



The Alabama Baptist

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November 12, 2020

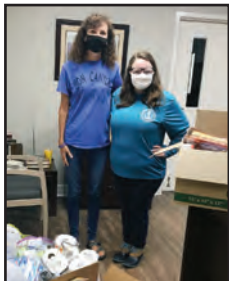
Vol. 185, No. 45
Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

INSIDE



National Adoption Month highlights needs of children in foster care

◆ Pages 6–7



BCMs, churches care for students in quarantine

◆ Page 8



Jasper church celebrates God's provision, unity in congregation

◆ Page 12



Organization collects, sends Bibles to ends of the earth

By Martha Simmons
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Many of us have a favorite Bible — dog-eared, marked up and littered with notes — that's our go-to for the gospel, while a dozen others sit elsewhere in the house gathering dust.

Meanwhile, Christians all over the world pray daily to get their hands on any copy of Scripture, new or well used.

Love Packages works to address that issue, placing donated Bibles and gospel-based literature into the hands of pastors and other Christians throughout the world.

Shipping tons

With warehouse and distribution locations in Illinois and Alabama, Love Packages has shipped Christian literature to 154 nations since it began in 1975.

Love Packages shipped 60 boxes that first year. Now the organization ships more than 1,700 tons annually. In 2020, Love Packages hopes to send at least 2,020 tons to the far reaches of the globe.

"The average income of the people we ship to is just \$300–400 per year," said Jason Jenkins, manager of the Alabama branch of Love Packages. "You can find Bibles overseas and in third-world countries, but the price would be twice the U.S. dollar price, so buying Bibles is out of the question."

Many U.S. Christians are unaware of how dire the need is for Bibles in undeveloped countries.

"Most people don't realize that there are pastors overseas who don't have a Bible, or they share it with their congregation," Jenkins said.

Love Packages was founded in Butler, Illinois, by Steve Schmidt, who was concerned about the appalling waste of Christian literature in the U.S., while Christians

in poor countries go without. A similar effort was ongoing in Decatur at Edwin Hodges (See 'Meeting,' page 11)



Photos courtesy of Love Packages
Love Packages volunteers box up donated Bibles and study literature.



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Unsplash.com

Ivey extends Alabama mask order

Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey on Nov. 5 extended the state's mask ordinance through Dec. 11 but loosened some other restrictions on businesses and restaurants.

Amended order

The state health order still requires masks to be worn in most public places, as well as at schools except for students grade 2 and below. But the amended order removes emergency occupancy rates for retailers, gyms, fitness centers and entertainment venues and allows for an exception for the 6-foot distancing rule at businesses including barber shops, hair salons, gyms and restaurants if people are wearing masks and are separated by "impermeable" barriers.

Ivey said the changes should be "welcome news as we come to the upcoming holiday season." (TAB)



The crossword puzzle can be found on page 17.

2020 Pastors Conference to be held virtually

Not many things went as planned this year, and the 2020 Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference is no different.

Following the lead of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, this year's in-person conference was switched to an online format in response to concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic.

That means the opportunity to hear sermons from great pastors and speakers still exists.

This year's Pastors Conference will be held exclusively online at albaptistpc.com on Nov. 16.

"We invite any and all Alabama Baptist pastors to view all the speakers and sermons as they premiere on Monday, Nov. 16," said Nathan Daniels, president of this year's conference.

"Tune in online as our lineup of speakers will preach on the theme of 'One Another.' I am confident God will still move powerfully through these sermons and preachers."

Encourage pastors

Daniels, pastor of Bethany Baptist Church, Andalusia, joins Blake Kersey, Robert Mullins and Richard Richie as officers of the 2020 Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference.

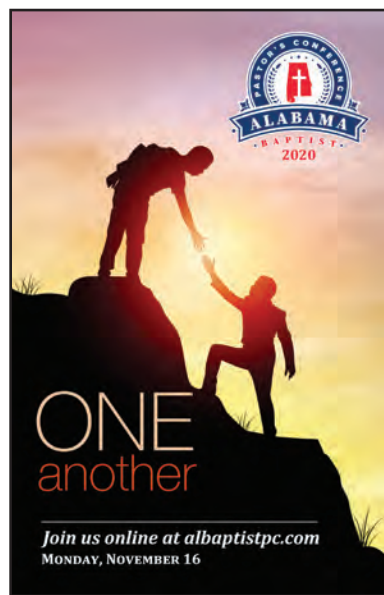
Kersey, pastor of First Baptist Church, Decatur, serves as president-elect; Mullins, pastor of Crossroads Community Church, Elmore, serves as vice president; and Richie, pastor of Blue Springs Baptist Church, Somerville, serves as secretary/treasurer.

Though this year's conference looks different from those in the past, the purpose is still the same:

To encourage pastors across the state in their ministries and personal walks with Christ.

And though the precious time of personal fellowship will be missed this year, the PC officers, TAB Media and the sponsors are glad to bring the conference to you in the online format.

Can't make it on Nov. 16th? No worries. Though the eight sermons will premiere that day, they will remain available after the conclusion of the conference.



123rf.com photo/cover by TAB Media

Conference lineup

Speakers for the 2020 Pastors Conference include Danny Akin, president, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary; Charlie Dates, pastor, Progressive Baptist Church, Chicago; Ben Bowden, pastor, First Baptist Church,

Enterprise; Crawford Loritts, pastor, Fellowship Bible Church, Roswell, Georgia; Juan Sanchez, pastor, High Pointe Baptist Church, Austin, Texas; Jimmy Scroggins, pastor, Family Church, West Palm Beach, Florida; Kevin L. Smith, executive director, Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware; and Daven Watkins, pastor, First Baptist Church, Pelham.

The conference website also will feature a list of this year's sponsors for participants to browse. They range from Christian education institutes to ministries to church suppliers. Don't forget to check out the services offered by the sponsors.

To view the Pastors Conference sermons, the marketplace and other resources, visit albaptistpc.com on Nov. 16. (TAB)

"I am confident God will still move powerfully through these sermons and preachers."

Nathan Daniels
president, 2020 Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference

TAB Media

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

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MY RASHIONALE

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

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Cutting through information avalanche exhausting but possible

It happens quite frequently really. Someone will mention to our staff how they wish we would cover a certain topic or how they didn't know about this or that after the event or experience has passed.

Sometimes we do miss an opportunity for coverage because the information got buried on someone's desk or in an email inbox. Sometimes we simply aren't aware because the information wasn't shared with us.

But most often, we actually do have the content available across multiple platforms and are a bit confused when the "wish you would cover" comments surface.

Recently, at least three people from different churches across the state who are subscribers of TAB noted how they had never heard of the annual Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering for Alabama Baptist ministries sponsored by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

While TAB Media does not benefit from the Myers-Mallory offering, our staff helps promote the effort for our ministry partners and their work at the State Board of Missions.

SBOM also purchases ad space in this publication for several weeks each year and designs an ad to promote the effort and urge churches to participate (see page 10 for an example).

Their willingness to promote the offering through advertising in our publication in turn helps support our ministry efforts.

And SBOM's communications team understands how sharing

a promotional message several times with a consistent look and feel is important to give everyone a chance to notice it.

Our friend Billy Irvin at Faith Radio reminded me of the same thing recently as we talked about how to best share all we have to offer at TAB Media.

"Just keep telling your story," he advised. "Think about how often pastors hear similar responses from church members who say they didn't know about something after it has been promoted for several weeks. We just aren't able to consume all the content coming at us."

Billy's right; we do suffer from information overload. Even for those who love reading and doing research, the massive amount of content instantly available to us is overwhelming.

Maybe that's why we also suffer from a bit of amnesia from time to time.

For instance, when we finalized the Love Packages article on page 1, I recalled our coverage from years ago when the Decatur branch was run by the Edwin Hodges Ministry.

I also thought of the number of Bibles and Sunday School

literature stacked on my shelves that could be shared. Why had I not already donated them?

My reaction to the front-page article serves as an excellent example of why we need to keep telling our stories. We do forget sometimes. We also overlook information important to us.

Our team at TAB Media wants to help Love Packages meet their 2,020 tons goal for 2020 and will be collecting Bibles and literature for the next few weeks to then take to Decatur to donate. You are welcome to drop donations by our office in Homewood. 🇺🇸

RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

TAB Media staff salutes our veterans; thank you for your service

Father, uncle, son, grandfather, nephew, brother, husband, cousin, other family members and close friends (male and female) — each of us on the TAB Media team is closely connected to a veteran of the United States military.

One of our staff members — Richard Maddox — served in the U.S. Navy (Submarine Service) from 1970 to 1974.

And a few days ago, another staff member was helping her grandson complete his paperwork for admission into the U.S. Army. He leaves for boot camp right after Christmas.

We all have varying levels of experience with someone who has or will be serving; and we all have tremendous respect for those who have served, are currently serving and will serve in the days to come. We are grateful for their service. We also want to personally thank

all of you who served our country. The sacrifice is not lost on us, and we are indebted to the role you

played in keeping our country safe, as well as to provide the freedoms we enjoy as American citizens.

May we never take those sacrifices — past, present and future — for granted.

While November provides a day on the calendar for us to salute our veterans, hold parades and remember, we urge all who live in this land (that so many worldwide covet for themselves) to never forget those who have served.

They not only faced dangerous situations but also missed milestone moments at home and gave up creature comforts during their service.

So many carry the horrible past experiences of war with them each day, choosing to tuck the nightmarish memories down deep while continuing to function as strong and contributing citizens.

We recognize you graciously accepted the lifelong sentence of what you endured — saw up close and personal, felt in your heart, worked to comprehend in your mind and maybe even had to do —

so the rest of us would be spared those difficult circumstances.

Thank you for your service, dear veterans. Know you are loved and appreciated.

—Jennifer Davis Rash



PETTY OFFICER SECOND CLASS RICHARD MADDOX

Your Voice



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

Pursuing 'clearer vision' in final months of 2020

By Amy Hacker
theropetab.com

The end of 2020 is fast approaching and what a year! We've seen things this year that we haven't seen before.

Everyone is now wearing masks, we've had a toilet paper shortage, a coin shortage and I do recall something about murder hornets. (Thankfully I've never encountered one of them.)

If anyone can remember, 2020 was supposed to be the year of

"clearer vision" — like 20/20 vision. It was such a great idea.

We were going to tackle 2020 like a boss and nothing could stop us. Until it did.

It was like someone slammed on the emergency brakes and everything we knew came to a halt.

The excitement at the beginning of the year turned to chaos and had me wishing for the year's quick demise. Our vision of 2020 suddenly changed. What we knew to be true wasn't true anymore.

Churches and businesses closed, people lost their jobs or their positions changed dramatically and many people lost loved ones.

Everything was and still is completely different than it was last year. But if you are beginning to lose hope, please don't.

Remember God's promise in Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

God knew 2020 would happen. It didn't surprise Him. The chaos of this year will never change the truth of Romans 8:28.

We can still have that "clearer vision" in the year of 2020. We can still accomplish great things even though we face difficult and changing circumstances.

We can give more; we can love more. We can show grace and mercy to people who might not "deserve" it. We can be the Jesus that others need to see — the hope for those who have lost theirs.

Every day is a new day — we can turn it around. 2020 isn't over. Let's finish like a boss!

EDITOR'S NOTE — Amy Hacker is a regular contributor to The Rope, a blog for college students and young professionals. Hacker serves with TAB Media as creative services associate. To read more from The Rope, visit theropetab.com.

TAB staff and friends help double our reach

I recently had the opportunity to provide a subscription for a senior adult who the Lord brought to my attention. It is such a blessing to know that my small contribution is bringing trusted news about what God is doing to this particular person.

Debbie Campbell
Director of communications

As a longtime reader of *The Alabama Baptist*, I especially enjoy the digital edition and also interacting with TAB posts on Facebook and Twitter.

Gary Fenton
TAB board member

I am continually sharing all that TAB Media offers with others as I talk to them on the phone, over email and through Facebook posts.

Pam Holt
Sales representative

A TAB board member graciously decided to provide a North Alabama church with 12 subscriptions so that its members could be well-informed and encouraged.

Letters to the Editor

Special thanks to Grace Thornton for her excellent article about my friend, Calhoun Baptist Association Director of Missions Roger Willmore and the Keswick Ministry.

Willmore was my pastor at Locust Fork Baptist Church and Deerfoot Baptist Church, Trussville, prior to his current assignment.

His mentor, Stephen Olford, introduced Billy Graham to a Keswick Convention in 1946.

Roger was instrumental in bringing Olford to preach and conduct Keswick Conventions at Locust Fork Baptist Church more than 40 years ago, and I was honored to be a part of the team.

We also participated in a num-

ber of the "Keswicks" in Birmingham. Keswick's theme "All One in Christ Jesus" has been a cornerstone in my personal faith.

Brice F. Marsh
Trussville, Ala.

I am so touched, Jennifer, by the shifting of the My Rationale editorial in the Oct. 22 issue to allow Carrie McWhorter to share about her dad. Tears and memories certainly surfaced.

Morris Murray Jr.
Jasper, Ala.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Let us hear your feedback about the special-edition Fruitful magazine you should be receiving this week.

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah.”

P S A L M 46:11

Not only does the Bible place high value on knowing the truth, it goes a step further in advising us both to believe the truth (2 Thess. 2:13) and to speak the truth (Eph. 4:25). And it goes even deeper. We are individually to be established in the truth as a foundation for life (2 Pet. 1:12). We are to wear the truth as a belt that girds our lives (Eph. 6:14).

Jerry Batson
Nov. 5 Theology 101

We should not fail to acknowledge what a remarkable thing it is that we get to vote. It is a precious freedom won and defended at great cost. We dare not presume upon the freedoms we enjoy. Indeed, for Christians, our concern must be one of stewardship unto the Lord, as we seek to lever-

age those freedoms for the glory of His name, animated by the love of neighbor.

Matthew J. Hall
Provost, Southern Baptist
Theological Seminary

A believer, held in balance by the presence of Jesus and not tossed by the chaos of our culture, is a precious treasure.

Bob Adams
Retired pastor

Who can heal our nation?
Not a politician.
Not a political party.
Not a president.
Not a government agency.
Not a state.
Not an educator.

Not an entertainer.
Not a preacher.
Not a celebrity.
Not an athlete.
Not a leader.
Not a church.

Each is important. Not one is imperative. Only Jesus can heal our nation. Only Jesus can heal relationships. America is broken. Each of us is broken.

Jesus is the answer. He always has been, and He always will be. While being our only solution, Jesus is never our problem. America needs Jesus. The world also needs Jesus.

Therefore, go tell. Now is the time to lead.

Ronnie Floyd
President and CEO
SBC Executive Committee

From the *Twitterverse*

@Jeff_Iorg

God loves you no matter who you are, what you have done, or what you are going through! He doesn't love spotlight Christians more because of their popularity or accomplishments. God loves every one of His children tenderly.

@johnthweatt

“Our good lives always with You, from which when we are averted we are perverted. Let us now, O Lord, return, that we be not overturned ...” — Augustine

@bellvuepastor

Liberalism denies and takes away from God's word. It's a theological ditch on the left. Legalism adds man-made rules to Scripture. It's a theological ditch on the right. Don't take away from God's word, and don't add your manmade rules to it either. Either of these will derail you.

@DL_Staples

Placing my confidence here today: “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (Rom. 10:4)

@NAMB_SBC

“What if ‘knowing Jesus and making Him known’ set the agenda for your day? How would this change the way we speak to others?” — @CatherineRenfro

@jdgrear

“Gentleness is what humility looks like in public.” — @bcloritts #Flags

@jaredcwilson

Slow down. Pray. Think. Resist the hot take. Weigh your words against Scripture. Weigh your words with love. The world doesn't need your “content.” It needs your Christ.

@philwaldrep

“Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.” (Rom. 14:19)

@EdLitton

Have we come to the place where God can withdraw His blessings and it does not affect our trust in Him?

@myutmost

The great essential is remaining true to the call of God and realizing that His one and only purpose is to disciple others to Jesus. Remember that there is a passion for souls that does not come from God but from our desire to make converts to our point of view. #myutmost

@BillyGraham

“Sinful pleasure can ruin our appetite for the things of God.”

Politics, religion and Him

After the dust settles from this election, I recommend we each reflect back on what we posted (on social media) and said in 2020.

This will help us see the bigger picture and lead toward helpful change in our own lives and relationship circles.

In his book, “Them: Why We Hate Each Other and How to Heal,” Nebraska Sen. Ben Sasse says: “Deep, enduring change does not come through legislation or elections. Meaningful change comes as lots and lots of individual minds are persuaded and hearts changed.

“Deep change allows people to change their minds without needing, first, to ‘eat crow.’ It tolerates provisional and partial agreements. It’s the logic of neighbors who live side by side. It’s the logic of the long term, which respects the dignity and agency of debate partners.”

Sasse is on to something helpful here.

Christians, of all people, need to be able to recognize the worth of others, even those with whom we have serious disagreements.

We do need to be thinking about and talking about politics, and of course religion.

But we more often need to be heard talking about matters of faith, about Jesus Himself.

For it is only when we go beyond talking exclusively about the political headlines of the day that people will believe Jesus is who's most important to us.

It's not about politics or even religion.

In the end, it's all about Him.

Brian Hobbs
Editor
The Baptist Messenger

FOSTER CARE

during COVID-19

November is National Adoption Month, spotlights ongoing need for permanent families

By Shawn Hendricks
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

With more than 400,000 children reportedly in the foster care system in the United States, and 100,000 of them available for adoption, experts in these fields say the COVID-19 crisis has opened up more opportunities for families to explore ways to help vulnerable children.

Virtual meetings, Zoom calls, live streaming and other online options are more accessible than ever before — thanks to the pandemic.

And they may help that hesitant family take that first — and sometimes the most difficult — step in the process, says Cheri Williams, senior vice president of domestic programs at Bethany Christian Services.

“Just explore,” said Williams, who along with Kimberly Offutt, national director of foster care adoption at BCS, discussed the pandemic’s impact on the foster care system during a recent Adopting and Fostering Home podcast episode, presented by the North American Mission Board’s SEND Relief initiative.

“All you’ve got to do is sign up for an online information meeting,” they said.

“You can sit in the comfort of your own home,” she added. “You don’t have to hire a babysitter for



Photo courtesy of ABCH

any other children you have at home. There’s never been an easier time to take that next step.”

‘Had to pivot’

Offutt added, “We’ve literally had to pivot. We’re doing more virtual visits, virtual events, virtual trainings, utilizing social media more, which has allowed us to really broaden our opportunities for reaching more people.”

And with families losing jobs, homes, adoption travel temporarily remaining on hold in some countries, court hearings being shifted online and child abuse potentially becoming more common during

lockdowns, many children are more vulnerable than before, they noted.

“COVID-19 has really changed our world in so many ways, and the same is true in the foster care system. These children,

by no fault of their own, they’re already vulnerable, but they have gotten even more vulnerable during this time,” Williams said.

All of these factors have increased the stress level for all involved, said Rod Marshall, president and CEO of the Alabama Baptist Children’s Homes & Family Ministries.

But families committed to helping vulnerable children “rose to the occasion” and have provided a calm in the storm for many children and families, he said.

“Our foster parents helped our children manage the anxiety they were experiencing and kept them

safe and healthy,” he said. “Our social workers were not able to perform in-home visits for many months but maintained routine visits with their children through video technology.”

Meanwhile, canceled court dates during the pandemic have caused delays for children eligible to return to parents and relatives, said Elise Vincent, ABCH director of social services in Central Alabama.

‘Overwhelmed’

Because of the personal and economic challenges during the height of the pandemic, many potential foster parents opted out, Vincent said.

“We had families who asked to be removed from the list to receive a placement because they were so overwhelmed with juggling working from home while having a house full of kids,” she said.

“It is a whole new element of being willing and able to care for someone else’s child,” she added. “The needs haven’t really changed. We still need families willing to take children and work out the inconveniences of day care and school closings.”

Lellwyn and Amy Griffin are foster parents living in the

Birmingham area who care for a 3-year-old boy along with their two biological boys who are 14 and 17.

The Griffins are members of First Baptist Church, Pelham, and shared some of the challenges they’ve experienced since their first of several placements since 2016.

Most of the visits with the family of a previous foster child during the



Photo courtesy of ABCH

“COVID-19 has really changed our world in so many ways, and the same is true in the foster care system. These children, by no fault of their own, they’re already vulnerable, but they have gotten even more vulnerable.”

Cheri Williams

senior vice president of domestic programs, Bethany Christian Services



Photo courtesy of ABCH

height of the COVID-19 lockdown consisted of standing outside on the porch wearing masks or navigating chaotic Zoom calls, Amy Griffin said.

“You’re looking at six different screens, you’re trying to do a visit with a 3-year-old, and that’s very, very difficult,” she said. “One, it’s difficult for the child because the child doesn’t understand they’re on the screen. They’re not getting to feel, they’re not getting to touch. And their attention span is real short looking at a screen.”

It’s also difficult for the birth parents, she said. “The parents don’t understand. ‘Why aren’t you letting

my baby on the screen. Put my baby on the screen.’ I did not realize how challenging that would be, to see the things I saw and hear the things that I heard. I was just blown away. So that, to me, was maybe the hardest part ... during this COVID experience.”

During the shutdown, their previous foster child desperately needed to go to the dentist, but the office was temporarily closed.

‘Power of God’

But there were also bright spots amid the challenges, Griffin said.

“In hindsight, besides everything being so negative ... I felt like it brought our family closer,” she said. “You’re kind of forced to slow

down and do stuff together with your family and other people. That has been really nice.”

Williams challenges families to be open to that one child God may be calling them to help.

“What might God be

calling you to do for just one, just one of those kids or just one of those families in your community who is in need?” she said. “Never underestimate the power that God has in you to make a difference in someone’s life today.”

For more information on the needs list, go to alabamachild.org/needs.

“The needs haven’t really changed. We still need families willing to take children and work out the inconveniences of day care and school closings.”

**Elise Vincent, director of social services in Central Alabama
Alabama Baptist Children’s Homes & Family Ministries**



Photo courtesy of ABCH

ADOPTION

during a pandemic

Process continues despite travel restrictions

By Shawn Hendricks
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Packed and ready to board a plane to China to meet their children, nine adoptive families working with Lifeline Children’s Services found their plans turned upside down when the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted international travel.

The families were scrambling to figure out what to do next, recalled Jenny Riddle, communications coordinator for the Christian adoption agency based in Birmingham.

“Families in Lifeline’s China program have been navigating COVID-19 and its challenges since late January,” she recently wrote on the agency’s website. “Lifeline’s China team immediately began working fiercely, looking for solutions daily for the now approximately 40 families who have seen their process paused at travel.

Need for families

“International travel has not yet resumed for families in the process of adopting from China,” she noted, “but the program remains open, is processing, and the need for families to adopt waiting children from China remains.”

International adoption has been particularly challenging in the wake of the pandemic, said Hanna Pearson, administrative coordinator at Lifeline. Domestic adoption, for the most part, has continued forward.

“Our domestic team is still

able to facilitate foster care classes and support birth mothers even in the midst of the medical crisis,” said Pearson, noting they have two classes in process. “Domestic adoptions and placements are still taking place and we have been encouraged to see missional families continue to pursue orphan care.”

‘No small feat’

Back on the international adoption front, Riddle said she’s seen miracles along the way. She shared how she saw the “Lord work through the immigration process in the U.S., foreign governments and a lot of paperwork, to see a young girl adopted before her 14th birthday — when she would no longer be eligible for adoption in China.

“This was no small feat during a pandemic,” she added, “and we are so grateful that this precious girl will eventually have a family traveling to bring her home.”

Sharing updates on Colombia, Taiwan and other countries in Asia and Latin America, Riddle noted that each country has unique challenges but “processes are progressing, and borders are continuing to open.

“We are praising the Lord for His continued providence for children and families in our international adoption programs in the middle of this pandemic,” Riddle said. “Although travel has slowed significantly for everyone, we have seen God at work in bringing children home.”



Photo courtesy of ABCH

BCMs, churches care for quarantined students

By **Lanell Downs Smith**
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The University of Montevallo had only one quarantined student when BCM campus minister Jacob Freeman first inquired about how Baptist Campus Ministries could help during fall semester 2020.

When nine more students entered isolation over Labor Day weekend, Freeman asked area churches to help gather supplies for care packages the BCM could use to encourage quarantined students.

“Being so young and most being athletes, they’re sitting in isolation for two weeks,” Freeman said. “Many feel fine and are just bored out of their minds. They’re used to a workout schedule, a practice schedule, seeing friends. Now all of a sudden all that’s gone, and they can’t leave this tiny little room for two weeks. It’s a pretty miserable situation, and I think maybe one they haven’t experienced to such a degree before,” Freeman said in an interview in early October.

Montevallo’s BCM initially collected snacks, gift cards, activity items and copies of sermons for about a dozen care packages, delivering them with personalized, handwritten messages promising prayer and affirming God’s love for each student.

Stepping in

As the number of Montevallo cases began to rise, local church groups like Woman’s Missionary Union at Liberty Hill Baptist Church, Clanton, stepped in to collect enough items for nearly



Photo courtesy of Jacob Freeman

Kelli Sellers (left) and Courtlin Weston study while Montevallo BCM ministry assistant Karla Birdsong (center) sorts donations.

50 more care packages.

“A student’s life is often so hectic that to catch them at a moment when they will give more than one second of thought to an invitation to consider Jesus is rare,” Freeman said. “This period of isolation ... is an obvious opportunity to invite them to consider the gospel.”

The majority of quarantined students were international students or athletes who lived too far away to self-isolate at home, Freeman said. Most of the quarantined students at Montevallo tested positive through required testing and not because they actually felt

sick, he added.

Students at most of Alabama’s public universities participated in GuideSafe, a COVID-19 testing partnership between UAB School of Medicine and the Alabama Department of Public Health funded by the state of Alabama through the CARES Act.

According to GuideSafe spokesperson Ashley Foster, most four-year schools participated in entry

dorm after a positive diagnosis.

Hearing of her plight, BCM students wanted to help her and others know they were loved and prayed for by their peers.

BCM’s prayer and evangelism teams partnered with the university to coordinate efforts, and BCM Journey Groups assembled 240 bags filled with hygiene items, snacks and handwritten cards.

Andrews said the bags were supplied by BCM funds from the Tuscaloosa County Baptist Association. The WMU of Friendship Baptist Church, Reform, in Pickens Baptist Association, also donated money to help purchase prepackaged snacks.

Across the state, universities like UA and Montevallo isolated students in designated dorms and supplied them with meals through the quarantine period.

Support for quarantined students has been high, Andrews said, and not just from BCM members.

“From my perspective, the university has been working diligently to meet needs and make changes when necessary in order to keep campus a healthy and safe place to be this semester,” she said. “And this seems to be coming from all across campus — individuals, offices and organizations, doing what they can to help by going above and beyond. For instance, I had one student tell me his professor offered to drop groceries at his house while he was quarantined.”

More committed

And at Montevallo, Freeman said participants have been more committed during the pandemic because in-person community is much less available.

“Week after week someone says ‘I’m just glad you guys are meeting in person. I’m going insane in my room alone, so this has been really good for me.’ We have 40–50 students involved. For those who are coming, it’s obvious this is a much-needed time of fellowship and community.”



Photo courtesy of Jacob Freeman

The WMU of Liberty Hill Baptist Church, Clanton, contributed to Montevallo BCM care packages. Karla Birdsong (left), BCM ministry assistant, and BCM president Kelli Sellers sort items.

COVID-19 testing at the beginning of the fall semester, testing all students before they arrived on campus. More than 40 schools conduct ongoing random testing of a small student population, regardless of symptoms.

Wanting to help

At the University of Alabama, BCM campus minister Kim Andrews said the idea for care bags for UA students came after one student’s roommate was forced to quarantine in a separate

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Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Strongholds of Truth

Christ, The Living Embodiment of Truth

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

Being imperfect persons living in an imperfect world, we live at risk of having truth elude us or slip through our fingers.

As a safeguard against such a risk, God has given us several strongholds of truth. These serve as guardians of truth. This week, Theology 101 directs our attention to Christ as the living embodiment of truth.

In the prologue to the Gospel of John, we read concerning Christ, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (1:14).

This is followed closely by the declaration, “For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (1:17). Divine grace and divine truth are on permanent display and unwavering preservation in the person of Christ.

Incarnation of truth

Thus, the witness to the good news about Christ is that He came as the incarnation of truth. Later, when responding to a question from Thomas about “the way,” Christ declared Himself to be not only the way but also “the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).

As Christians, we confess that Christ is the only way to God, the accurate truth about God and the authentic life of God. These are absolute and unchangeable confessions. In Christ, truth has no variation or shadow of turning.

Hebrews 13:8 declares, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.”

In his letter to the Ephesians, the Apostle Paul urged his readers not to walk after the manner of unconverted Gentiles, reminding them that they were no longer blind of heart, “If indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus” (4:21).

Teacher of truth

Christ not only embodied the truth as the eternal citadel of truth, He came as the premier teacher of truth to others.

In John 8:31–32, Jesus promised, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.”

Human perceptions of truth may vary from person to person or from generation to generation, but Christ remains the unchanging embodiment of divine truth. His teaching remains the trustworthy vehicle of communicating that truth. In a world of competing truth claims, if we would become doers of truth, we must become obedient and authentic followers of Him who is the Truth. ✝

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.



Stewart keeps serving despite lung transplant, COVID-19

Virginia Stewart received seven calls that a set of new lungs might be hers.

Every time, she grabbed her bag and headed to UAB Hospital from her home in Ashford. Every time, she got all charged up, wondering if this would be the time it would work out.

The first six times, the answer was no.

“Every time they get a set of lungs, they call two people just in case the lungs don’t fit the first person,” Stewart said. “One time I got all the way to University Boulevard, and they called and told us to go back home, that this wasn’t my time.”

But the seventh time, it was.

She got a new set of lungs to replace the pair that had been diagnosed with pulmonary fibrosis 11 years before.

‘My first miracle’

“With pulmonary fibrosis, you usually have a three-to-five-year lifespan,” said Stewart, a member of Bluff Springs Baptist Church, Ashford. “But I lived 11 years. That was my first miracle.”

The second was the transplant six years ago. And the third was when she survived COVID-19 this July.

She was in UAB Hospital for 11 days before they sent her home.

“I’m not as strong as I was — it’ll just take some time,” she said. “My husband and I pray often for strength for the day.”

But her friend Delores Frye said over the years, not much has slowed

Stewart down. She said Stewart has sewn hundreds of dresses for children in Third World countries and blankets for the homeless, all while using an oxygen tank. She helped grow a large sewing ministry at their church too.

Stewart also has traveled to other churches in the area to speak about the sewing project to encourage women there to do the same thing.

“She had the double lung transplant and kept on with her sewing,” Frye said. “She has a phenomenal testimony. She’s overcome so much, and she just keeps going.”

Stewart said she’s only made it through the hard times by holding on to the truth that God is holding her by the hand.

“Holding God’s hand and walking through it, that’s the only way to get through it,” she said. (Grace Thornton)



STEWART

Mount Pleasant holds trunk or treat



Mount Pleasant Baptist Church Facebook photo

Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, Georgiana, was among churches across the state that worked to figure out ways to hold their normal fall outreach activities in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Mount Pleasant’s trunk or treat, held Oct. 31, offered a way for the church to engage with its community.

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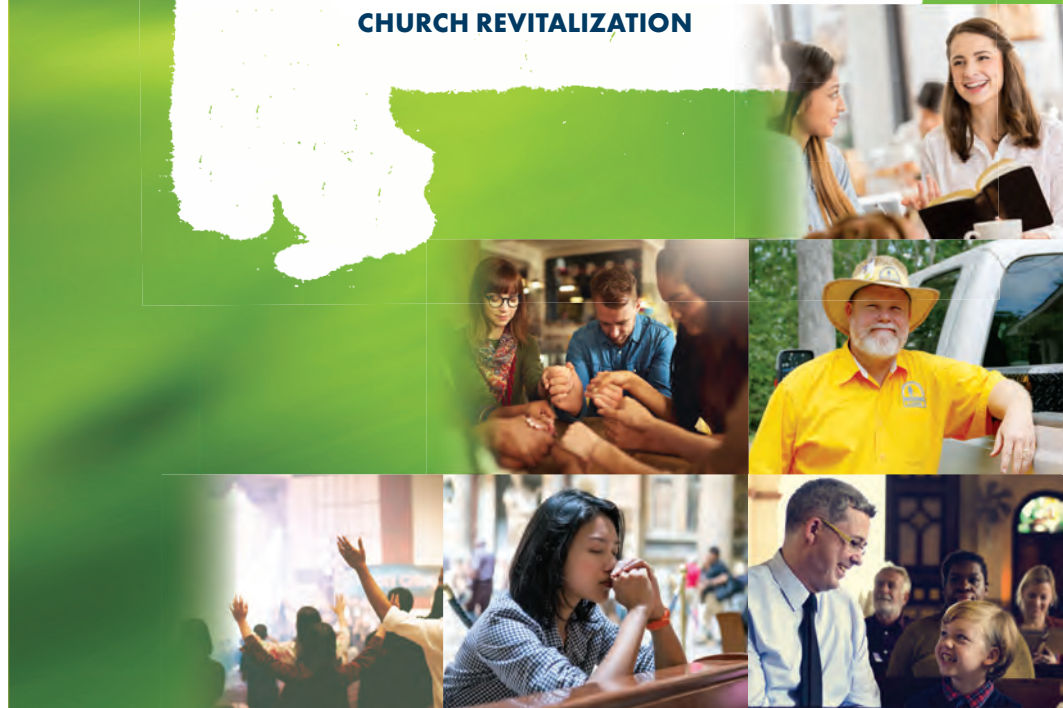
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Myers-Mallory.org



UPCOMING EVENTS

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS AND LOTTIE MOON

CHRISTMAS OFFERING

November 29-December 6

Visit alsbom.org/lottiemoon for more information.



South Asia

IN PERSON: MAKING HIM KNOWN IN SOUTH ASIA

Saturday, December 5, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.,

First Baptist Church
Prattville



Join us for the South Asia Missions Spotlight, where South Asia missionaries will be sharing their stories, their ministry and how Alabama Baptists can be involved. Learn more information and register at alsbom.org/southasia.

ONLINE: CONNECTING WITH THE CORE: DISCIPLE MAKING

Tuesday, December 8, 10-11 a.m.

Join featuring State Missionary Daniel Edmonds, Alabama Baptist pastors Robert Mullins, Andy Frazier and Mark Gainey, and the Office of LeaderCare & Church Health for this session which will engage pastors in moving members to the core of every church: disciples who make disciples that serve the Kingdom and bear fruit that remains. Register at PinnacleAlabama.org under Upcoming Training.



ONLINE: EARLY BIRD TAX CONFERENCE

Thursday, December 10, 10 a.m.-Noon



What tax changes will be taking place in the new year? In this webinar, State Missionary Lee Wright will help answer questions to get you started out right. If you have questions about this webinar, you may contact Lee Wright at lwright@alsbom.org or 334.613.2241. Register at PinnacleAlabama.org under Upcoming Training.

MEETING NEEDS

Bibles, gospel-based literature needed globally; volunteers needed locally

(continued from page 1)
Ministry, which was also sending excess Christian literature to the global missions field.

In 2016, when Hodges was ailing and in his 80s, he asked Love Packages to take

over his operation. Jenkins and his family moved to Decatur, where he manages the new branch.

“We have a large warehouse where we receive all kinds of Christian literature from all over the United

States, including Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, you name it,” Jenkins said. “At any given moment, literature can be coming in on a church van, a tractor-trailer and the postal service.

“We unload those onto a pallet or carts,” he said. “We open and sort through every box we get. This is very important. We want to take out anything bad and make sure we only send materials that are biblically sound overseas.”

“Typically, we receive six to eight tons per week,”

Jenkins said, adding that less has been received during the pandemic. Volunteer help also has dwindled in recent months, and the three-person staff struggles to keep shipments moving.

“We need volunteers des-



Photo courtesy of Love Packages

Love Packages in Decatur processes 6–8 tons of materials weekly. The organization has continued to send shipments during the pandemic.

perately,” Jenkins said, noting local warehouse volunteers

can wear masks and have “plenty of social distancing” while they help sort and repackage incoming materials and repack and load shipping containers.

There are other opportunities to volunteer at the facil-

ity too, doing everything from stuffing envelopes to maintenance, Jenkins added.

Churches are encouraged to take Love Packages on as a missions project, collecting Bibles and other materials to be delivered directly to the warehouse or working through volunteer-run collection points.

Go to lovepackages.org to learn more. 🙏

For more details about how to contribute to Love Packages, organize a church Bible-collection drive or become a volunteer, call 256-355-3004 in Alabama, 217-532-6701 in Illinois or visit lovepackages.org.

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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

CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR

First Baptist Church, Tallassee, is searching for a full-time senior pastor. Those interested should send a resumé to: PSC c/o FBC Tallassee, 1279 Friendship Road, Tallassee, AL 36078 or email to: julie@fbctallassee.com.

ASSOCIATE PASTOR FAMILIES & YOUTH

Linden Baptist Church, Linden, Alabama, is seeking a full-time minister of families and youth. Send resúmes to: admin@lindenbaptist.org or Linden Baptist Church, P.O. Box 480776, Linden, AL 36748.

MINISTER OF YOUTH & EDUCATION

Farley Community Church in Huntsville, Alabama, is currently seeking a full-time minister of youth and education. Please reply to: personnel@farleycc.org.

FULL-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC & WORSHIP LEADER

Southside Baptist Church, Andalusia, Alabama, is seeking an individual to provide worship and music leadership. Send resúmes to: southside@sbcandalusia.com or Southside Baptist Church, 1213 West Bypass, Andalusia, AL 36420.

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What to send/what not to send

Needed materials:

▶ **Bibles** — New or used, any translation, New Testaments or other portions, individual gospel booklets, regardless of being marked up or old

▶ **Reference material** — Secular dictionaries, Bible dictionaries, concordances, commentaries, etc.

▶ **Books** — All Christian books — adult or children, nonfiction

▶ **Magazines and daily devotionals** — Any devotionals or magazines from a Christian publisher, except lifestyle magazines that cover subjects

not relevant to third-world countries (retirement, travel, gardening, senior citizen issues, etc.)

▶ **Sunday School materials** — Adult quarterlies and all teacher manuals in any quantity, from all publishers; children’s quarterlies with teacher guides and student manuals

▶ **CDs, DVDs, BluRay** — Music, movies, teaching from well-known speakers (Billy Graham, Chuck Swindoll, etc.)

▶ **Tracts** — All gospel tracts

▶ **Puppets, nativity sets, etc.** — Bible games, biblical puzzles, anything that helps

teach the gospel, especially to children

Do not send:

▶ Cult material
▶ VHS/tapes/records/8-tracks

▶ Hymn books and sheet music (music generally doesn’t translate to the recipients’ culture)

▶ “Guideposts”
▶ Handiwork or busy papers from Sunday school materials

▶ Secular books other than dictionaries
▶ Secular magazines
▶ Missions magazines (the materials are going into the missions field)

'We're family'

Philadelphia Baptist celebrates God's provisions for church, congregational unity

By Tracy Riggs
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

On a cool, overcast Sunday morning in October, a small congregation in North Alabama met at Dotson Baptist Camp.

With some 55 in attendance, from children to seniors to one “furry baby,” Philadelphia Baptist Church celebrated its 75th anniversary, as well as a note-burning for a much-needed family life center.

Paul Mason, pastor of the Jasper church for the last 12 years, said he is blessed to be part of that history.

When Mason first arrived, Philadelphia Baptist averaged 30–35 each Sunday.

In March, the church was averaging about 125 and has retained those members through the pandemic. It even gained 10 members in recent days.

During the celebration, David Nelson with the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented a plaque to the congregation, along with one from Walker Baptist Association.

The church's actual anniversary was in August and the note was paid off in September, but members decided to wait until October to celebrate.

The church already had a tradition of holding “Worship in the Woods,” an outdoor service, twice a year and decided to combine it with the celebration.

Community ministry

As a congregation that emphasizes loving its community — and needing space to do it — the desire for a family life center was born. One specific event made the need even more apparent.

Each year on the last Saturday in February, the men cook and the women provide

desserts for a community-wide wild game event called the “Beast Feast.”

“The 2012 Beast Feast sent us over the top,” Mason said. “We had a limited amount of space, and we had over 150 show up. It was the impetus for us to decide to [build the new building].”

The family life center is used for everything from birthday parties to weddings to anniversary parties for both church members and the community. An unaffiliated home-school co-op also uses the facility.

“It's been a ministry for our surrounding area,” Mason said.

'God thing'

The church came together and paid off the 10-year note in seven years.

“The only time it became an issue where we didn't pay the [extra] principal payment was the next-to-last payment,” Mason noted. “That

was when we weren't meeting together with COVID and were working out how to get tithes and offerings sent in. We didn't have a financial problem but didn't want to create one either.”

Starting as a “brush arbor,” Philadelphia Baptist has seen a lot through its 75 years of ministry. In 2010, lightning hit and the structure burned down. After the initial shock, church members realized it was a “God thing.”

“About six months prior to that, we had come to the

realization that we needed to remodel our bathroom/foyer area. ... We got some quotes and the best quote we had was about \$8,000. At that

time the church didn't have the kind of money to do that. We began praying. In March of 2010, the Lord provided His way — burning the place down!” Mason said.

The congregation came together during that difficult time.

“When the building burned, ... folks came to the church and gathered around. Robin Roberts, one of our deacons, gathered us up and said, ‘Let's pray.’ So, we prayed

together in a big circle, probably 40–50 people there. We held hands and we prayed about it.”

Tearing up as he talked, Mason said, “These are the most loving people I've ever met in my life.

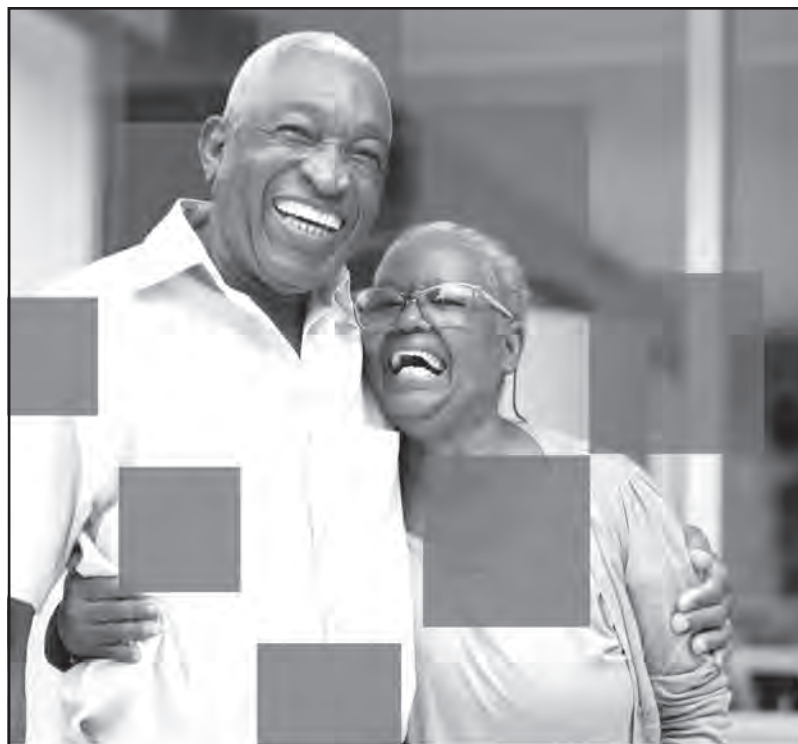
“Splits in Southern Baptist churches [can be] caused by the color of the carpet. ... During the time we were redesigning the new building, we never had one dispute during the redesign and rebuild — not one. No disputes, no anger, no frustration, no heartache, no people getting mad at each other. It was the most amazing work of God I've ever seen.”

'Far-reaching arms'

“That depicts who our folks are. We're family, but we're not just a local community church anymore. We've got folks from almost an hour away. We've got arms that reach out quite far.”✠



Photo by Tracy Riggs
Philadelphia Baptist Church
Pastor Paul Mason prepares
to burn the note for the
church's family life center.



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Ross Bridge Renaissance Resort, 6:00PM
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 30

Tickets must be reserved for this limited capacity event, but are free of charge with a suggested **DONATION OF \$25 PER TICKET**. You can also participate in the auction online.

The health and safety of our guests and our ABCH team is very important to us! As we plan for this year's event, we are working closely with Ross Bridge in taking proactive steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Find more details or contact us at [TREESFORHOPEEVENT.ORG/BIRMINGHAM](https://treesforhopeevent.org/birmingham)

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3 stories you should know



Photo by Tim Richey

Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers deployed once again after Hurricane Zeta ripped through the state Oct. 28–29. The storm brought down trees and knocked out power to more than a half million homes and businesses. Above, volunteers from DeKalb Baptist Association clear a large tree in hard-hit Citronelle on Nov. 2. Many teams were working locally, and some were providing hot meals and shower and laundry services to power crews. (TAB)

Court hears case on agencies' right to refuse same-sex couples

The U.S. Supreme Court on Nov. 4 heard arguments in *Fulton v. Philadelphia*, a case that asks whether foster and adoption agencies that oppose same-sex unions on religious grounds may be exempted from serving such couples.

At issue is Catholic Social Services, which for years has contracted with the city of Philadelphia to help place foster children in suitable homes. However, the Catholic agency doesn't place foster children in homes of same-sex couples since the church opposes same-sex "marriage," and the agency refused to change that policy when the city requested that they do so.

Many legal scholars expect the court, whose nine justices include six Catholics, to rule in such a way that allows Catholic Social Services to continue its work. (RNS)

Judson students head home; will finish fall classes online

Judson College officials made the difficult decision on Nov. 5 to transition students back to online classes and close down the Marion campus for the rest of the fall semester because of citywide water damage caused by Hurricane Zeta.

The City of Marion Water Works issued a boil water notice on Oct. 30 following damage from the Oct. 29 storm that left some in the area without power for a week.

The college's dining service provider, Sage Dining, was able to provide prepackaged options through breakfast on Nov. 6, but the inability to provide meals and clean water forced the decision to close campus beginning Nov. 6 at 3 p.m., Judson officials said. All remaining fall activities are postponed or canceled. Judson's fall semester is scheduled to end Nov. 24. (TAB)

Headline news from around the Southeast

Georgia

When COVID-19 prevented Georgia Baptists' Hispanic church members from in-person visits with their families in Central America, church planter Neftali Coronado, working with two other Georgia Baptist leaders, responded with a solution. Coronado uses popular technological platforms to connect church members with loved ones. Coronado joins in the video calls, praying and presenting the gospel, with many making professions of faith, *The Christian Index* reported.

Florida

What began with four southwest Florida pastors connecting monthly with one another to encourage other local pastors has developed into an official church relations team in the Royal Palm Baptist Association. The focus of the team is to help plant healthy churches and revitalize hurting ones, the *Florida Baptist Witness* reported. Team

member David Gold, pastor of Crossroads Baptist Church, Fort Meyers, said he is looking forward to being "a resource and source of encouragement to local pastors."

Louisiana

Holden Matthews, confessed church arsonist, was sentenced to 25 years in federal prison for destroying three historically black churches in Louisiana in a 10-day arson spree in 2019. The sentence was handed down for three counts of intentional damage to religious property, a hate crime under the 1996 Church Arson Prevention Act, and one count of using fire to commit a felony, the *Baptist Message* reported.

Mississippi

With Hurricane Zeta's landfall along the Louisiana and Mississippi Gulf Coasts on Oct. 28, Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief teams are once

again aiding those affected — this time in their own state. Trained MBDR assessors have begun surveying the area affected by Zeta, and initial mobilizations are providing chainsaw/debris removal and placement of tarps on damaged roofs, *The Baptist Record* reported. An estimated 9,300 homes in Mississippi sustained damage.

Tennessee

After paying off a \$1.5 million construction loan in September, Mount Carmel Baptist Church in Maryville, Tennessee, began giving 10% of undesignated receipts to the Cooperative Program, doubling its longtime annual contribution of 5%, and also increased its annual giving to the Chilhowee Baptist Association from 3% to 5%. Before the church became debt-free, monthly loan payments were \$10,000 for the congregation averaging 200 in pre-pandemic Sunday worship, the *Baptist and Reflector* reported.

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

► **Jack E. Brymer Sr.**, a former managing editor of *The Alabama Baptist*, former editor of the *Florida Baptist Witness* and retired communications specialist for Samford University, died Oct. 28 at the age of 84.

An award-winning Baptist writer, Brymer was active in many organizations, including the Association of State Baptist Papers, where he served two terms as president (1992–93, 1993–94). Brymer retired from Samford in 2003, after serving in a variety of communications roles. The Jack E. Brymer Endowed Journalism Scholarship at Samford is named in his honor.



BRYMER

An ordained minister, he served in various capacities at several local churches and was an active member of Baptist Church of the Covenant in Birmingham.

World missions was close to Brymer's heart.

He is survived by his wife of 64 years, Shirley Jarman; a son, Jack Jr.; two daughters, Vicki and Carissa; eight grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

► **DeWayne Borders**, a longtime bivocational pastor, died Nov. 2. He was 64.

Borders served churches for more than 40 years, most recently at Chosea Springs Baptist Church, Anniston, where he served as pastor until he retired.

He also owned and operated Borders Construction for 42 years and was instrumental in building part of the Calhoun Baptist Association building. He studied at Covington Theological Seminary in Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia.

Borders is survived by his wife of 47 years, Dianne; daughters, Kara and Shelley; and six grandchildren.



BORDERS

CHILTON ASSOCIATION

► **Jeremy Jones** is the new pastor of **Bethsalem Baptist Church, Billingsley**. His first Sunday is Dec. 6. He previously served as associate pastor of families at Crossroads Community Church, Elmore. Jones holds degrees from Troy University and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Crystal, have two children.



JONES

MOBILE ASSOCIATION

► **David Roach** is the new pastor of **Shiloh Baptist Church, Saraland**. He previously served as pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church, Shelbyville, Kentucky, and as a writer for Baptist Press and other publications. Roach holds a bachelor's degree from Vanderbilt University

and a master's and doctorate from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He teaches as an adjunct professor at several colleges and seminaries including New Orleans and Midwestern Baptist theological seminaries. He and his wife, Erin, have three children.



ROACH

MONTGOMERY ASSOCIATION

► **Frank M. Bowling** is the new senior pastor of **Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery**. He will begin his ministry at Eastmont on Dec. 1. Bowling has served as senior pastor of Medina First Baptist Church, Medina, Tennessee, and has more than 20 years total experience in pastoral ministry.

Bowling earned his undergraduate degree from Middle Tennessee State University and has a master of divinity from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He is currently pursuing his doctorate of ministry from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

He and his wife, Gina, have been married for 23 years and have three children — Emma, Eliza and Joseph.



BOWLING

ESCAMBIA ASSOCIATION

► **Larry Patterson** is the new director of

missions for **Escambia Baptist Association**.

He also will continue to serve as interim pastor of London Baptist Church, Castleberry, until Dec. 31.

Patterson previously served as pastor of a number of Baptist churches in the state as well as DOM for Baldwin Association. Since his retirement from full-time ministry in 2017 (pastor of Southside Baptist in Bay Minette at the time), he has continued to serve in interim roles.

He holds a bachelor's degree from Samford University in Birmingham, a master's degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and a doctor of ministry degree from Louisiana Baptist University in Shreveport.

He and his wife, Wanda, have three children, two grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.



PATTERSON

RUSSELL ASSOCIATION

► **Walter Clay Duck Jr.** is the new pastor of **Philadelphia Baptist Church, Smiths Station**. A native of Mississippi, he served over eight years on staff of Poplar Springs Road Baptist Church in Meridian, Mississippi. He earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Southern Mississippi and his master's degree from Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary.

He and his wife, Haley — a native of Russellville — have three sons. (Alabama news items compiled by TAB staff)



DUCK

Persecuted church

Christian Chinese advocate Bob Fu threatened in US for activism

MIDLAND, Texas — Christian Chinese activist Bob Fu and his family are under police protection in the U.S. after death threats were made against him.

Fu and his family have been at a safe house for several weeks because of the threats and daily protests at their home in Midland, Texas.

Midland Mayor Patrick Payton said in early October that the FBI and CIA are involved in the investigation of the death threats.

The protesters may be linked to Chinese billionaire Guo Wengui, who lives in New York

and blogs as "Miles Kwok." Guo instructed his followers to kill Fu, claiming he is a Chinese Communist Party spy.

The Fu family fled to the U.S. from China in 1997. Before leaving China, Fu and wife, Heidi, became Christians and were subsequently imprisoned for their faith. After their release, Heidi became pregnant without the CCP's permission. The couple escaped China to protect their baby from being aborted.

Fu is founder and president of ChinaAid, which promotes religious freedom and human rights in China.

China is No. 23 on Open Doors' 2020 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian. (TAB)



Voice of America photo



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

THREE VIRTUAL EVENTS DESIGNED WITH YOU IN MIND!

Although the Annual Meeting of the State Convention won't be taking place in person this year, three key events have been planned online to keep us connected as Alabama Baptists. Here are the details!

Online State Missions Celebration

Tuesday, November 17, 2-3 p.m.

Please join us for this hour of inspiration and information as we celebrate how God has been at work among Alabama Baptists, even during the global pandemic.

You can participate in the celebration by visiting live.alsbom.org or the **SBOM Facebook** page.



imb | SENDING | CELEBRATION

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 6:30 P.M.

International Mission Board trustees recently approved the appointment of 80 full-time, fully funded personnel who will be sent to eight of IMB's nine global affinities. The group includes some Alabama Baptists. View the livestream of the celebration at LIVE.ALSBOM.ORG and on the IMB Facebook Page.



photos / imb



ONE another

Join us online at albaptistpc.com
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16

Forward by faith

Floyd offers comfort, encouragement to ministers during BMBA virtual meeting

By Martha Simmons
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

On arguably the most stressful day in an already stressful year, ministers in the Birmingham Metro area took comfort in remarks made by Ronnie Floyd, president and CEO of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee.

In an election-day Zoom meeting on Nov. 3, Floyd sought to encourage pastors dealing with upheaval on multiple fronts.

“You’ve done so much in one of the most extraordinarily unprecedented moments any of us have ever lived,” Floyd said. “Meeting on this very unique day in American life is just beyond our imagination, what we’re seeing and living in the last several months.

“I’m reminded in all this that the greatest need is we’ve got to find a way to come together in every way to move forward, to take the gospel of Christ to every person in the world,” he said. “And that’s really why I’m here, to try my best, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, to help us in that.”

Ministers of churches in the Birmingham Metro Baptist Association, which now includes Bessemer-area churches, invited Floyd to speak to participants during

a Virtual Ministers Conference. Local pastors, Floyd said, are essential to keeping churches on course in the face of the ongoing pandemic, social and racial unrest, and political polarization that has shaken the country.

Read more about the meeting at tabonline.org/Floyd-bmba.



Screenshot courtesy of BMBA
Ronnie Floyd (third row, second from left), president and CEO of the SBC Executive Committee, joins Birmingham Metro Baptist Association ministers in a virtual conference held Nov. 3.

“Y’all are the ones making it happen,” Floyd said. “We all know that it really comes back to the heart of every one of our churches. There’s nothing greater than being a pastor of a local church.”

Despite difficulties imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Floyd said, Baptist churches aren’t suffering

too many membership or financial losses.

Great activity

“The great news is that churches are coming back. We’re seeing great activity. It’s all very, very positive in the first month of this new fiscal year for the Southern Baptist Convention. I’m very, very encouraged

by that and so thankful to God,” he said.

Floyd previewed the 2021 SBC annual meeting in Nashville, which he said will feature a four-year plan for Southern Baptist churches.

“We’re going to bring forth a vision that we believe God has given us to try to bring together a lot of different streams of Baptist life and leaders of Baptist life at every level to try to move us forward, to really place a deep, deep focus toward sending missionaries and doing everything we can to re-energize evangelism of this denomination through our churches and through all that we do together,” he said.

“That will be a four-year vision that will move us forward in great ways,” Floyd said.

Read more about the Nov. 3 meeting at tabonline.org/Floyd-bmba.

Christian Crossword

By Lee Esch Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

1. Silas' cellmate. (Acts 16:25)
5. ___ aloud, spare not. (Isa. 58:1)
8. From whence come ___ and fightings among you? (James 4:1)
12. Straight mark.
13. Grassy meadow.
14. Against. (prefix)
15. Mine entrance.
16. Each. (abbr.)
17. Fork prongs.
18. Longing.
19. Documents.
20. There is a ___ for the silver. (Job 28:1)
22. Musical exercise.
26. All ___ of God. (2 Cor. 5:18)
30. Nothing.
31. Ritual.
32. Environmental watchdog. (abbr.)
33. Buddies.
34. Before. (poetic)
35. Acceptable.

Down

1. Can ___ well on an instrument.
37. Grassy plant.
39. Carbonated beverage.
40. Renew ___ spirit within me. (Ps. 51:10)
43. Depot. (abbr.)
46. The Spirit of the Lord God ___ . (Isa. 61:1)
49. A Great Lakes state.
50. Thy ___ is like a tower of Lebanon. (Song of Sol. 7:4)
51. Golfer's requirement.
52. Display model. (abbr.)
53. Raced.
54. A Great Lakes province. (abbr.)
55. Biblical garden. (Gen. 2:8)
- (Ezek. 33:32)
27. The laborer is worthy of his ___. (Luke 10:7)
28. Military address. (abbr.)
29. A police arrest record.
33. Cushion.
35. Air. (prefix)
36. Child.
38. They ___ upon me with their mouths. (Ps. 22:13)
41. Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it ___ my side. (John 20:27)
42. Federal agents. (for short)
44. Brethren, the ___ is short. (1 Cor. 7:29)
45. Twelve o'clock.
46. ___ and outs.
47. He it is to whom I shall give a ___. (John 13:26)
48. ___ hospitality one to another. (1 Pet. 4:9)
49. Poem.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For November 15

Explore the Bible

By Robert L. Olsen, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



GOD JUSTIFIES Isaiah 53:1–12

Despised (1–3)

Isaiah 53 is one of the most visual foreshadowings of the crucifixion and the implications thereof in the Old Testament. It is referenced in some capacity over 10 times in the New Testament and is a prominent part of Handel's Messiah.

This first section establishes the Suffering Servant's origins, having nothing special about His appearance to attract men to Him. The servant was lowly and despised by men, a point clearly seen throughout the Gospels.

Jesus was continually harassed and insulted by the Pharisees. At His crucifixion, people mocked Him openly.

Substitute (4–6)

These verses are some of the clearest references to the crucifixion in the Old Testament. Jesus took up our infirmities which refers both to our sins and physical sicknesses, which He healed on a regular basis. Jesus was then "pierced because of our rebellion, crushed because of our iniquities."

Isaiah is prophesying the crucifixion and its importance for us. Jesus' death on the cross was a payment for our sins. This is seen clearly in 2 Corinthians 5:21 where "God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in Him we may become the righteousness of God."

Jesus' death was for us — our sin separates us from God, and we need a Savior to make things right between God and us. Jesus is the One who by being fully God is able to make the payment for our sins by living a perfect life but by being fully human is the One who deserves to make the payment.

Mankind is guilty and must be punished. Therefore, Jesus must be human in order to make the payment. But only God can make the payment, since it requires a perfect sacrifice. So Jesus, by being both human and God, can fulfill God's requirement of a perfect sacrifice.

Just as the Old Testament sacrificial system was meant to be a

payment of our sins, Christ is the final sacrifice.

The sacrificial system pointed to Christ as the ultimate sacrifice, and now no more sacrifices need to be done (1 Pet. 3:18).

Willing (7–9)

Again, following the account of Jesus' trial and crucifixion, it is easy to see the references here in Isaiah 53. Jesus did not open His mouth to defend Himself at the trial, and He was ultimately "struck down" because of the sin of His people. The reference to the servant as a lamb is a perfect allusion to Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

It is crucial for Christians to acknowledge the sinfulness of all of humanity. The Bible is clear that no one is good, and all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23).

This flies in the face of many modern views of humanity. Many people today, including some Christians, believe people are innately good and only the worst of humanity — the Hitlers, Maos and Stalins — deserve eternal punishment. Many of us have friends who are not Christians but who are genuinely good people, good in the sense they don't run around creating havoc and such.

However, no matter how "good" a person appears, we know from Scripture, which is our foundation, that everyone is sinful and deserves eternal punishment.

Sacrificed (10–12)

Continuing in the same vein, these verses affirm that the servant's death acts as a guilt offering. This death provides atonement for all those who become children of God through their belief in Him.

It is only through Christ that people can be saved. Therefore, as Christians we need to share the gospel because the sin of each person separates him or her from God.

If we don't take this seriously, it makes a mockery of Jesus' crucifixion.✠

Bible Studies for Life

By Jeffery M. Leonard, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Biblical Studies, Samford University



COMMITTED TO PRAY Colossians 1:3–12

Some of the most natural of human actions seem entirely unnatural in our first attempts at them.

What could be more natural than walking? And yet, to watch a toddler progress from crawling to taking that first independent step is to witness a seemingly endless procession of nearly-theres, almosts, and you-can-do-its.

It is fortunate that we start off life so short; any higher off the ground, and we'd never survive the tumble and bumble of finally learning to put one foot in front of another.

Of course, walking isn't the only thing that falls into this category. Babies are born ready to nurse, and yet those first attempts at feeding are often filled with frustration.

God has gifted us with the ability to speak, and yet it takes months to progress from plaintive cries even to the jabbering that precedes real words. Our hands may one day move on to sculpt a Pieta or paint the Mona Lisa, but most of us start off hardly able to keep our crayons inside the lines (and let us not even speak of the infamous "finger painting" stage!).

Because God has made us as spiritual and not just physical beings, some spiritual disciplines also come quite naturally to us.

Nothing is more natural than for a person to cry out to God in prayer in a moment of distress. But if prayer comes to us "naturally," that doesn't mean our first attempts at it will not be met with slips and stumbles like those we faced when we took our first steps.

Ancient Israel's psalms were composed not just to be sung but to teach the people how to pray. Even after a lifetime spent reciting these kinds of prayers, the men Jesus chose to be His disciples still turned to Him and asked, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). We all know how to pray, and yet we all still need to learn how to pray.

Pray with thanksgiving for other believers. (3–6a)

The Apostle Paul's opening

address to the church at Colossae offers a tremendous guide for us as we seek

to pray better and especially as we seek to pray better for other people.

Paul's first instinct is to thank God for the Colossian Christians and more so because he has seen the way these believers have grown in their faith in Christ Jesus and in their love for all God's people.

Pray for those who minister and spread the gospel. (6b–8)

Paul next lifts his eyes to the horizon, to look beyond Colossae itself and to give thanks for the way the same gospel that impacted the Colossians is impacting the rest of the world.

Along the way, Paul is careful to give thanks for Epaphras, a fellow servant and minister of Christ. Epaphras is the one who shared with Paul the great strides the Colossians were making in their own faith.

Pray for the spiritual growth of believers. (9–12)

Paul's prayers for the Colossians begin with thanks to God for their progress in the faith, but they don't end there. The Apostle is eager to see these believers continue in their growth and maturity.

Paul tells the Colossians that he never fails to ask God to fill them with the knowledge of His will, to fill them with the wisdom that the Holy Spirit gives and to give them the ability to lead lives that will be worthy of God and pleasing to Him.

Paul's prayer is that this group of believers will bear fruit in good works, that they will grow in the knowledge of God and that they will find the strength of God, which will give them endurance and patience for difficult times ahead.

In the end, Paul's prayers offer a model for our own: thanks to God for what He has already accomplished in the lives of those around us and earnest cries to God for completion of the good work He has already begun.✠



Media reviews

MOVIE

Disney's inspiring film 'Clouds' teaches us how to live ... and die

By **Michael Foust**
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

One of the best movies this year may be a new Disney film that never landed in theaters.

"Clouds" (PG-13), now on Disney Plus, follows the inspirational story of Zach Sobiech, a joy-filled high schooler who is diagnosed with bone cancer and told by his doctor he likely has only a few months to live.

Talent from God

But instead of wasting his final days, Sobiech chooses to separate the important stuff from the trivial.

Realizing he has a talent from God, he begins writing music about his situation, about his joy in life, about hope and optimism. Eventually one of the songs (also called "Clouds") becomes a hit.

"I hope my story helps everyone to realize that you don't have to find out you're dying to start living," he says.

The movie is based on a true story about the real Zach Sobiech, a Minnesota teenager who died in 2013 but who wrote music in his final months. His best-known song ("Clouds") has been streamed or downloaded 200 million times.

In the film, his mother tells him,

EDITOR'S NOTE

Reviews of films, books, music or other media that appear in TAB are intended to help readers evaluate current media for themselves, their children and grandchildren in order to decide whether to watch, read or listen. Reviews are not an endorsement by the writer or TAB Media.



'Clouds'

Photo courtesy of Disney

"Maybe this is some kind of weird chance for you to forget about all the superficial stuff that people waste their time on."



Sobiech is faced with multiple gut-wrenching questions, knowing death is just around the corner: Does he pursue a romance with his girlfriend? Does he write a college essay, as all his classmates are doing? Does he go to his own graduation party if he's too weak?

"Clouds" has faith elements, though it's not a traditional faith-based film. Asked what he wants to be read at his funeral, Sobiech answers: the Parable of the Talents.

"That one makes sense to me," he says.

(In real life, Sobiech's mother said she prayed, "Okay, Lord, you can have him. But if he must die, I want it to be for something big. I want someone's life to be changed forever.")

Inspiring film

"Clouds" is an entertaining film that's filled with uplifting music, a gripping storyline and a sweet

romance. Mostly though, it's inspiring. It encourages us to contemplate eternity and to concentrate on what truly matters. It urges us to live life with joy and to cast aside worthless distractions. It tells us to live each day as if it might be our last.

Parental guidance

The film is rated PG-13 for "brief strong language," yet I didn't catch anything. (I spoke with three friends who watched it and also

Meet the reviewer

Michael Foust covers the intersection of faith and entertainment as a media reviewer for The Alabama Baptist. He also is the husband of an amazing wife and the father of four young children.

didn't hear any strong language.) At most, it has a couple of OMGs (which sound a lot like "gosh").

Additionally, there are at least two scenes parents may want to skip: at the beginning where Zach sings a made-up song about his body (his mom hates the tune) and a scene where he and his girlfriend kiss at her house (Zach runs out before it goes too far). It should have been rated PG. For those who want it, ClearPlay offers a filter.

"Clouds" stars Fin Argus as Sobiech; Sabrina Carpenter as his best friend, Sammy; and Madison Iseman as his girlfriend, Amy.

It may be the best film of the year. 🌈



'Clouds'

Photo courtesy of Disney

Spreading the gospel

Foundations of Faith chaplaincy ministry takes gospel to dairy workers

By **Trennis Henderson**
WMU National Correspondent

Dozens of dairies with hundreds of workers and thousands of dairy cows surround Portales, New Mexico. While the milk barns scattered across Eastern New Mexico and West Texas represent huge business ventures, Foundations of Faith (Fundamentos de Fe) dairy ministry views the dairy farms as a fertile missions field.

Melissa Lamb, president of New Mexico Woman's Missionary Union, and her husband, Beau, a New Mexico pastor, are among volunteers who help Foundations of Faith minister to primarily Spanish-speaking workers at the dairies.

They serve alongside longtime dairy owners Stanley and Valerie Jones who founded and lead Foundations of Faith and chaplains A.B. Najera and Arturo Villa who regularly visit workers at dairies throughout the region.

Foundations of Faith's primary goal is to help dairy workers and their families "build strong lives on the foundation of faith in Jesus Christ," according to the ministry's website: ffaith.net.

Foundations also sponsors English as a Second Language classes to help workers gain or increase fluency in English.

As she blends her missions involvement in WMU and Foundations of Faith, Melissa Lamb said, "WMU's passion and desire to do missions first to spread the gospel just goes so well with what Foundations of Faith does."

With the Lambs both growing up in New Mexico, she added, "We were excited to come alongside the

ministry just because missions is our heart, and rural agriculture ministry has always been a big thing for us."

'Hungry for the Word'

In addition to holding regular Bible studies at several dairies such as W Diamond and Grande Vida, Foundations of Faith hosts worker appreciation events every few weeks during the workers' shift changes.

The rallies, complete with lunches ranging from cookouts to pizza, typically attract larger crowds to hear the chaplains' gospel messages.

The results? Since being launched in 2015, Foundations of Faith has recorded more than 500 professions of faith in Christ, including 124 last year and more than 170 so far this year even amid the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many of the dairy workers "are real hungry for the Word," Stanley Jones explained. Affirming that

the chaplains' commitment to building personal relationships with the workers "is really making a huge difference," he said the spiritual response is "amazing."

According to Villa, a large percentage of the workers "don't have time to go to church be-

cause they work 12 hours, and they go home and eat dinner and go to sleep, and the next day they do the same thing." He said that is a primary motivation for leading Bible studies on-site at the dairies.

Among the workers involved in the weekly Bible studies, those sessions "are what they call church," Jones agreed. "We're just taking church to them."

With many of the dairy workers originally from Mexico,



WMU photo by Trennis Henderson

Stanley Jones, the founder of Foundations of Faith, talks with dairy workers as part of a worker appreciation event held at one of several dairy farms in the region. Foundations' primary ministry goal is to help dairy workers and their families 'build strong lives on the foundation of faith in Jesus Christ.'



WMU photo by Trennis Henderson

Melissa and Beau Lamb visit a dairy where Foundations of Faith provides on-site chaplaincy ministry and Bible studies to dairy workers.

Guatemala, Honduras and other Central American countries, Lamb said, "It's amazing to see them travel thousands of miles to come up to hear the good news, quite possibly for the first time in their lives. It's so overwhelming at times just to see how gracious God is to give us this opportunity to share the love of Christ with them."

As workers pray to receive Christ as their Savior, Foundations of Faith provides each of them a Bible in Spanish, English or even Kiche, the heart language of many of the Guatemalan workers.

The chaplains also give them a small packet of information that includes a "first steps" discipleship booklet, a list of nearby Spanish-language churches and the chaplains' contact information.

Along with its dairy ministry focus, Foundations of Faith has

expanded to provide Bible studies wherever needs and opportunities arise, including a peanut mill and a nursing home.

Multiplying ministries

Jones said he is hopeful that Foundation's ministry strategy can be duplicated to reach workers in food processing plants, factories and warehouses across the nation.

"I think there could be a lot of good come out of this if we can just get it out there as a model of showing what we're doing," he said. "You don't just have to take it to dairy farms. It can go to all

different places."

Reflecting her missions heart for unreached language groups all across the U.S., Lamb concluded, "God has brought them to America. We can share the gospel with them." ✝

To learn more about ministry opportunities through Foundations of Faith, visit ffaith.net. To support the ministry of WMU, give to the Vision Fund at wmufoundation.com/vision.



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