director of Human
Resources

Margaret Colson
Special
Assignments Editor

James Hammack
Digital Services
Manager

Hannah Muñoz
Digital Editor

Sarah Gill
Digital Services
Associate

Lauren C. Grim
Creative Services
Manager

Jessica Ingram
Event Coordinator

Amy Hacker
Creative Services
Associate

Annette Brown
Guest Services

Melanie McKinney
Advertising Manager

Haley Piersol
Client Coordinator

Pam Holt
Outside Sales Rep

Deb Lowery
Financial Assistant

Susan Stevens
Outside Sales Rep

Richard Maddox
Computer Services

Freelance and guest
contributors

NEWS SERVICES

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

POSTMASTER

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

ADDRESS CHANGE

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

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

Full member of Alabama Press Association

Accredited member of Evangelical
Council for Financial Accountability



‘Nation’s Top Regional Christian Newspaper’

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



The crossword puzzle
can be found on page 13.

MY RASHIONALE

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

jrash@thealabamabaptist.org
@RashionalThts



Four ways to make a difference as we await Nov. 3

We are a little more than six weeks out, and we all know the intensity of the political rhetoric will only increase as we near election day, Nov. 3.

So, for all of us in Baptist life, what if we take these next six weeks and determine to truly make a difference?

First, if you are settled on your choice for president, then choose to refrain from listening to anything beyond your local news in the morning, at midday and in the evening.

Leave the various political discussions taking place on other shows throughout the day to those still trying to decide how to vote.

Instead, use that time to pray for God to make your heart sensitive to the needs around you and how you can serve.

It will be fun to discover where God leads you, even if the service He needs from you is more prayer or moments of encouraging others through various forms of affirmation and being a listening ear.

Spend extra time during these next six weeks reading God's word and seeking what He is saying to you during this time when the world wants us to be fearful, agitated and anxious.

Second, find out which other positions are up for election and will be on the ballot. Use these next few weeks to determine for whom you will vote in each role, not just president.

If you vote a straight-party

ticket, use the time to share with others why you are making that particular decision.

You might even share a resource comparing the Democratic and Republican platforms with your friends who are undecided.

The option prepared by the Alabama Policy Institute summarizes both platforms and removes the "unscrupulous platitudes about the other side," according to Parker Snider, director of policy analysis for API.

The resource can be found at tabonline.org/platforms.

Snider said the API's goal was to produce a "primer ... (striving to) avoid anything more than mere comparison."

If someone seems to be torn on how to vote, be willing to talk through the issues, the party platforms, the candidates, etc., in a calm discussion.

Share your convictions and why you are voting the way you are. Share your concerns with the opposing candidate or party. But do all of it with facts and your personal reasoning. Avoid embellishing the facts.

Third, show grace and kind-

ness to those not voting for your candidate and/or your party.

Choose to be grateful they are exercising their right to vote rather than being upset with how they are voting or speaking disparagingly of them.

Fourth, use these next six weeks to outline how you will pray for those elected to lead our country and serve in various public service roles — even if your candidate doesn't win.

Determine how you can serve your community and the country — and how you can share God's love at the same time. 🇺🇸

RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

Have you completed the Census? If not, take six minutes to help the people of Alabama today. Deadline is Sept. 30.

I'm excited to share with you that the staff of TAB Media is 100% in completing the 2020 Census.

While we've been publishing consistent reminders this year, I didn't want to write about it myself until I could confidently confirm each of our team members had filled it out.

And if you've picked up a newspaper, listened to news in any form, watched TV ads, seen billboards on the side of the road or been aware at almost any level this year, you know it's time to fill out the Census.

It really is easy to knock out and will make a world of difference for Alabama — and you still have time to fill it out before the Sept. 30 deadline.

Completing the Census helps

ensure Alabama receives appropriate funding for schools, hospitals, fire departments, road repairs and more.

Without a complete count of who lives in the state — and thus uses the services provided by the state — Alabama stands to lose billions of dollars of federal funding as well as congressional representation.

Some days, it feels like our voices are easily silenced, and we can't make a difference even if we try.

The Census is one way your voice will be heard. You truly can make a difference for your state, your community and your family.

Think about that road in disrepair you drive on constantly or that county service you experienced recently that wasn't up to the quality you believe citizens of our state deserve.

We will always have debates over prioritizing funding and who gets

what where, but we shouldn't be missing out on basic needs merely because our citizens failed to slow down long enough to be counted.

You can choose to fill out the Census online, by paper or over the phone.

Call 844-330-2020 to fill it out over the phone or talk to someone about the Census.

To fill it out online, go to my2020census.gov.

Once you've completed the census for your household, check on your family and friends and encourage them to do the same.

Take a few minutes to help them knock it out if they are having trouble or aren't sure what to do. The information is confidential, so no one has to be fearful of filling it out.

—Jennifer Davis Rash

Your Voice



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

In unusually stressful time, pastors tempted to 'fall on their sword'

By Pastor Jakob Topper
Norman, Okla.

Well, I guess what I'm trying to say is that I've been imagining killing myself," the pastor said.

I was on a Zoom call recently with 10 pastors across three denominations, when one of the participants shared a struggle with suicidal thoughts in these challenging days.

By the time the meeting concluded, four of the 10 had found the courage to admit their own suicidal ideations.

I was the youngest person in the group, so these aren't young, green pastors. These are veterans who have gone through plenty of difficult things in their time, but today's intensity and difficulty is unprecedented.

One pastor shared the heartbreaking story of going back to church too early and losing a beloved church member to COVID-19. Another shared how congregants were

daily emailing him with threats to leave the church if they didn't re-open immediately — and withholding their tithes until then.

One shared that the survey results the congregation took about whether they should return to in-person worship or not resulted in a nearly perfect 50/50 split, with several members writing in the comments section that they would leave if the church 1. didn't open immediately or 2. attempted to open at all.

Leading anxious congregations amidst a pandemic, a hyper-partisan culture, a civil rights movement and an upcoming election is destroying the lives of our pastors. Literally.

The only thing that surprised me about the confessions made by these four pastors struggling with suicidal ideation was that there were only four admissions. This Zoom call only echoed the reality that I've heard other pastor friends across the nation report for months now.

There's a story in the Old Testa-

ment about King Saul being defeated in battle. Instead of waiting on the opposing army to torture and ridicule him before killing him, he chooses to take his own life by falling on his sword.

Well, pastors are already facing ridicule not just from their adversaries but from many of their own congregants. They're being tortured by their own inability to lead their churches out of a pandemic, out of hyper-partisanship and out of racism. Falling on their swords is starting to look pretty attractive.

If you're a congregant reading this, here's some advice:

► First, accept the fact that your church is not The Church. The body of Christ here on earth is not Christ himself. Don't conflate the two. Churches are fallible organizations full of sinners saved by grace.

The person who chooses to love the church just as she is, for this is what Christ does, is the one who is able to grow with her. So stop comparing your church to the one down the street or the one your kids go to. Accept your church for who she is.

► Second, accept that your pastor is a shepherd, not The Shepherd. If we're unable to accept that our pastors are human beings with flaws, that says more about us than it does our pastors. And stop comparing them to the pastor down the street or on the podcast you listen to. It isn't fair to your pastor, and such comparison incites in us the sin of envy. One of the Ten Commandments teaches us not to covet — and I believe healthy church members will not covet their neighbor's pastor.

► Third, pray for your pastor. Pray for his or her mental health.

Pray for the pastor's family. Pray for the pastor to flourish. Pray for God to give you understanding and patience with your pastor and to show you how to be a source of light and life during this time of death and darkness.

► Fourth, for the next six months, commit to staying and being the best church member you can be. If you don't like how things are going in your church, that's OK. No one is saying you should, but I am absolutely suggesting that you keep it to yourself until the pandemic is over and then, if you still think it's worth addressing, do so at that time.

It's common for church members to smile to themselves when their pastor does something they like but never reach out with a compliment — and then be quick to speak out when the pastor does something they don't like. That means the only time we hear from some of you is when you are unhappy. It's exhausting, and isn't an honest representation of who you are or your relationship with the church and your pastor. Share the good things, and share them often.

Practice the Christian virtue of being long-suffering, and ride this storm out. Be committed to your church. Be committed to its financial and spiritual success.

► Fifth, advocate for your pastor's mental health. Ask committees to use emergency funds to pay for your pastor to see a counselor, get a spiritual director or even just get out of town for a bit. Assure your pastor that if she or he needs to take a leave of absence or an extended vacation, they are empowered to do so.

Their lives may depend on it.

EDITOR'S NOTE — A few weeks ago, this opinion article from Baptist News Global was shared with TAB staff members.

TAB digital services manager James Hammack, who also serves as worship pastor of HisWay Community Church in Prattville, noted then:

"I can't express enough the seriousness of this situation in our churches. I firmly believe it comes from an over-consumeristic mentality in churches and a lack of 'outdo[ing] one another in showing honor' coupled in part with a tendency of pastors to overextend themselves. It's an unhealthy and unbiblical reality in too many churches."

BNG publisher Mark Wingfield told TAB that Topper's piece has been the site's most-read article of 2020 and is still gaining readers.

See pages 6–7 for the first in a series of articles on mental health and how the COVID-19 pandemic is having an impact, and watch for more coverage of this topic in TAB in the weeks ahead.

“Forgiveness is a decision of the will.
It is not a feeling.”

JOHN PERKINS

Author and minister

Suffering and prosperity are two of the great weapons in Satan’s arsenal. Millions of people refuse to trust God because of suffering they see in the world or experience in their own lives. They ask, “How can I believe God is good when so many terrible things happen?”

On the other hand, millions of people never come to faith in God because their prosperity convinces them they are wise enough and sufficient enough to handle life on their own. God seems an unnecessary intruder. Life goes well without Him. Satan uses the glitter of gold and silver to blind them to real aliveness, aliveness that has nothing to do with the outside of things and everything to do with the heart.

Take up the shield of faith and

use it against these fiery darts. Faith in God causes us to walk through suffering with strength and through prosperity with humility.

Retired pastor Bob Adams

The church should be a model, at such a time as this, to reveal to the world what true oneness, equality, and freedom can produce. ... Much of what has gone on under the designation of racial reconciliation and oneness in Christianity is nothing more than tolerance. To be certain, we have come a long way from slavery, Jim Crow laws or segregation and other overt expressions of racial hatred. But tolerating each other does not mean we have reconciled. The two are not the same, as demonstrated by the fact that we remain

relationally separated most of the time, only coming together for a scheduled event as opposed to living out a desire for ongoing mutual edification and implementation of a shared vision.

Pastor Tony Evans

There is a strength, a power even, in understanding brokenness because embracing our brokenness creates a need and desire for mercy, and perhaps a corresponding need to show mercy. When you experience mercy, you learn things that are hard to learn otherwise. You see things you can’t otherwise see; you hear things you can’t otherwise hear. You begin to recognize the humanity that resides in each of us.

Author Bryan Stevenson

From the *Twitterverse*

@timkellernyc

Two seemingly contradictory currents mark our society.

1. There is a denunciation of all claims of absolute truth.
2. Yet there is also a fanaticism in which one position or group is absolutely right, nothing is ambiguous and divergent views should be destroyed.

@BillyGraham

“Do you want your faith to grow? Then let the Bible begin to saturate your mind and soul.”

@matalexander

Trying this for my joy:
Other pastors/Christians do stuff I wouldn’t do.

I do what I do according to my conscience before God.

He sorts out who’s right/wrong at the judgment. I won’t be consulted.

I don’t have to rage, holler, yell, foment, slander or gripe on social media.

@haines_matt

Snatching God’s word out of context to speak to the glory of any nation is to minimize the glory of the One to whom all Scripture points and the only real hope that will truly save that nation and those who live in it.

@rhynputman

The James Leo Garrett rule: “Only when you can state your opponent’s

position so well that they themselves say, ‘Yes, that’s what I believe,’ can you then begin to debate.” Most of the fearmongers and rabble-rousers charging SBC entities with heresy will fail this basic test.

@DannyAkin

“If God calls you to be a missionary, don’t stoop to be a king.”
— @Spurgeon_

@Jonathan_Howe

“You cannot hate a people and reach a people at the same time.”
— Ed Stetzer

@JimmyScroggins

Redeeming love has been my theme and shall be till I die.

Like Andrae Crouch used to sing, ‘Jesus is the answer for the world today. Above Him there’s no other. Jesus is the way.’ The answer for the civil unrest is for you and me to share Jesus with one person at a time, and then allow Jesus to transform his or her life. ... It is that simple — simple and yet profound.

Simple, in that our responsibility is merely to share the gospel message — unashamedly and unapologetically (Rom. 1:16). Profound, in that the power of the gospel message to transform lives is supernatural, mysterious and inexplicable.

Unless we are convinced in our heart of hearts that Jesus is enough and that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation (including complete life transformation), then we will never be the effective seed planters God has called us to be.

Trust me when I say that complicated government reforms and added layers of legislation will not solve the issues that confront our nation. It will not change the condition of a single human heart. Only Jesus can do that.

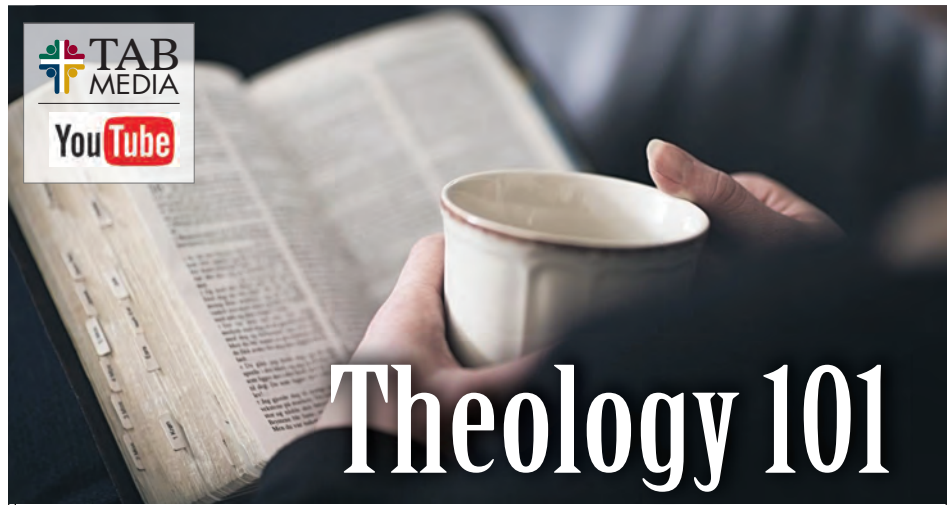
It is that simple — but only if we are convinced of the life-transforming power of the gospel.

Robert Jackson
Spartanburg, S.C.

So many people are hurting and afraid and looking for something. I’m tired of bad news, and what we have is good news. We have the opportunity to share good news with a world in desperate need of it. That’s something that doesn’t change.

Pastor Kenny Gooden
Union Grove Baptist Church
Yadkinville, N.C.

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org



TAB MEDIA

YouTube

Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Biblical Mysteries

Kingdom of God

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

The term mystery in connection with the kingdom of God is found in three parallel passages in the Gospels (Matt. 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10). Early readers of the Gospels would have perked up at the connection between mystery and God's kingdom. The word mystery was associated in Paul's time with a variety of religions, collectively referred to as "mystery religions."

In general, these religions promised salvation to those who joined them and learned a set of secret rituals and doctrines intended as channels of spiritual power or salvation. The secrets of the mystery religions were carefully guarded, largely unknown except to the initiated insiders.

Different meaning

The New Testament's multiple use of the term mystery carries a different meaning. Rather than referring to what is largely hidden or kept secret from outsiders, the word in the Bible refers to truths made known by God. These are not discovered by people but disclosed by divine revelation.

So, as Theology 101 continues for several weeks to explore some of the truths in the Bible referred to as mysteries, we are thinking about truths God has made known through His servants and His Son.

This week, we consider the mystery of the kingdom of God. As revealed in the Bible, God's kingdom is spiritual in nature. It is not presented as a realm with

carefully defined boundaries that might be drawn on a map.

Rather, the idea is that of God's reign over human lives wherever they might happen to be. God's kingdom is found wherever He is allowed to reign in a person's life.

Within each believer

One day the religious leaders asked Jesus when God's kingdom would come. His reply was, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:20-21).

With Christ's coming, this spiritual kingdom was inaugurated. What Jesus announced and inaugurated has continued to advance across the centuries. Missions and evangelism are the twin strategies for advancing God's kingdom reign in human hearts.

The Bible reminds us what has been inaugurated and advancing will one day reach its consummation. This glorious future of God's perfect reign is the blessed hope of believers everywhere.

In the wording of 1 John 3:3, "Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."✠

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.



FIRST IN A SERIES

Facing depression, anxiety, other mental health struggles

By Tracy Riggs
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, 1 in 5 individuals lives with a mental health issue. This was true even before COVID-19 came into play, and it's more true today.

One in four American adults is now likely to be experiencing symptoms of depression, a threefold increase from last year, according to a study released Sept. 2 by researchers at Boston University's School of Public Health.

Ken Duckworth, chief medical officer at NAMI and a professor at Harvard University Medical School, said, "The toll on mental and physical health from the virus has been great, and it isn't over yet."

For anyone stressed by the pandemic, "First of all, take care of your own self. Not everybody needs a therapist," Duckworth said. "Get exercise, don't use substances

to excess and put down all media after dinner. Talk to people. Stay connected. Don't be a loner. ... Really work the family/friendship angle. Really work it."

'Not enough'

But for those who have a diagnosed or undiagnosed mental health condition, tips like these often aren't enough.

Nick Longshore, pastor of worship arts at Lifepoint Church in Albertville, said in many cases even faith isn't enough.

"Sometimes the Bible isn't enough. Sometimes prayer isn't enough," Longshore said. "Mental illnesses are like chronic physical illnesses in that there is no cure. If you are sick, you need professional treatment to be able to

live as healthy a life as possible."

Charisse Parker, one of the presenters on the NAMI production "In Our Own Voice," said she has had a difficult time adjusting to the stress of the pandemic while also coping with several mental illnesses.

Resources for those having trouble coping or with active thoughts of suicide or self-harm

► **Crisis Text Line** — text "NAMI" to 741741 to chat with a trained crisis counselor

► **National Suicide Prevention Hotline** — 800-273-TALK (8255)

► **Trevor Project Resources** — call 866-488-7386, instant message a counselor on their website or text "start" to 678678. (Compiled by Tracy Riggs)



“Not being able to physically be around those who were a constant part of my life and ongoing recovery has led to increased feelings of anxiety, depression and outright fear,” Parker said.

Having untreated depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder or schizophrenia can be literally life-threatening, and during the pandemic people are even more at risk.

“Social isolation protects us from a contagious, life-threatening virus, but at the same time it puts people at risk for things that are the biggest killers in the United States: suicide, overdose and diseases related to alcohol abuse,” said Jeffrey Reynolds, president of the Family and Children’s Association, a New York-based nonprofit.

Even before COVID-19, mental illness ranked second in a National Institute of Mental Health list of risk factors for suicide.

Know the symptoms

Awareness of symptoms can help those who wouldn’t otherwise seek help because of the social stigma of mental illness, according to the Association for Psychological Science.

The most common mental health issues are anxiety disorders. But severe depression is a close second.

Find additional warning signs and resources at tabonline.org/mental-health.

The difference between normal anxiety and a disorder or between

being sad and being depressed is determined by the severity and impact on daily life.

According to the Mayo Clinic, symptoms of an anxiety disorder include:

- ▶ worrying out of proportion to the impact of the event
- ▶ perceiving a non-threatening event as threatening or overthinking to worst-case scenarios
- ▶ indecisiveness and fear of making the wrong decision
- ▶ inability to set aside worry and relax and/or trouble sleeping.

Signs of major depression include:

- ▶ loss of interest in activities you once enjoyed
- ▶ significant weight loss or gain
- ▶ inability to sleep or sleeping too much, fatigue
- ▶ feelings of worthlessness
- ▶ suicidal thoughts or attempts.

‘Tired of it’

Physical illness not the only threat of COVID-19 pandemic

The physical effects of the coronavirus aren’t the only cause for concern as churches — and the whole nation — navigate COVID-19. With much uncertainty over the virus itself, professionals report increased anxiety and stress due to health concerns, unemployment, social isolation and more.

Mental health must be taken into consideration the same as the physical side of health, said Brad Schwall, CEO of The Center for Integrative Counseling and Psychology in Dallas.

“We’re created for relationships,” he said. “We thrive on social interaction, and the lack of that interaction certainly has an impact.”

Churches historically have provided care for those in need, and Schwall thinks churches can be active resources in their communities to help connect people to care for mental health needs during COVID-19.

“Churches are significant partners in our work. People regularly go to the church if they’re dealing with a crisis or dilemma in life,” he said. “The church is another connecting point with communities to help people to be healthy.”

Anxiety on the rise

A wide-ranging study of 2,700 people by Qualtrics at the beginning of the pandemic found 67% reported higher levels of stress, 57% had greater anxiety, 54% experienced greater day-to-day sadness and 42% said their overall mental health had declined since the outbreak. These numbers run parallel to what Schwall sees in The Center’s work — both the number of clients and number of sessions have increased throughout the year and also in comparison to last year.

And in an unusual twist, therapists now find they often share the same circumstances as their clients. Eric Minton, co-owner



123rf.com

and psychotherapist at Minton Family Therapy in Knoxville, Tennessee, said the coronavirus has created a sense of solidarity among many people. But it also has created a sense of loneliness because people feel like they can’t ask for help when everyone has the same problem.

“So rarely in my life am I having the same kind of traumatic experience, at the exact same time, as every person I’m working with,” Minton said. “Literally everyone has the same problem, and no one is OK.”

Minton suggests that churches reach out to mental health care providers in their areas to find out what services are provided and collaborate to share resources. If the church has the means, he even suggests designating budget funds to support mental health initiatives.

“Reach out to providers in your area, build relationships with them and bring them on board to help them be helpful to your congregation,” Minton said. “And then creating a community where we’re educating people constantly in terms of how do you care for yourself when you notice you’re not yourself. Churches have a really amazing opportunity to be something helpful for people in our community.”

Grace Powell Freeman, a hospital chaplain in Georgia, predicts anxiety levels will continue to rise,

compounded even more as people traverse the reopening of businesses, workplaces and schools.

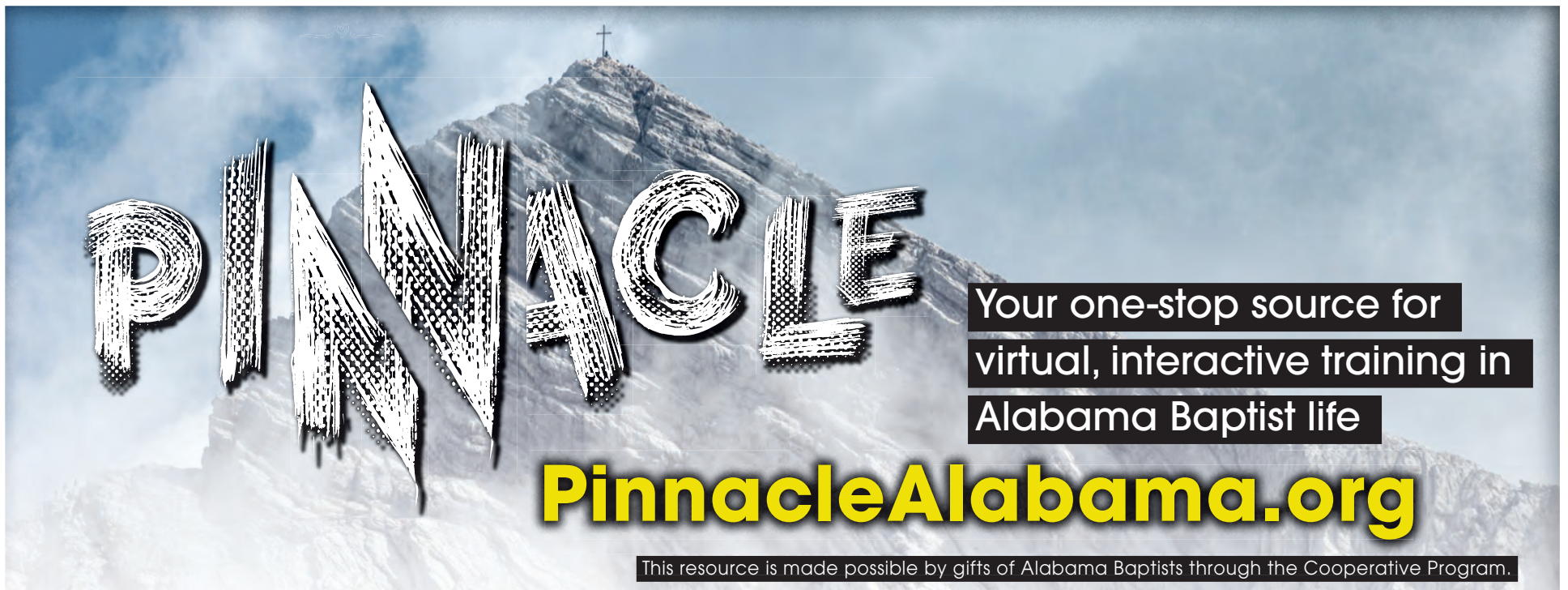
“I see the weariness in their eyes. People are just tired of it,” Freeman said. “It’s not just nurses and doctors, but it’s me, my young adult children, it’s everyone. I think that’s leading to some of the mental and emotional struggles people are having of what do you do to take care of yourself in the midst of all this.”

Freeman suggests people consider talking about how they are feeling, and she believes the church can be a proponent for this. Although sometimes in church people are expected to “put on our happy face,” it is OK to let people know you are struggling, she said.

‘It’s OK’

“For so long, mental health issues have had such a stigma about them. I’m a firm believer in going to a therapist, having a time to talk to somebody who can help you work through something,” Freeman said. “It’s OK to let someone know you’re mad or sad or anxious or whatever you might be. I think if anything, the church could help by saying that out loud.” (Baptist News Global)

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



Your one-stop source for virtual, interactive training in Alabama Baptist life

PinnacleAlabama.org

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

UPCOMING WEBINARS

Register at PinnacleAlabama.org

CONNECT: PATHWAYS THAT LEAD TO CONNECTION

Tuesday, September 22, 10-11 a.m.



The webinar will focus on the process of moving a church toward greater overall health through four key connections: **Connect with the Creator** through renewal and worship; **Connect**

LeaderCare with the **Community**
+ Church Health through

Sunday School/small groups; **Connect with the Core** through disciple making, mentoring and leadership development; and **Connect with the Commission** (and Acts 1:8) by reaching out to individuals, the local culture and beyond. Join the Office of **LeaderCare & Church Health** and other state missionaries for this great opportunity to be introduced to a biblical process for moving through and beyond the NEW REALITY.

DISCIPLESHIP LUNCH & LEARN

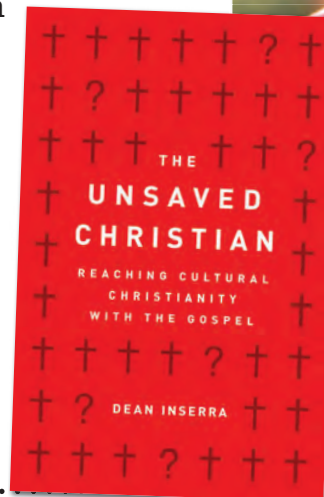
Thursday, September 24, 12-1:30 p.m.

Set aside your lunch hour for a great time of virtual learning with the Alabama Disciple-Making Lead Team and pastor/author, **Dean Inserra**. Dean is the pastor of City Church in Tallahassee, Fla., and also wrote the powerful book, *The Unsaved Christian*.



Dean Inserra

Dean's session will be from noon to 1, followed by another 30 minutes of Q&A hosted by your Alabama leaders.



REMEMBER THAT RECORDINGS of past webinars are available for you to view on PinnacleAlabama.org at any time. Topics currently featured are Sunday School leadership training for all age groups, men's ministry, music and worship ministry, evangelism and apologetics, tech talk, and much more. *Be sure to take advantage of these helpful resources!*

Forming new friendships

Campus ministry goes virtual, connects distance learners to fellow students

By **Sandra Richards**
Special to The Alabama Baptist

When students at the Baptist College of Florida were required to move fully online to complete the spring 2020 semester, a long-distance friendship formed between a student in Graceville and another student living in New York.

Staying connected

Like other colleges around the country, BCF went online in the spring semester and continued many online classes through the summer. Baptist Collegiate Ministry leader Lance Beauchamp explored unique ways to keep students connected and engaged spiritually.

Beauchamp moved his weekly Coffee Hour to a virtual meeting and added a weekly “virtual but real Bible study” for all of the students through Zoom. He sent out email reminders, posted on Facebook and encouraged students to participate in the online BCM events to stay connected throughout the semester and through the summer.

All of the BCF students, whether taking classes online or on campus, were now connected to the BCM events online, together, in a way that otherwise might not have been considered in the past.

Amid the coronavirus pandemic, two BCF students connected via one of the BCM Zoom sessions and formed an unlikely

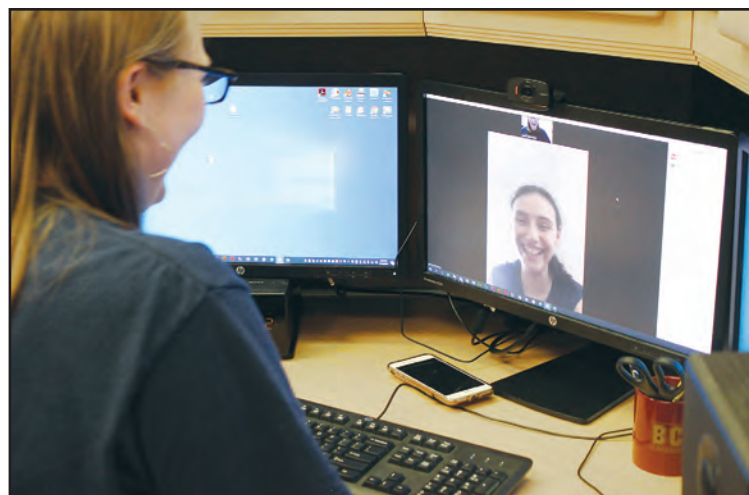


Photo courtesy of Baptist College of Florida

A new friendship continues to grow as BCF students Elyssa McCallum in Florida and Hannah Weber (on screen) in New York, regularly meet online during the pandemic.

friendship. Hannah Weber is from New York’s Hudson Valley and started her degree program at BCF in 2018 as a fully online student. She is seeking to earn a bachelor’s degree in music education in hopes of one day teaching in a piano studio or school.

Being a fully online student, Weber has never been able to join any extracur-

ricular events or gatherings that BCF has provided, other than those available on the website or through classroom experiences.

Reaching out

Meanwhile, Elyssa McCallum, a senior from Crestview, Florida, who is pursuing a degree in elementary education, also made it a priority to join every Zoom meeting and ev-

ery online Bible study that the school offered. After hearing Weber’s testimony, McCallum reached out and offered support from one BCF student to another.

After an exchange of emails, it soon turned into personal Zoom meetings, FaceTime calls and now a wonderful friendship.

“When I came to BCF, I had no idea how someone taking an online class could commune with his or her peers or classmates on campus,” Weber said. “There is such a Christlike community at BCF, and now anyone can take part in this community!”

Both students said the unique connection has been a blessing.

“While this pandemic has brought many hardships to the world, the Lord has brought many blessings through it as well. Without the pandemic, I don’t think I would have ever been able to join a BCF Bible study online, and I definitely wouldn’t have really ‘met’ Dr. Lance or Elyssa,” Weber said. “I have been very blessed to be able to find a like-minded Christian friend, and it is truly an answer to many years of prayer.” McCallum agreed.

Encouragement

“This unlikely occurrence has just brought so much encouragement in this difficult time. Getting to connect with other Christians that are the same age as me is a cool experience. And that we have so much in common is like a super God thing, like we would have never met if quarantine hadn’t happened.”

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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

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. Give Danny, Stephanie and the rest of the team a call: 1-800-729-6844 or 205-664-0955.

BUSINESS

FOR SALE NEW & USED STAIR LIFTS

Lift chairs, power wheelchairs,

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

TRAVEL/VACATION

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

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.

3 stories

you should know



BP photo

Southwestern Seminary and Baylor University filed suit on Sept. 8 against the Harold E. Riley Foundation, alleging some board members of the foundation, set up solely to benefit the two schools, led a 'secret coup' in an 'attempt to seize control of the foundation and its assets' — stripping the schools of their rights and status as beneficiaries and misappropriating assets worth millions. Read the full story at tabonline.org/southwestern-lawsuit. (BP)

California Baptists aid firefighters, residents

California Baptists are ministering as the state battles historic wildfires that have already burned more than 2 million acres.

More than 14,000 firefighters are battling about two dozen fires around the state.

"This is the worst fire season in California history, and it's not even fire season," California Southern Baptist Convention communications team leader Terry Barone told the Associated Press.

Lighthouse Baptist Church in Seaside has been hosting a mobile kitchen for two weeks, preparing hundreds of meals a day for evacuees of the Santa Cruz area fire.

"CSBC churches have opened their facilities to help in their communities," Barone said, "but because of COVID-19 restrictions in California, it has been difficult." (TAB)

Pakistani Christian sentenced to death

A Pakistani court sentenced a Christian man to death after finding him guilty of blasphemy, his defense lawyer said Sept. 10.

Asif Pervaiz, 37, was accused of blasphemy by a supervisor in a hosiery factory where he worked. The coworker accused Pervaiz of sending text messages in 2013 that insulted Islam's prophet Muhammad.

It was the latest example of the Islamic nation's strict upholding of blasphemy laws, under which anyone accused of insulting Islam can be sentenced to death if found guilty. Pakistani authorities have yet to carry out a death sentence for blasphemy, however.

Pervaiz claimed he was accused after he refused to convert to Islam. His attorney said the court rejected Pervaiz's denial of the charges, and he plans to appeal. (AP)

Headline news

from around the Southeast

Georgia

For Hebron Baptist Church, Dacula, Georgia, building connections with families is a top priority. Last spring's pandemic-related quarantine sent children home for their education. Hebron responded with a digital learning center in the church facility to help children focus on their studies and to ease parents' burdens of juggling work and family responsibilities. Then, in August the church voted to build The Haven at Hebron, a maternity care center, for eight new mothers, ages 21 and younger, *The Christian Index* reported.

Florida

Having hosted a back-to-school bash for its community for several years, First Baptist Church, Lake Wales, Florida, improvised the outreach event due to COVID. At this year's "Back 2 School Bash Drive-Thru Style," volunteers handed out 250 hotdogs, 480 hamburgers and over

250 bags of school supplies in just two hours, the *Florida Baptist Witness* reported.

Louisiana

While racial tensions in America are high, disaster response in hurricane-ravaged Louisiana is building racial unity. There, disaster relief volunteers, most of whom are white, often find themselves in predominately black communities. As volunteers seek to address overwhelming physical needs left in the hurricane's wake, much-needed racial healing also begins to occur, Louisiana's *Baptist Message* reported. One white volunteer from Kentucky asked a black storm survivor for prayer requests. Her response: "That people would love each other."

Mississippi

Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief teams are among at least 10 state convention DR teams

working in Louisiana after Hurricane Laura raked the state on Aug. 27, according to *The Baptist Record*. A 20-person team of mass feeding specialists has been working at the Salvation Army "super kitchen" field facility in Lake Charles, while chainsaw teams have worked in DeRidder and Moss Bluff. Assessment/chaplaincy teams continue to operate in the Deville/Alexandria area.

Tennessee

On Sunday, Aug. 23, First Baptist Church, Hendersonville, Tennessee, baptized 51 people in an outdoor service, Tennessee's *Baptist and Reflector* reported. Pastor Bruce Chesser believes the high number of baptisms, with people from the ages of 7 to 79, came as a result of church members seizing ministry opportunities, even amid the pandemic. The outdoor public baptism resulted in many people in the park and even at a boat launch hearing the gospel, Chesser said.

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

▶ **Ed Wallen** — longtime pastor of **Hueytown Baptist Church** and active missions leader — died Aug. 29. He was 83.

A Kentucky native, Wallen served for 10 years in the U.S. Army before attending Samford University in Birmingham. While he was a student, he served as pastor of Wayside Baptist Church, Anniston.

In 1974, Wallen became pastor of Hueytown Baptist, where he served until he retired in 1999. For 14 years of that time, he maintained a daily radio program called Bible Study Time.

In retirement, he led a ministry in Ukraine, providing housing for Christians in remote villages. He also served as senior adult minister for Philadelphia Baptist Church, Birmingham, for more than 10 years in addition to serving as its interim pastor for a year in 2010.

Wallen was preceded in death by his son, Stephen, and daughter, Susan. He is survived by his wife of 21 years, Tommie; stepdaughter Anna; stepson Scott; and five grandchildren. (TAB)



WALLEN

COFFEE ASSOCIATION

▶ **Newbia Baptist Church, Elba**, will host Old-Timey Day on Sept. 27 at 11 a.m. at the Vineyard Christian Retreat Center in Arton. Fellowship, games and a catered lunch will be included. To reserve a lunch, RSVP via email to emily@ccbacenter.com.

COOSA RIVER ASSOCIATION

▶ Half a century ago, **Jeff Thomas** accepted his first pastorate at **Bon Air Baptist Church, Sylacauga**. He stayed there two years before heading off to school in Florida, starting a ministry journey he never imagined would bring him back to his first church years later.



THOMAS

On Sept. 20, Bon Air Baptist will honor their pastor and his wife, Carolyn, for 50 years in ministry.

When Thomas first accepted the call to be a pastor, he remembers driving to a mountain to spend some time with God.

“I really needed some assurance,” he said. “I said, ‘If You’ll just assure me, I’ll stay in the ministry as long as You’ll let me.’ And God did. That word of encouragement that He gave to me on the mountain got me through the ups and downs of the years.”

Along the way, he’s served churches in Alabama and Georgia, including 10 years at Ridgeview Baptist, Talladega, and 12 years at Hopewell Baptist, Bessemer. He returned to Bon Air Baptist in 2013.

“It’s been a good ministry, and we’ve had a lot of good people to support us along the way,” Thomas said.

Everyone is invited to attend the celebration Sept. 20 during the 11 a.m. worship service, with refreshments to follow. (Grace Thornton)

PLEASANT GROVE ASSOCIATION

▶ When COVID-19 hit, many churches around the state with anniversaries this year pressed pause on their celebrations.

But Aug. 9, **Little Hurricane Baptist Church, Brookwood**, was one of the first to get theirs back underway. They celebrated their 150th anniversary that day with a special service.

“We had to make some adjustments due to COVID-19, but we still had a great celebration, and everyone thoroughly enjoyed it,” said Kimberly Boyd, whose husband, Anthony, serves as pastor of Little Hurricane.

During the service, David Nelson, a commissioner for the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented the church with a plaque. Cheryl Pounds and Roger Pierce led congregational singing. The church also had a display featuring historical documents and photographs including a letter written by charter member Minnie Walker, whose grandson, Wayne, is a current deacon. (TAB)

ST. CLAIR ASSOCIATION

▶ **Central Baptist Church, Trussville**, will host a concert by the Kingsmen Quartet on Sept. 24 at 6:30 p.m. Doors will open at 5:30 p.m. Admission is free but a love offering will be taken. For more information, visit central-baptistch.com.

Survey: Americans’ conflicting theology

More than half (54%) of Americans say religious beliefs are a matter of personal opinion, not objective facts. And that’s made clear by examining the varying, and sometimes contradictory, theological doctrines they hold.

The biennial State of Theology study from LifeWay Research explores the religious and cultural beliefs of U.S. adults. Among the significant findings:

- ▶ 72% believe in the classic Christian doctrine of the Trinity.
- ▶ 65% believe God is perfect and cannot make a mistake.
- ▶ 52% believe Jesus was a great teacher but not God.
- ▶ 66% believe in Jesus’ resurrection.
- ▶ 64% believe that God accepts the worship of all religions.
- ▶ 65% agree everyone sins a little, but most people are good by nature.
- ▶ 56% believe hell is a real place.
- ▶ 60% believe only those who trust in Jesus alone as Savior receive eternal salvation.
- ▶ 62% believe Jesus will return to judge all the people who have lived.
- ▶ 51% believe sex outside of marriage is a sin.
- ▶ 40% believe the Bible’s condemnation of homosexuality doesn’t apply today.
- ▶ 51% believe abortion is a sin.
- ▶ 38% believe gender identity is a matter of choice.

The 2020 State of Theology study has much information to discover and digest. For more information, visit LifeWayResearch.com or TheStateOfTheology.com. (BP)

Persecuted church

Attacks continue on Nigerian Christians

KADUNA, Nigeria — Muslim Fulani herdsmen continue their attacks on Nigerian Christians, killing 10 on July 24 and another 37 in Kaduna state in the first half of August.

Two pastors, a 5-year-old boy, a 16-year-old girl, and a father of nine number among the 47 killed. Bulus Joseph, the 48-year-old father of nine, was gruesomely murdered on his farm. Godwin Jonathan Bakoshi was kidnapped July 29 by Fulani. His body was recovered Aug. 17.

Reports further state that children have been slaughtered, women raped and molested, houses burned and villages looted and vandalized.



Sources say Fulani violence has displaced 50,000 Christians in 109 villages in southern Kaduna state. Christian leaders in Nigeria have said they believe herdsmen attacks on Christian communities in Nigeria’s Middle Belt are inspired by their desire to forcefully take over Christians’ lands and impose Islam.

Nigeria is No. 12 on Open Doors’ World Watch List 2020 of places most difficult to be a Christian but second only to Pakistan in the number of Christians killed for their faith.

Read more about ongoing violence against Christians at tabonline.org/nigeria-violence or search “Nigeria” at tabonline.org. (MS)



Myers-Mallory

State Missions Offering

State Goal: \$1,200,000

A Word from Our State Leaders



Rick Lance

*State Missionary and Executive Director
Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions*



Candace McIntosh

*Executive Director
Alabama Woman's Missionary Union*

"This has truly been a historic year for Alabama Baptist churches and for everyone. When the pandemic hit, we were confronted with a very real challenge. I can't tell you the encouragement it has been to see the way our pastors and lay leaders across the state have responded to the need for flexible, creative ways to share hope during this time. The men and women at the State Board of Missions and Alabama WMU put together a solid response in record time in order to be a resource for churches when resources were scarce. And the Great Commission Ministries that benefit from the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering are instrumental in reaching many hurting people in need of the hope of the Gospel. Thank you for your support. It is truly making a difference."

"I want to thank you for all you do to support the Week of Prayer for State Missions and the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering. And I want to thank you for all you do for the Kingdom. I know this has been a hard year. Constant change seems to have been the norm in 2020; however, you have remained laser-focused on the unchanging Gospel and living out the Great Commission. I ask you not to grow weary in doing good now. Your prayers during this Week of Prayer for State Missions are crucial to the support of our Great Commission Ministries. Your gifts to the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering will continue to assist in meeting needs in whatever change may be next. Please stay the course and dig deep, because your gifts and prayers are needed now more than ever."



Alabama Baptist
STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS

Myers-Mallory.org



Churches encourage teachers in challenging time

(continued from page 1)
for them, and we are willing to help them in any way that we can.”

Mayo added that schools are deeply involved in the homes of their children, and the Gilliam Springs congregation engages with the school system each year by hosting teacher trainings, meals and other events.

“When we offer support and prayers for [teachers and staff], we are touching every family through association,” Mayo said. “We want to pour into them so they can pour into the children and the families.”

Three years ago, Russell Baptist Association developed Mission 2018 to expand existing local missions efforts of providing backpack supplies and weekend food backpacks for students.

The association also added an email hotline through which teachers could request supplies and prayer.

The association continued the effort as Mission 2020, providing supply bags to encourage area teachers. Specially printed bags included messages of appreciation along with hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, paper

towels, pencils and other requested items.

Participating churches collected items, then gathered to pack and deliver 777 bags to teachers in Russell County, Phenix City and southeast Lee County

Schools, according to Marty Holley, director of missions for Russell Association.

In Albertville, Mount Calvary Baptist Church Pastor Brent Roe said a number of church members work in Albertville city schools.

With school faculty and staff under extra strain and working long hours to meet COVID-19 challenges, Roe said the church wanted to share the love of Christ and help meet some physical needs for school personnel.

Prayer needed

On Aug. 18, Mount Calvary volunteers grilled 200 hamburgers for faculty of Albertville primary and elementary schools. Each lunch contained a card of appreciation and a promise of prayer for the coming school year.

“Our teachers spend so much time with our children, guiding our children at the most influential times in their development,” said Roe. “We recognize the importance of these men and women who are on the front lines of the future of our churches and our nation. They need our support through prayer and every means possible much more than they need our criticism.”

First Baptist Church, Carbon Hill, provides a meal for



Photo courtesy of Brent Roe

Mount Calvary volunteers grill 200 hamburgers for faculty of Albertville primary and elementary schools. Each lunch contained a card of appreciation and a promise of prayer.

local school faculty and staff each year as well, but this year the church had to adapt because of COVID-19.

Boosting morale

Seeking to boost teacher morale, the church provided nearly 100 reusable treat baskets filled with chocolate candy, peppermints, a pen, sticky notes and hand sanitizer along with a handwritten note of encouragement.

Pastor Scott McCullar said the church normally donates school supplies, but with

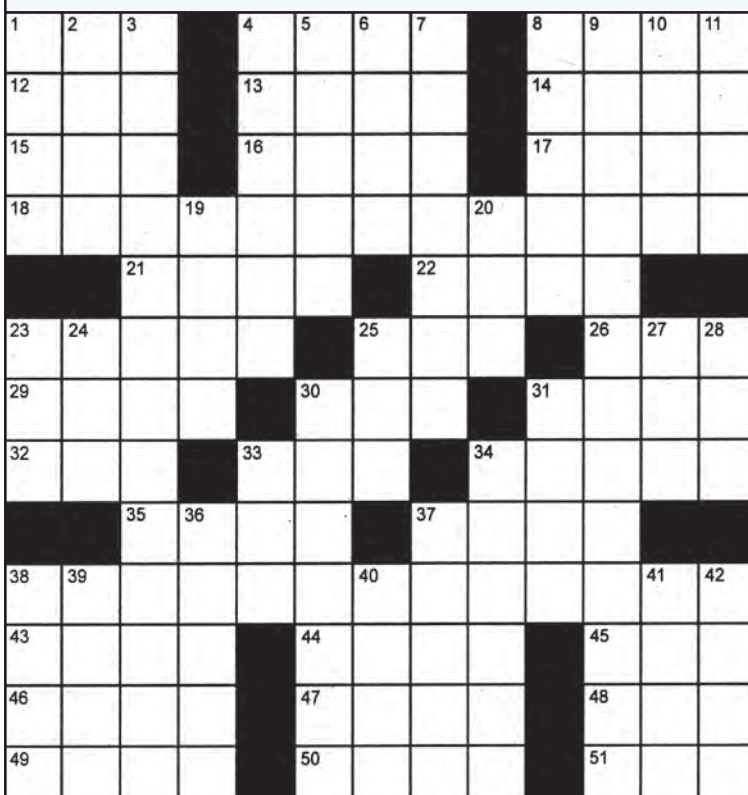
many students attending virtual school, prayer is the greatest need this year.

“We support the schools because we want to show the love of Jesus,” he said.

“There are so many people in our schools that don’t have a church home, that may have a bad taste in their mouth of what churches are or who Christians are. Showing God’s love in a practical way helps show them what the gospel really is — not a judgmental church but a loving Savior.”

Christian Crossword

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



Across

1. Health resort.
4. ___ them in pieces. (Mic. 3:3)
8. Chemical symbols for Calcium and Francium.
12. Tamar was ___ wife. (Gen. 38:6)
13. Of the oaks ... they made thine ___. (Ezek. 27:6)
14. Capital of Norway.
15. And the ___s grew. (Gen. 25:27)
16. American chemist.
17. Bachelor of dramatic arts. (abbr. plural)
18. But ___, but as of God. (2 Cor. 2:17)
21. The ___ and the Thummin. (Ex. 28:30)
22. Noggin.
23. And ___ lifted up his hand. (Lev. 9:22)
25. A thousand thousands. (abbr.)
26. Upon the great

- ___ of their right foot. (Ex. 29:20)
29. The name of Abram’s ___ was Sarai. (Gen. 11:29)
30. An ocean. (abbr.)
31. Blessed be the Lord God of ___. (Gen. 9:26)
32. Greek letter.
33. Cast him into a ___. (Gen. 37:24)
34. Equals.
35. Jog.
37. Both low and high, ___ and poor, together. (Ps. 49:2)
38. God gave them the like gift ___. (Acts 11:17)
43. Competes.
44. Take thine ___, eat, drink and be merry. (Luke 12:19)
45. Our country.
46. ___ the son of Chelub. (1 Chron. 27:26)
47. Allowance.
48. And God ___ the in the firmament.

- (Gen. 1:17)
49. And God did ___. (Heb. 4:4)
50. Mixture.
51. Come down ___ my child die. (John 4:49)

Down

1. The kings of Sheba and ___ shall offer gifts. (Ps. 72:10)
2. Some athletes.
3. Be ye not ___. (Zech. 1:4)
4. Behold, thy ___ Elisabeth. (Luke 1:36)
5. The third to ___. (1 Chron. 24:8)
6. Ram the firstborn and Bunah and ___. (1 Chron. 2:25)
7. Of the mind.
8. Hooded snake.
9. He ... did evil in the sight of the Lord, ___ ___ of Ahab.

- (2 Kings 8:27)
10. Level.
11. Blushing.
19. Cleaving tool.
20. Snake-like fish.
23. Stand in ___, and sin not. (Ps. 4:4)
24. Little island.
25. A pad.
27. Above. (poetic)
28. German river.
30. The Lord ___ them that fear him. (Ps. 103:13)
31. There rose up certain of the ___ of the Pharisees. (Acts 15:5)
33. Hull.
34. Gnasheth with his teeth and ___ away. (Mark 9:18)
36. When legislatures sit a second time.
37. Tricks.
38. Vow.
39. Bigness.
40. Son of Zerah. (1 Chron. 2:6)
41. Consumer.
42. Satisfy.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For September 20

Explore the Bible

By Robert L. Olsen, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



GOD PROMISES Isaiah 7:7-17

God Intervenes (7-9)

King Ahaz worried that Syria and Ephraim would succeed in their attacks against Judah. God sent Isaiah to reassure Ahaz that both would fail. However, Ahaz did not trust the word of God through Isaiah, instead preferring to rely on another nation, Assyria, for help.

Ahaz's situation is a lot like what we face as Christians today. It is easy to look around at circumstances and ignore the promises God makes to us in Scripture. While times may be uncertain politically, socially and even militarily, we know we can trust God and believe His promises.

Jesus tells us not to worry in Matthew 6:34, and we need to trust God despite our circumstances.

God Expects (10-13)

To comfort Ahaz, God told him to ask for a sign. God was going to show Ahaz that He would carry out the defeat of these invading armies. However, Ahaz tried to act righteous by claiming he did not want to put God to the test, when in reality, he refused to trust God and instead was looking to other military allies to help his cause. This shows Ahaz's lack of faith in God.

We often face this attitude as well. God tells us not to put our hope in wealth, in our careers or in our family, yet we often look to these things for assurance. If we have enough money, we think we can weather anything that comes our way. But Jesus reminds us money and riches are not eternal. They can disappear at a moment's notice. Instead, Jesus reminds us to focus on eternal things that do not fade away (Matt. 6:25-34). Our trust needs to be in God, not in anything else.

God Announces (14-15)

Despite Ahaz's unbelief, God was going to give a sign anyway. The sign was that a virgin would be with child and His name would be Immanuel. This is one of the most famous passages on the prediction of Christ's birth to Mary. It is important to note that most scholars believe

this prophecy of Isaiah had fulfillment in his own day, as well as fulfillment in the birth of Christ.

Many scholars believe it referred to a woman who was engaged but not yet married at the time of the prophecy, getting married and then conceiving. We know for sure though that this prophecy looked forward to Christ.

Often, prophecy or statements in the Old Testament have a meaning for the people of that time while also holding a meaning for the future. Since the Holy Spirit is the author of all of Scripture, He is free to provide meaning in this way.

The fact that this promised child would be named Immanuel meant, for Ahaz, a slap in the face. Here is a man, the King of Judah, who is supposed to be trusting in God, yet he trusts in men. The prophecy calls this child Immanuel — God with us — to show that despite Ahaz's lack of faith, God is still with His people.

The name Immanuel also signifies Christ, the true God of the universe coming to reside among men, the real God with us.

God Judges (16-17)

Because of Ahaz' refusal to trust God, God would remove Ahaz from power. In fact, Assyria, the nation that Ahaz wanted to ally with, would be the power that would overtake Syria and Ephraim and invade Judah. God has control over all the nations, so certainly Ahaz should have trusted in God, not men.

All of this confirms that God is sovereign, and He is the judge of the universe. As Christians, knowing this should bring us great comfort, since we know that God is going to put to right all the injustices that have ever been committed on the earth. We know God will save us from our sins through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, so that nothing can remove us from the love of God (see Rom. 8:18-39).

We can trust God in all our circumstances. This should give us great hope when we face uncertainties on earth. 🌈

Bible Studies for Life

By Jeffery M. Leonard, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Biblical Studies, Samford University



HONOR PARENTS Exodus 20:12, 2 Samuel 15:7-14

If you've ever had occasion to journey "across the Pond," you can likely attest to the truth of George Bernard Shaw's maxim, "The United States and Great Britain are two countries separated by a common language." Pass through Heathrow, and you enter a world of crisps (chips), chips (fries), biscuits (cookies), candyfloss (cotton candy), lorries (trucks), boots (trunks), lifts (elevators) and a thousand other "foreign" (for an American, at least) terms. What is true of traveling east to England is doubly true of traveling back to the centuries that first produced our English Bibles. So many terms that populate the pages of Scripture have fallen out of favor in our modern dialects.

Outside of church or a Bible study, when was the last time you used a term like glory, bless, sovereign, lordship, wicked or judgment? These are words that used to be part and parcel of everyday speech. Now, though, they are hardly used, or if they are used, they are used in a fashion quite different from their original meaning.

Another word that could be added to this roster of "old fashioned" biblical terms is the word "honor." We still take note of "honors" like being valedictorian or winning an MVP award. We rarely speak, though, of giving "honor" (singular) to a person. We hardly know what it means to give honor to a person or even to give honor to God. Part of the reason this concept of honor is so foreign to us is that it derives from a time when society was highly stratified. Those on the lower rungs of wealth and status were expected to treat those higher up as their betters. Thankfully, the spread of democratic ideals has served to erase much of that stratification of society.

But what was a gain in our politics has also been a loss in our theology. The truth is that we are on the bottom rung when it comes to our relationship with our Creator, and that same Creator deserves to be honored as much now as He did before 1776.

Honor the parents God has placed in your life. (Ex. 20:12)

The fifth commandment is quite clear in its instruction — there are those we should honor, namely our parents. Of course, not every parent deserves honor. To honor an abusive parent or a parent who abandons his or her children would simply be to offer up a lie. True honor is honor that is deserved. That is why David's prayer in 1 Chronicles 16:29 says, "Ascribe to the Lord the honor due his name." To honor someone is to recognize the commendation that person truly does deserve.

Honor acts with truthfulness and integrity towards parents. (2 Sam. 15:7-12)

The Bible offers various examples of children who honor and, sadly, who dishonor their parents. An example of the latter is found in the life of Absalom. Absalom's father David was by no means a perfect man. David's affair with Bathsheba and his murder of Uriah were grievous sins, and it is no surprise that the great king's family began to fall apart soon after these events. Even so, Absalom was wrong not to give his father the respect he did deserve. He was wrong not to acknowledge the good things David had done or to recognize the bitter tears of repentance the king had shed.

Honor seeks the welfare of parents. (2 Sam. 15:13-14)

When Absalom rebelled and forced David to flee, he acted in direct opposition to the idea of honoring one's parents. Absalom cast aside whatever honor was due David and demanded instead that it be directed toward himself.

Sadly, the end of Absalom's life was nearly a direct fulfillment of the words in the Decalogue. The fifth commandment promised long life to those who would honor their parents. Absalom did the opposite of this and achieved the opposite end. The young prince died in the very prime of his life. 🌈



Media reviews

MUSIC

Chris Tomlin's latest album features heart, faith of country artists

By Tess Schoonhoven
Baptist Press

It's easy to make judgments about public figures, according to Chris Tomlin, the award-winning Christian artist.

Tomlin said this proved to be true in the process of writing and recording his latest album, "Chris Tomlin and Friends," a collabora-

tion with multiple country music artists.

He said he enjoyed partnering with Thomas Rhett, as well as members of the groups Florida Georgia Line and Lady A, in part because he was able to hear their individual faith stories and to

experience what God was doing in their lives.

"Especially when they're in the public eye and in country music, sometimes [the view] is just partying and alcohol and whatever comes with it all," said Tomlin, adding he found something very different.

"Getting to know everybody on this record, from top to bottom, just

where they come from, the influence that the Church has been on their life, and faith, and God, and [how] so many of them grew up in the church leading worship or have parents and family members in ministry and just have a real heart for the Lord has been beautiful to see," Tomlin said.

Tomlin noted that Florida Georgia Line's Tyler Hubbard leads a Bible study for musicians in Nashville, while Rhett and his wife Lauren Akins are involved in adoption advocacy.

"[These are] things that you would never know that these guys are doing ... and it's

been amazing and something that's been really beautiful to me," Tomlin said. "It just shows me that you can never judge a book by its cover. You may think or see one thing but when you get beyond it, you see, 'Wow, these guys have a really beautiful, genuine heart for the Lord.'"

The album was written and produced entirely in partnership with



Photo by Robby Klein

CHRIS TOMLIN

the country artists. It features fun hooks and choruses in songs like "Thank You Lord," as well as deeper connections to God's relationship with the world and people in tracks such as "Be The Moon."

Tomlin said the album served as a new launching point for a goal he'd always had: merging his country roots with his faith.

Tomlin said as the group worked on or recorded each song, the conversation centered around how the music could bring glory to God.

"[They were] conversations of being a light in these times, and every conversation revolved around that in making this record," Tomlin said. "The overall theme of this record is collaboration. We wrote the songs together, we recorded them together. This wasn't like I had some famous friends on to sing

a second verse. ... We wrote these songs together, we recorded them in the studio together. If you listen to the album there's songs where I barely sing. We were just trying to find the right thing, the right voice, for the right song."

Available on all platforms

The album is available for streaming on all music platforms. Tomlin said he would like to collaborate again with the country artists and would love someday to perform live with them.

Regardless, he said the friendships formed through the creation of the record have taken flight — even leading to a joint vacation. Tomlin said he does not anticipate the relationship ending with the release of the album. (Reprinted with permission from Baptist Press)

"We wrote the songs together, we recorded them together. This wasn't like I had some famous friends on to sing a second verse. ... We wrote these songs together, we recorded them in the studio together."



THOMAS RHETT

Photo by John Shearer courtesy of The Green Room

Chris Tomlin

'Love of neighbor'

Amarillo church's language ministry equips internationals from 25 nations

By **Trennis Henderson**
WVU National Correspondent

Ministering to internationals is nothing new for First Baptist Church of Amarillo, Texas. In fact, the current program's early roots date back to World War II and the Korean War.

According to Sue Kelly, director of the church's English as a Second Language ministry, as American servicemen came back from those conflicts, many of them returned home with Japanese and Korean war brides who had little or no English skills. For those who settled in Amarillo, volunteers from First Baptist organized language classes to help the women navigate their new culture.

Today, decades later, First Baptist's International Friends ministry continues to thrive. Weekly ESL classes held on Thursday mornings and Sunday afternoons often attract more than 200 students from up to 25 countries. While the coronavirus pandemic cut short this year's spring semester, ESL fall classes were launched in September over Zoom.

Rich blend of cultures

The church also serves refugees and other internationals with worship services held in six languages each week — Burundi, Congolese, Karen, Laotian and Vietnamese as well as English.

Additionally, a rich blend of as many as 10 languages can be heard joyfully spilling out of the international Sunday School department on any given Sunday morning.

"Amarillo really has a very high

"You see people from all different countries and all different backgrounds singing the songs and saying the Bible verses and learning about Jesus."

Sue Kelly, director, FBC Amarillo ESL ministry



WVU photo by Pam Henderson
Beverly Adcock teaches an ABC class as part of FBC Amarillo's International Friends ESL program. More than 20 volunteer teachers typically lead classes for refugees and other internationals on Thursday mornings and Sunday afternoons. With the spring semester ending early due to the COVID-19 crisis, teachers and students are looking forward to classes launching online this fall.

refugee population for its size," said Kelly, who has coordinated the International Friends ESL program for more than 20 years.

"We just feel like the Lord brought them here and we want to help them feel at home, welcome them, teach them English so that they can have friends in the community and so they can get better jobs," she said.

Kelly emphasized that sharing about Christ is an important aspect of ESL ministry. Noting that "each class starts with a Bible verse," she said, "We try to pick a verse that kind of fits with the English because they come for the English.

"We offer Bibles and Jesus videos in their own language and we have a Bible story for the large group," she added. "You see people

from all different countries and all different backgrounds singing the songs and saying the Bible verses and learning about Jesus."

Kelly first got involved in ESL in 1975, the same year as the fall of Saigon at the end of the Vietnam War which sparked an influx of refugees from Vietnam and Laos. Over the years since then, Amarillo has welcomed refugees fleeing turmoil in Bosnia, Burma, Iran, Iraq and several African countries.

'One prayer, two parts'

Boon Vongsurith, pastor of First Baptist's Laotian congregation, was among those who escaped from Laos to Thailand after being held captive because of his Christian faith. Sensing God's direction to flee the persecution of his home country, he carefully wrapped his Bible in a plastic bag before swimming into the freezing Mekong River dividing Laos and Thailand.

"I prayed to God, one prayer, two parts," Vongsurith recounted. "I said, 'God, I know in my head I will be drowned or killed escaping from Laos to Thailand. If I die,

I pray someone will find my dead body and know that I'm a believer because of the Bible with me. But if you spare me, I will serve You any place, any time.'"

Making new friends

More than 45 minutes later, he made it safely across the river and into Thailand. "This Bible is very important to me," he said, gently holding aloft the treasured Bible he has carried with him for decades.

Declaring that "God spared me for a better job," Vongsurith said, "The Laotian ministry here is from birth to burial. ... Working with Laotians is a very high honor for me because I love my God and I serve my own people."

Kelly noted that the ESL program's "International Friends" title was intentional. "We want to teach them English but we also want to be their friends and just get to know them," she said.

International Friends offers ABC, beginning conversation and advanced ESL training, as well as GED and citizenship classes and private tutoring. The classes are led by a team of more than 20 teachers who volunteer their time each week.

Whether in person or online, the program continues to focus on each participant gradually becoming fluent in spoken English.

Emphasizing that the church's ministry to internationals is a two-way street, FBC Amarillo Associate Pastor Trevor Brown said refugees and other immigrants "teach us new things about what it means to believe and what it means to have faith in God and to trust Him."

"The body of Christ is stronger when we're more diverse," Brown said. "The more people we welcome and the more space we find to let others worship here and the more we can equip internationals to reach their friends, the more the kingdom of God grows and comes alive right here in front of us."✝



**LISTEN TO
TAB TALKS ON
WXJC EVERY
SATURDAY AT
2PM CST**

FM 101.1

AM 850

IN ALABAMA

**OR ON THE
WXJC RADIO APP**



**ALSO FIND A VARIETY OF
CHRISTIAN RADIO PROGRAMMING
EVERY DAY OF THE WEEK.**

WXJC.RADIO.COM | (205) 879-3324



The Rope

Giving you something
to hold on to.

theropetab.com
A blog for young adults