



The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

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Above: Dan Fastuca (left) and volunteers load chicken to go to an area food ministry. **Right:** After Dan Fastuca moved to Alabama to give Vatani the lion a good life, he gained access to large amounts of meat products, which led to him supplying food ministries all over the state.



Photos courtesy of Dan Fastuca

SAVING LIVES

Rescued lion opens doors for unlikely Alabama hunger ministry

By Grace Thornton
TAB Media

At 6-foot-5 with tattoos and a mohawk, Dan Fastuca looks like a tough guy. But he — and everyone who knows him — will tell you

quickly that he's not.

"He's my favorite kind of person," said Mike Dowling, pastor of Leeds Community Church. "He not only helps people — he's a mediator to get people help. The ministry he has is hard to even put into words."

And that ministry all started with a lion.

Several years ago, Fastuca was living in California building his brand, Jet Black Racing — a brand affiliated with auto racing, animal rescue,

stunts for the film industry and music. Then he found out about Vatani, a lion cub in need of rescue from a desperate situation.

Rural land

As Fastuca saw it, he didn't have an option. He had to save Vatani.

And as the lion grew, Fastuca knew he was going to need space — and lots of it. But it's almost impossible to get that in California.

So he and his wife moved

to Alabama, a state with lots of rural land, a place where Vatani could have a good life.

"It would've been selfish of me to continue my life without saving his," Fastuca said.

Freshly settled as a transplant in the Gadsden area, he dedicated his life to making Vatani's life comfortable and happy. He built a 40-acre USDA-accredited compound with a 5-acre enclosure where Vatani can roam free. He cares for the lion meticulously and, (See 'Meeting,' page 8)



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The crossword puzzle can be found on page 17.

'Tons' of thanks to Alabama Baptists for donations

After a call to action in the Nov. 12, 2020, issue of The Alabama Baptist, approximately 2 tons — 4,000 pounds — of Bibles, Christian books, Bible studies

and other materials were delivered to Love Packages in Decatur.

Visit tabonline.org/love-packages to view a video feature about the day. (TAB)



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

Five carloads of donated materials dropped off at TAB Media by Alabama Baptists were delivered to Love Packages in Decatur on Feb. 2.



Photo by Jessica Ingram

After arriving at Love Packages, each SUV was unloaded and carried into the sorting area.



Photo by Jessica Ingram

A pinned map displays all of the countries where materials have been delivered. Across the hall is a map of all the places in the U.S. that have brought or sent donations.



Photo by Jessica Ingram

Jason Jenkins is one of two full-time employees responsible for sorting and packing materials each week.



Photo by Jessica Ingram

The Love Packages warehouse includes a Bible repair station so no donated Bibles have to be discarded.



Photo by Jessica Ingram

Love Packages sorts and collects Sunday School material so they can send complete class sets of the curriculum.

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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RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

By Jennifer Davis Rash

President and Editor-in-Chief



jrash@thealabamabaptist.org
@RashionalThts

Thank you for being ‘you have lettuce is in your teeth’ kind of friends

Concerned about my hair and making sure my necklace fell properly, I forgot to check for lipstick on my teeth.

And wouldn't you know it, my plum lip shimmer shimmered itself right across the front of my pearly whites perfectly in time for the photo.

Granted a little lipstick out of place on occasion isn't unusual, but what confused me was the fact that at least five people had been chatting with me prior to my turn to pose and smile.

I'm guessing the photographer focused on overall composition and lighting and overlooked a few tiny details.

I know to always double check in a mirror prior to an official photo shoot. Why I didn't this time, I'm not sure.

But still it was my friends who let me smile all big and bright without even the slightest indication something was amiss.

They most likely never thought about it again and maybe, just maybe, they didn't actually notice the lipstick. It's possible they are innocent bystanders. At least I can hope.

When the photo popped in my email inbox complete with the plum-colored smudge across

my smile, I chuckled at the image and realized how a simple goofy-looking photo represented what can happen when no one is around to assess the situation and tell you the truth.

And, of course, you know I couldn't let the experience go to waste, especially as it happened so close to when I wanted to introduce you to your advocates on the TAB Media team.

While all of us on staff consider you a friend and are here for you, we wanted to be more intentional about ensuring all of you partnering with us has an advocate representing you.

Some of you may fall into several categories, and that works great. Either way, know you are important to us and we want you to reach out any time.

▶ For individual and group subscribers, as well as local edition clients, **Haley Piersol**, client coordinator, is your contact. Haley's email is hpiersol@thealabamabaptist.org and her number is 205-777-6318.

We appreciate your patience as USPS works out its issues

We know you are well aware of the internal chaos happening with the United States Postal Service and how it has trickled over into all of our mailboxes.

Our team has been working since

▶ For clients using our digital services resources (help with websites and/or social media), **Sarah Gill**, digital services associate, is your contact. Sarah's email is sgill@thealabamabaptist.org and her number is 205-777-6313.

▶ For directors of missions and associational missions staff members, **Debbie Campbell**, director of communications, is your contact. Debbie's email is dcampbell@thealabamabaptist.org and her number is 205-777-6306.

▶ For church leaders and donors, your contact is **Cynthia Watts**, executive assistant to the president. Her email is cwatts@thealabamabaptist.org and her number is 205-777-6303.

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mid-2020 attempting to find solutions. I even offered to volunteer at one of the major hubs.

The postal representative appreciated my offer but reminded me I did not have proper clearance.

▶ For guests visiting the TAB offices or callers needing assistance, your contact is guest services coordinator **Annette Brown** at abrown@thealabamabaptist.org or 205-777-6300.

▶ For ministry partners and those participating in various events sponsored by TAB, events coordinator **Jessica Ingram** is your contact. Jessica's email is jingram@thealabamabaptist.org and her number is 205-777-6322.

▶ If none of these categories describe you, then contact **Maggie Evans**, special assistant to the editor, at mevans@thealabamabaptist.org or 205-777-6301 and she'll help you find your group and corresponding advocate.

We will work hard to take care of any concerns you have related to your experience with TAB Media — and we promise to let you know when you have lipstick on (or lettuce in) your teeth. Thank you for being a close friend to us as well.✝

We are continuing to monitor the situation but have discovered the issue will have to be solved by the USPS. Still, we are encouraged by the signs of improvement we are seeing. —Jennifer Davis Rash

Your Voice



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

Jesus loves you, Tom Brady: Athletes, adulation and admonition

By Jared C. Wilson

General editor, For the Church

The Christian's adulation of public greatness is always complicated — or should be.

Like the rest of the world, with hope and aspiration we appraise the work of politicians and pop stars, country singers and quarterbacks, and we celebrate success. And there's a touch of worship in it. Sometimes more than a touch.

Nowhere is this more evident perhaps than in our reverence for athletes. Evangelicals in particular

are not as taken with movie stars or politicians (as a class) to the extent that their neighbors are, but we do love our athletes.

The most notable example of this is of course Tim Tebow, who turned a stellar college football career into a disappointing NFL career without losing the favor of American evangelicals because of his faith and family values. But we do it with unbelieving athletes as well.

We wear clothing with their names on it. We sing their praises on social media. We buy their products.

If they so much as mention anything positive about God, we invite them to speak at the men's retreat and hire a ghostwriter for their Christian book deal.

Admiring 'strongmen'

God's people have always had an inordinate bent toward strongmen, and athletes are the strongmen who have emerged from among us.

My favorite athlete of all time is quarterback Tom Brady, who is basking in the satisfaction of cementing his GOAT status with a decisive Super Bowl win over the favored Kansas City Chiefs.

I love Tom Brady. But my love for him is complicated. He is not a believer in Christ. He is undoubtedly an idolater of his sport. And as with all idolatry, the gods will let you down in the end.

A few years ago, when Brady only had three Super Bowl rings, he was on "60 Minutes," and he said this: "Why do I still think there's something greater out there for me? I mean, maybe a lot of people would say, 'Hey man, this is what it is.' I reached my goal, my dream, my life. Me, I think, 'God, it's got to be more than this.' I mean this isn't, this can't be what it's all cracked up to be."

Interviewer Steven Kroft asked him, "What's the answer?" Brady responded, "I wish I knew. I wish I knew."

Brady has seven championship rings now. None of them was the answer. You and I know that. I hope that reality is dawning on my favorite athlete. Because bodies wither and rings fade, but there is a Word that stands forever.

Do we love these heroes? Or just

what they do for us? Is it possible we care about the stats, the talent, the influence, the success, even the legacy, but not their souls?

As my generation gets older, our heroes will continue to fall (in more ways than one). Michael Jordan is going to die. LeBron James is going to die. Patrick Mahomes is going to die. Tom Brady is going to die. And what will it all be worth if we only cheered for their trophies on a shelf?

"What does it profit a man," Jesus asked, "to gain the world but lose his soul?" I fear this weightier business does not inform much of our adulation of athletes.

All are image-bearers

Let's keep cheering. Sports are fun and a common grace. Let's keep rooting for our teams and for our favorite players. Competition can be sharpening and athletic greatness is a testimony to the Creator's design and artistry. But let's remember all people are image-bearers — when they fail and when they succeed, when they're in their prime and when their time is up.

Will Christians only contribute to that which for the sports star will only dry up? Or can we carry them further? Athletes are more than the avatars of our tribal loyalties. They are men and women who need prayer far more than praise.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Jared C. Wilson is assistant professor of pastoral ministry at Spurgeon College, author in residence at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and author of several books. This article originally appeared at ftc.co and is reprinted from Baptist Press.

Letters to the Editor

Now that I am retired from the International Mission Board (1958–1994) and all other activity, I have had lots of time to spend on memory lane and prayer.

My trip down memory lane has taken me back to all the church families and communities that Maxine and I served before the Lord called us to Thailand. (She's gone to paradise now, since Nov. 24, 2017, but I know that she would agree with my sentiments.)

I have thought about all our church members, and in my mind, I've walked around each community, visited each family and prayed for each church.

Since I am almost 93 years old now, I don't know how many of you are still here with me, but I trust that you have younger loved ones still living in these church fields: Rose Hill (Jefferson

County); New Prospect (Clarke County); Oak Grove (Clarke County); Friendship, Awin, Furman and McWilliams (all in Wilcox County); New Bethel (Lowndes County); Carlowville (Dallas County); and Eulaton First (Calhoun County).

I wish I could visit all of you and tell you in person how much I love you and appreciate you for your loving kindness and support to our young family.

Since I am now confined to my bed, lift chair and walker, I wanted to use this letter to let you know that you are very special to our family and that I am keeping you in my prayers. Please continue to be as supportive to your current pastors' families as you were to us back in the 40s and 50s.

Robert R. (Bob) Stewart
Anniston, Alabama

“The perfect love within the Trinity is beyond our comprehension. And yet, in Christ, it is offered to us.”

WILL KYNES

Associate professor of biblical studies, Samford University

The Christian life is an ongoing process of uniting our life with the life of God and the members of His body on earth — the Church.

Morris Murray Jr.
Jasper, Ala.

The reason I think that the church in the West is so anemic is we create a culture that is attractive to spiritual consumers. And then we are surprised when those spiritual consumers realize we have to die to self to serve one another and they leave the moment you have to die to self. But here's the reality: On the other side of that death to self is where real

church starts. That's where it actually begins to happen in our lives.

Pastor Matt Mason
The Church at Brook Hills
Birmingham, Ala.

What if we invested in things that have value? Like our relationship with God or people. What if instead of worrying, we trusted, prayed and gave God our burdens? Instead of investing time, treasure and energy into things that have no eternal value, we made decisions to prioritize actions that echo in eternity. What if ... we committed to improving our spiritual and physical health instead

of feeling unfulfilled, sick and tired all the time? This is the day you can make these choices. Instead of some day doing this, you can start today.

Tim Tebow
via Instagram

Prayers for Unity: Lord, I ask that You help all who are called by Your name to live without divisions among us. Help us to be rooted in Your word and Your truth. Let falsehood and lies be obvious to all. Give us discernment to know Your truth. In Christ's name I pray this.

Pastor Tony Evans
via Instagram

From the *Twitterverse*

@JL_Wood

You will never be the crowd's favorite when you're more committed to pleasing the Master than you are the masses. Serve On... Great is your reward.

@lukestamps

The aim of Scripture is Christian virtue: to help you believe in Jesus, love as He loved, and hope for His return.

@LigonDuncan

“To be right with God the judge is a great thing, but to be loved and cared for by God the father is a greater.” — J.I. Packer, “Knowing God”

@jasonkeithallen

“The perfect church service would be one we were almost unaware of; our attention would have been on God. But every novelty

prevents this. It fixes our attention on the service itself; and thinking about worship is a different thing from worshipping.” — C.S. Lewis

@jjdison

Our disobedience will not impact God's sovereign will or plan. His will and His plan will be accomplished. The only question is whether or not you will allow Him to bless you by using you to accomplish that plan.

@JackieHillPerry

The promise of His presence, that God is with us, means that in all of your doing, you are never alone. With all that you do, you don't have to be afraid.

@bigvox

Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as dust on the scales. ... All the nations are as nothing

before Him, they are accounted by Him as less than nothing and emptiness. ... (Isaiah 40:15a, 17) Drop the drama. Remember who we serve.

@gavinortlund

If God can bring resurrection out of Jesus' death, then surely He can redeem the worst pain and anguish in our lives.

@esaumccauley

The cross is an inexhaustible resource.

@revandyfrazier

Formula for becoming great in the eyes of the world: make everything about achieving my goals, meeting my desires and accomplishing my plans, while getting all of the credit and none of the blame. The strategy for being great in Christ's Kingdom: become a humbled servant.

Is it surprising that we find hypocrisy within our capitol when our country is rampant with it everywhere else? This isn't a partisan issue. It's a gospel issue. And neither of the main parties in the American government is a gospel party.

These events should give us a sense of urgency in sharing the gospel and a call to holiness and repentance both for ourselves and for the world around us.

Don't dismay and stop pointing fingers. Filter your words carefully through this: “Is my attitude and word choice leading others to the throne of Jesus? Am I valuing my desire for rightness over and against their soul and eternity?”

We need to be slow to speak, quick to think through a Jesus-centered response, and then speak gently with Spirit-empowered focus and words.

James Hammack
theropetab.com

“The Lord arises to contend, and stands to judge the people” (Isa. 3:13).

“I'm in your corner.” “I've got your back.” These phrases let us know someone will come to our defense and will protect us. With such a loyal friend at our side, we feel safe and can rest and work with greater peace.

During the prophet Isaiah's time, poor people felt helpless before the abuses of the rich and powerful. God sent this message to those suffering in such a way, “I'm in your corner!” “I've got your back!”

Centuries later, the Spirit moved the Apostle John to speak the same truth. He wrote, “We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous” (1 John 2:1). John did not mean an advocate against the Father but along with the Father. God the Father and God the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit are “in our corner” — “they have our backs.” With such a holy, triune Friend we are eternally safe! Let us live and work without fear.

Bob Adams
Retired pastor

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

Serving bivocationally

FOURTH IN A SERIES — TREI KING, PASTOR OF PINE FOREST BAPTIST CHURCH, ASHVILLE, SINCE 2015

Hunger for God's word, vigorous biblical study important for ministry leaders

EDITOR'S NOTE — An estimated 55% of Alabama Baptist pastors serve bivocationally or covocationally. Many more serve as bivocational ministers in other church roles. In this series, TAB shares some of their stories, adapted from information provided by the Alabama Baptist Fellowship of Bivocational Ministers.



KING

Q: How long have you been bivocational?

A: I have served 6 years at Pine Forest and served 3 years at my previous church, Prescott Baptist Church, Pell City.

Q: What type of work do you do?

A: I am director of neurophysiology at Children's (Hospital) of Alabama. We perform physiological/functional testing of the nervous system.

Q: How many people did you have to start your ministry?

A: We began with 20 people.

Q: What type of facilities did you have for gathering as a church?

A: Our campus includes the sanctuary, fellowship hall, Sunday School rooms and home.

Q: How long did it take before you started seeing growth?

A: It took about a year before I began to notice spiritual growth. This has increased over the years.

Q: What percentage would you estimate is transfer growth and evangelistic growth?

A: Transfer growth: 50%; Evangelistic growth: 50%.

Q: What type of outreach has been the most effective for your ministry?

A: Our work with the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries.

Q: What has been your greatest discouragement?

A: Seeing people fall away from the Lord into unbelief. This has been one of the most heartbreaking things to endure. It hurts deeply.

Q: What has been your greatest encouragement?

A: Seeing God grow our people in the knowledge of Him and seeing them repent and turn from sin.

Q: What are the most important lessons or suggestions you would offer bivocational pastors today who also want to reach the lost and grow a local church?

A: ▶ Let your church into your life and be in theirs. Don't be distant from them. You are part of your church also. This does open the door to being hurt by others,

but it is biblical. You will find that church members will be a strength and encouragement to you in difficult times. It's OK to model repentance from sin. Pastors still sin, but God is honored as we display growth and repentance. He is working in us. He is perfect, not us. Seek your church family's prayer.

▶ Trust in God's means of

grace: the Word, baptism, Lord's Supper and prayer. The means that God has established in His word work. Our place is not to convert but to be faithful and trust that God knows what He is doing.

▶ Read vigorously and always seek to improve biblically. Read the Scriptures constantly and sit at the feet of other godly men through their writings. You will gain so much from learning from others in their writings especially the

older ones before the 18th century. The 17th century was full of great Baptist works. They have a wealth of knowledge and insight.

▶ Do not neglect your family, and make plenty of time for them. There are too many missionaries who did wonderful things for the Lord but who have brought shame upon that ministry because they neglected their families. There is a reason for the qualifications of an elder to include how his family is. You will also find strength from them as God works through them to provide you with rest and encouragement.✝

The Alabama Baptist Fellowship of Bivocational Ministers will hold its first Bivocational Ministers Online Conference on Feb. 20 from 9:30 a.m to 3:30 p.m.

To register for the conference, go to tabonline.org/bivo-conference-21.

For additional information, contact Tim Henning at 205-613-7235.

Fayette County students earn certificates



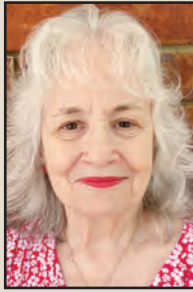
Photo courtesy of John Killian

Fourteen students (two not pictured) were recognized Dec. 27 at FBC Fayette for completing certificate programs through New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary's Fayette center. Graduates completed eight courses in two years to earn a certificate in one of 12 programs. Also pictured are instructors Scott Davis, pastor of FBC Fayette (left), and John Killian, Fayette Association director of missions (second from left) and Edward Vines (right). (TAB)

Famous Christians from previous centuries

By Joanne Sloan

Joanne Sloan, a member of First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, has been a published writer of articles and books for 30 years. She has a bachelor's degree double majoring in history and English from East Texas State University (now Texas A&M University-Commerce) and a master's degree specializing in English from the University of Arkansas (1978).



Heroes of the Faith

Boothe: Alabama Baptist preacher, advocate for African Americans

Charles Octavius Boothe (1845–1924) was an Alabama Baptist preacher, educator, author and determined advocate for African American advancement.

Born into slavery on June 13, 1845, in Mobile County, Boothe was the slave of planter Nathan Howard Sr.

Some accounts say that teachers who boarded at Howard's house taught Boothe to read. Other accounts say that Boothe taught himself the alphabet from the lettering on tin pie plates. At the age of six, after his first owner died, he went to live with owner Nathan Howard Jr.

Boothe learned to read the

Bible and was raised in the Baptist church. He experienced a conversion after the Civil War. Baptized in 1866, he was ordained as a minister in 1868. Boothe was strongly involved in teaching basic literacy, as well as religious and moral education, to African Americans.

He helped establish the Colored Baptist Missionary Convention of the State of Alabama in the early 1870s, which served as a ministerial alliance of Black Baptist churches. Boothe served as recording secretary and as a missionary, preaching to freed slaves.

He established and served as pastor of two churches after the Civil War.

He started the First Colored Baptist Church in Meridian, Mississippi.



BOOTHE

In 1877 he helped found Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery and served as its first pastor. The church became famous during the civil rights movement because of its pastor, Martin Luther King Jr.

The church's name was changed to Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church in 1978.

Boothe was one of the founders of Selma University in 1878 and served as an

early president. A prolific writer, Boothe was editor of a religious newspaper, the Baptist Pioneer, writing articles and reports on missionary activities.

Boothe also wrote two books. His first one, "Plain Theology for Plain People" (1890), communicated Christian doctrines in an understandable way for Black Baptist ministers and their church members. In 1895, he wrote "The Cyclopedia of the Colored Baptists of Alabama," which recorded the works of African-American Baptists in Alabama.

Boothe traveled regularly throughout central Alabama from the early 1870s until 1900. He conducted ministerial training institutes on basic literacy and elementary Baptist beliefs, as well as more advanced theological concepts.

Fighting racism

He strongly urged church leaders to hold members accountable for living a moral life. He hoped righteous, biblically articulate church members would put a stop to the racist beliefs among many white people that without slavery African Americans would become uncivilized.

He also worked with other Baptist groups to obtain funding for missionary efforts and educational institutions.

Organizations such as the Alabama Baptist State Convention helped fund his ministerial institutes and

provided support for his efforts to help ill-prepared African American preachers. He later received support from the Southern Baptist Convention to assist African Americans who were migrating to northern cities.

'Simplicity'

Boothe worked tirelessly for 50 years, striving to improve the condition of African Americans and

at the same time working against racial oppression. He moved to the North sometime in the first decade

of the 20th century. Little is known about him after he left Alabama. He died in Detroit in 1924.

Boothe has sometimes been called the "Unknown Theologian." No longer. In 2017, his "Plain Theology for Plain People" was reprinted by Lexham Press at the urging of Walter Strickland, associate vice president for diversity and assistant professor of systematic and contextual theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina.

Strickland, who rediscovered the book, told Baptist Press in 2018, "Boothe's work is important today because it positions black evangelicals in the broad spectrum of the evangelical tradition."

He went on to say that Boothe's book explained "the doctrines of our holy religion" with "simplicity of arrangement and simplicity of language." ✝

February is Black History Month.

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MEETING NEEDS

Meat ministry plus Alabama Hunger Offering gifts go a long way toward feeding state's hungry

(continued from page 1)
as he puts it, doesn't make him do anything he doesn't want to do.

"You can't force a lion to do anything," he said. "Vatani interacts lovingly every day because he's happy, and because our relationship is built on love and respect."

Fastuca is a "big softy," and he says he loves that lion like a son. As he started posting videos on Facebook of their relationship, he found something else happening — not only was Vatani happy, he was making other people happy too.

Helping people smile

Cancer patients began messaging Fastuca to let him know they'd decided not to give up on their treatments because Vatani had made them start to smile and laugh again.

"One of them told me, 'The way I get through my treatments is I watch Vatani videos,'" Fastuca said.

Person after person reached out with their own Vatani stories. And a famous stunt man Fastuca knew messaged him and told him he felt more at ease about his daughter being on the internet because all she wanted to do was watch lion videos.

"He said, 'How can we help the lion?' and I said, 'Well, he eats,'" Fastuca said.

Vatani does eat — about 55 pounds of meat every day. That was stretching Fastuca a little thin. That is, until his friend from the stunt business made some calls, and suddenly

Fastuca had access to hundreds of thousands of pounds of quality meat that, for economic reasons, is usually discarded by the food industry. Once Fastuca proved he could meet the necessary protocol, the product



Photo courtesy of Rick Hagans

Residents of His Place and Hosanna Home eat a meal made with chicken provided by Dan Fastuca and food bought with funds from the Alabama Hunger Offering.

was made available to him at a more manageable cost.

"I had to scramble to take advantage of that opportunity," he said, and he moved quickly to figure out how to get freezers, trucks and trailers.

What opened up from there was a partnership between Fastuca and food ministries all over Alabama in which he was able to take what he'd been given and supply them with large amounts of protein products, in part thanks to funds from the Alabama Hunger Offering. That includes the ministry Dowling runs in

his community in Leeds.

Dowling gets emotional talking about it.

"Dan has been a champion of all champions for the ministry we have," he said.

Between the chicken from Fastuca and funds given through the Alabama Hunger Offering — which is collected all year round but emphasized specifically on Feb. 21 — Dowling is able to distribute food boxes to the housing authority in his area.

The people there have deep physical needs, he said, and taking them food has built bridges for him to share the gospel and bring them into the church family.

Building relationships

"It's people like Dan who have made this possible," he said.

Dowling also has something else

in common with Fastuca other than their shared burden for the hungry — he knows what it's like for an unexpected move to open new doors.

Several years ago, someone burned down the house where Dowling lived in Trussville. So he and his wife, Sandra, moved to Leeds, and over time, it was clear God had a new ministry for them there.

Nonprofit ministry

Fastuca understands that.

He sees so many ways he can help people through V and Me, his nonprofit — from helping to provide food to the hungry to teaching animal conservation to helping make people smile.

The move to Alabama has been good for Fastuca's faith too. He grew up Catholic, but when his mom died he began to struggle, he said. "It wasn't that I didn't believe in God — it was that I had prayed for her, and I felt like I must not have been worthy to be heard."

But as he took long walks in the woods with Vatani, he began to pray again for the first time in decades. And then he visited The Church at Wills Creek, Gadsden, and they welcomed him with open arms.

Rick Hagans — founder of Harvest Ministries, which runs His Place and Hosanna Home in the Opelika area — said it's interesting to him how, even though God saved Daniel from the lions in the Bible, He's now using a lion to save people's lives in Alabama.

During the COVID-19 pandemic

Alabama Hunger Offering Sunday is Feb. 21.



Photo courtesy of Dan Fastuca

Rick Hagans (left) and Dan Fastuca load chicken for His Place and Hosanna Home.

"You can't force a lion to do anything. Vatani interacts lovingly every day because he's happy, and because our relationship is built on love and respect."

**Dan Fastuca
founder, V and Me**

“Just like Dan was willing to give of his resources to help others in need, we are all called to do the same, and what a joy and privilege it is.”

Kristy Kennedy
 associate in the associational missions office
 Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

when Hagans’ ministries were struggling to feed their residents, Fastuca came through with chicken to help them put food on the table.

“He’s been getting us 1,000 pounds of chicken quarters per month, and it’s a big, big help,” Hagans said. “Between him and Kristy Kennedy working in a partnership with Alabama Baptist hunger funds, Dan is able to get a lot more meat. We’ve gotten more meat from him than any single source we’ve ever gotten meat from.”

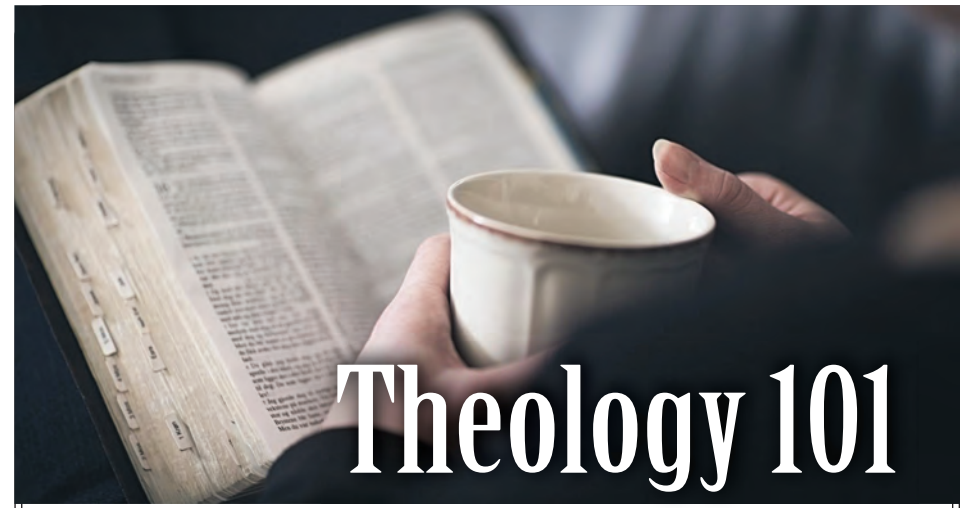
Kennedy, an associate in the associational missions office of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said the partnership be-

tween the Alabama Hunger Fund and Fastuca has been an amazing way God has provided for so many people over the past year as needs have been even greater than normal.

To find out more about V and Me, visit vandme.net. To learn more about the Alabama Hunger Offering, visit alsbom.org/hunger.

“Giving to the Hunger Offering is a way that we as Southern Baptists can work together in meeting the physical and spiritual needs of those around us,” Kennedy said. “Just like Dan was willing to give of his resources to help others in need, we are all called to do the same, and what a joy and privilege it is.”

To find out more about V and Me, visit vandme.net. To learn more about the Alabama Hunger Offering, visit alsbom.org/hunger. 🇺🇸



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Love Does

The Heart of the Matter

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

Hearth is a much-used term in our language. For example, a sweetheart might declare, “I love you with all my heart.” Then we have the phrase, “The heart of the matter,” to speak of the essential or inner meaning of something.

“Heart” occurs often in English versions of the Bible. While several different Hebrew terms in the Old Testament are rendered into heart in English, we sometimes attribute a limited meaning to the term when we are thinking of it in relation to a human being’s makeup.

Used physiologically, we think of heart as the central bodily organ that serves as the essential core of physical life. However, like the Bible, we also often use the term in the psychological sense, as the center of a person’s inner life.

Emotion and feeling

Quite obviously in the Bible, heart often refers to a person’s emotion or feeling. In this sense, it carries the meaning of the seat of human passions or motives. For example, Romans 9:2 records the Apostle Paul’s feelings toward his unbelieving fellow Jews when he wrote, “I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart.”

Since human nature is composed of more than emotions, we also commonly switch from heart to “mind” to reference a person’s rational or thinking capacity.

In the Bible, however, heart also can refer to one’s seat of

conscious thought. For example, Proverbs 23:7 says of a person, “As he thinks in his heart, so is he,” thereby linking heart to mental capacity.

Human beings also possess the capacity of volition or choice-making, a feature of our makeup we often refer to as the “will.” Again, however, the Bible uses “heart” in reference to human willfulness, as in Romans 2:5: “In accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”

Heart, mind, will

Thus, a thoughtful reading of the Bible finds the single term “heart” doing multiple duties — speaking sometimes of the seat of rational thinking, sometimes of the source of decision-making, and sometimes referencing human emotional capabilities.

While invoking these distinctions by using heart, mind and will tend to aid in clear communication, the heart of the matter is that in the Bible one’s “heart” can reference the various human capabilities of thinking, feeling and choosing. 🇺🇸

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.

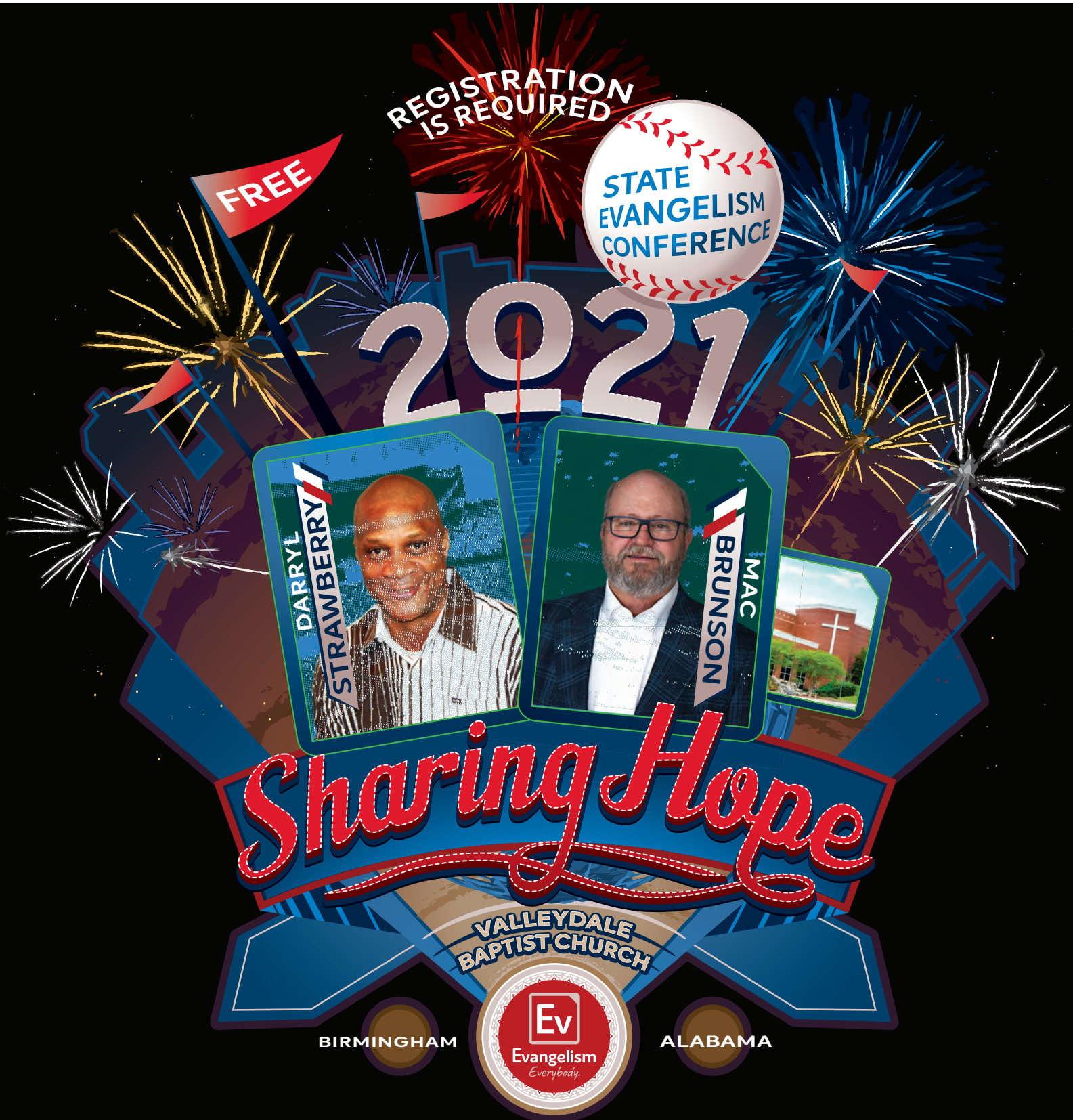


2021 SCWC Book Expo goes virtual



Photo by Jessica Ingram

The 2021 Southern Christian Writers Conference Book Expo was streamed live from the TAB Media building in Homewood on Feb. 6. SCWC Notable Book Award finalists were invited to attend the ceremony in person. Joining live were John “Jack” Cunningham (center), Michael A. Rogers (lower right) and A.S. Mackey (upper right). Cheryl Wray (left) hosted the event. Visit tabonline.org/expo to browse books featured in the expo.



SUNDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 21, 5:30 PM, IN PERSON OR LIVESTREAMED AT LIVE.ALSBOM.ORG.

Because seating is limited due to social distancing, registration is required. For complete schedule, COVID guidelines and to register, visit EVANGELIZEAL.ORG/SHARINGHOPE.

If you can't attend in person, consider hosting a socially distanced event at your church or other venue so as many as possible can hear these evangelistic messages!



Evangelism Conference for Hispanic Pastors and Leaders, 5:30-7 p.m. at Valleydale

Join us for this opportunity for fellowship and encouragement, including a time of worship through music and a speaker, designed to ignite our passion for evangelism.

Travel restrictions

Before taking a missions trip, consider recent travel restrictions, Goldman says

By Grace Thornton
TAB Media

If you're making plans to take a missions trip overseas anytime soon, Scotty Goldman says you might want to seriously consider if it's wise in light of recent travel restrictions imposed by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In mid-January, the CDC director signed an order prohibiting anyone from re-entering the U.S. without proof of a negative COVID test or proof they have recently recovered from the virus before returning.

Valid negative test

To provide a valid negative test, the test must have been done within three days of return travel to the U.S. To provide proof of recent

recovery from COVID-19, you must have two things:

1. proof that you recently tested positive
2. a letter from your healthcare provider or a public health official stating you have recovered and are cleared to travel.

The restrictions include travelers who have been vaccinated or have tested positive for COVID-19 antibodies, according to the CDC website.

The regulation went into effect Jan. 26 for any traveler age 2 or older, and it means that even if you are able to leave the U.S. and enter another country, getting back to the U.S. could be tough, said Goldman, director of the office of

global missions for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

"I'm getting four or five calls a week from people who are making plans to travel, and none of them know about this restriction," he said.

Many of the places they're considering going could be places where it is difficult to find a reliable COVID-19 test, especially for a whole group, Goldman said. And even if you're in a city where it seems

more possible, figuring out how to arrange that for a group could be difficult.

Chances are high that some or all of your group could get stuck there for a length of time, he said.

To read more about the CDC travel restrictions, visit tabonline.org/travel-restrictions.



Pixabay.com

"Also, if you had to come back through a gateway city like Paris to get tested after your trip to Africa, that would add days to your timeline in addition to being hard to organize," he said.

It "complicates travel desperately," Goldman said, and he wants people to have all the information in hand before they make plans.

If you do decide on a plan to move forward with travel, he recommends travel insurance. (The SBOM uses Patriot Travel for their travel insurance. More information is available at a18c.org/resources/patriot.)

But he notes another consideration. While travel insurance may cover hospitalization costs for COVID-19 just as it does for other illnesses, it may not include costs incurred by a positive

test which does not require hospitalization — such as the costs of medicine or expenses related to being quarantined for extra days in another country.

"Travelers need to check with their travel insurance policies to see what's covered and what's not," Goldman said.

Virtual ministry

Because of current travel complications, Goldman said the SBOM is not coordinating any trips in the first half of 2021. Some opportunities may open up for August or the fall if travel conditions change.

"Until we get to where we can get in and out of the country easily, we're going to continue to do things virtually and take care of missionaries who are here," he said. 🇺🇸

ANIMATE
21

Samford University's virtual summer program in worship and the arts for teenagers and their adult mentors.

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June 7-11

ANIMATE 21 FLEX:

June 15-July 31

REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN

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samford.edu/worship-arts/animate
Email: cwa@samford.edu with questions.

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3 stories you should know

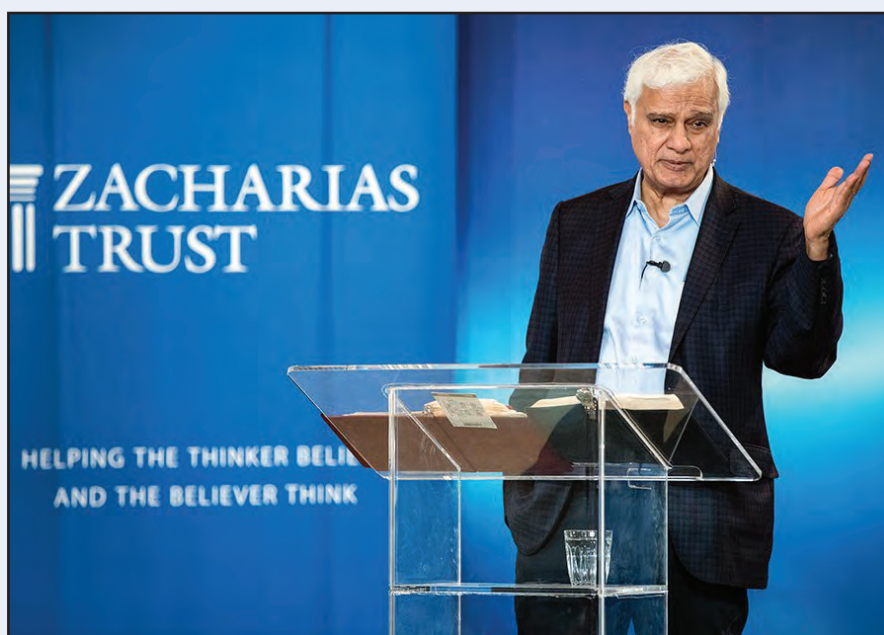


Photo by Hazel Thompson/True Image Media

Evangelical apologist, author and speaker Ravi Zacharias engaged in a pattern of sexual misconduct, according to a new report commissioned by Ravi Zacharias International Ministries to investigate allegations of sexual misconduct by its late founder. The RZIM board said that it was “shocked and grieved” and said the organization needed to repent. The board also said it believes Zacharias’ accusers are telling the truth. Read the full story at tabonline.org/rzim. (RNS)

American opinion split on racial progress

A new study from Nashville-based LifeWay Research finds Americans are divided on the progress of racial relations in the U.S.

When asked to respond to the statement, “We have come so far on racial relations,” 46% of respondents agreed. An equal number disagreed.

LifeWay last asked the question in 2014. In that survey, 74% agreed that America had made progress in race relations, and 23% disagreed.

In the recent survey, religiously unaffiliated Americans were least likely to agree with the statement (38%). Evangelicals were more likely to agree (58%).

But the majority of respondents — nearly 7 in 10 — said racial diversity is good for the country.

Most Americans (57%) say religious leaders play a positive role in improving racial relations. (BP)

Supreme Court rejects California worship ban

In a 6–3 opinion, the Supreme Court on Feb. 5 halted California’s prohibition of indoor worship in most of the state, previously the most extreme restriction in the country amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

The justices declined to block the state’s ban on singing and chanting in indoor services.

In response to the court’s decision, California Gov. Gavin Newsom’s administration issued new guidelines for indoor worship Feb. 6 that permit 25% capacity in counties where COVID-19 transmission is designated as widespread or substantial and 50% capacity in counties considered moderate or minimal.

Religious liberty advocates praised the court’s ruling. Read more at tabonline.org/worship-ban. (BP)

Headline news from around the Southeast

Arkansas

Arkansas Baptists gave more than \$10 million to the International Mission Board in 2020, surpassing the 2019 amount given by more than a million dollars. The increase came as a result of Arkansas Baptists exceeding the state convention’s annual budget as well as an increase in its Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. The annual budget uptick resulted in an additional \$187,051 sent directly to the IMB according to the state convention’s Cooperative Program giving formula. The state’s LMCO surpassed its 2019 total by more than \$900,000, Arkansas Baptist News reported.

Florida

When Pastor Shelly Chandler saw hundreds of people waiting in their cars for a COVID-19 vaccination, he saw an evangelistic opportunity. Chandler, pastor of First Baptist Church, Bonifay, Florida, worked with his staff to devise a “car-

to-car evangelism” plan and returned to the line of cars later that day, stopping at each vehicle to talk, pray and share the gospel, the Florida Baptist Witness reported.

Georgia

About six years ago, Chris Pritchett, lead pastor of Pleasant Grove Baptist Church in Bowman, Georgia, began serving as a volunteer firefighter and chaplain, which inspired his church to launch a multifaceted community ministry. To minister to people in crisis, the church has bought a covered trailer, the Hope Trailer, and stocked it with everyday items. The church also built the Neighborhood of Hope, five houses ready to provide temporary shelter, the Christian Index reported.

Kentucky

Big Spring Baptist Church, a small congregation of only six members, is making a big impact,

Kentucky Today reported. Since September, one-third of the church members — Kelly McCowan and Dale Fleenor — have gone door to door in their community, sharing the gospel more than 300 times. “We’re only two guys from a small church, but we want to do our part,” Fleenor said. “It’s our honor to do it for the Lord.”

Tennessee

Because of COVID-19, Emma Worthy’s senior year in high school and her path to becoming a college freshman at Union University in Jackson, Tennessee, were anything but ordinary. Worthy’s parents are International Mission Board missionaries in Tuscany, Italy, and Worthy attended a Christian boarding school in Germany. A lockdown kept the teen and her parents hundreds of miles apart for months. They finally reunited at a German airport to fly to America for Worthy to begin college, the Baptist and Reflector reported.

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

► **Ben Corley** — longtime pastor of First Baptist Church, Woodstock, and current pastor of Schultz Creek Baptist Church, Centreville — died Jan. 29. He was 80.

Corley began preaching in 1966 and first came to First, Woodstock, in 1969. Though he left to serve at a couple of other churches over the years, he kept coming back to First, Woodstock, said Betty Brooks, a church member who was on the search committee who called him.

She called Corley a “wonderful person” who was “pastor to the whole community.”

He “retired” from First, Woodstock, in 2012 and started serving at Schultz Creek Baptist the following year. At one point in his ministry, he also served about a year as director of missions for Bibb Baptist Association.

Corley is preceded in death by his son, Alan. He is survived by his wife, Jo; daughter, Jessica; son, Jeff; and seven grandchildren.

► **Wanda Collins Patterson** — whose husband, Larry, serves as director of missions for Escambia Baptist Association — died Jan. 19 from complications of a massive heart attack.

She was 70.

A Thorsby native, Patterson lived in Flomaton and Bay Minette over the years, and at the time of her death she was a member of Little Escambia Baptist Church, Flomaton. She was a homemaker and assisted her husband in his ministry.

Patterson is survived by her husband of 50 years; sons, Clint and Kevin; daughter, Belinda; three grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren.

► **Cecil O. Sewell Jr.**, a longtime Alabama Baptist pastor, died Jan. 27. He was 84.

Born in the coal-mining community of Piper in Bibb County, Sewell graduated from Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham.

During his 66-year ministry, he served numerous churches in Tennessee, Texas, France and Alabama, including South Roebuck Baptist Church, Birmingham. He retired the first time from the pastorate of Westwood Baptist Church, Forestdale, and a second time from First Baptist Church, Saks, in Anniston, in 2007.

He retired again in 2019 from First Baptist Church, Union City, Tennessee.

Sewell is preceded in death by his daughter,

Melanie. He is survived by his wife, Sharon; son, Cecil III; four grandchildren; and 13 great-grandchildren.

► **Mickey Jones** — pastor of Mount Moriah Baptist Church, Pell City, since 2014 — died Jan. 29 from complications of COVID-19. He was 62.

Jones previously served at Popes Chapel Community Church, Ragland; Enon Baptist Church, Morris; and New Temple Baptist Church, Dora. Serving bivocationally, he also taught, coached and worked in lawn care.

He was a graduate of Samford University in Birmingham; Jacksonville State University; and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

He is survived by his wife, Marla; sons, Jason and Justin; daughter, Jessica; and 10 grandchildren.

ALABAMA CRENSHAW ASSOCIATION

► **Jeremy Hendrick** is the new pastor of **Highland Home Baptist Church**. He

and his wife, Summer, have three children.

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

► **Daniel Stewart** is the new student minister at **Lakeside**

Baptist Church, Birmingham. He has a degree in Christian ministry from Leavell College and a master’s in Christian education from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He previously served as associate pastor and student minister at First Baptist Church, Purvis, Mississippi. He is married to Nicole and they have one daughter, Chloe.

CLARKE ASSOCIATION

► **William Faircloth** is the new pastor of **Liberty Baptist Church, Thomasville**. He formerly was associate pastor and minister to students at Linden Baptist Church. He and his wife, Whitney, have two children.

EAST LIBERTY ASSOCIATION

► **County Line Baptist Church, Dudleyville**,

celebrated its 185th anniversary on Nov. 15, a service delayed from May due to COVID-19 precautions. Dale Wood, associational mission strategist for East Liberty Association, spoke on the church’s history at the service. Donny Brown is interim pastor.



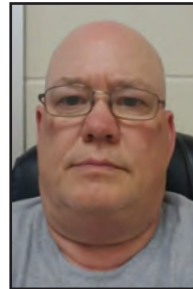
Photo courtesy of Dale Wood

MARSHALL ASSOCIATION

► **Randall Stoner** is the new pastor of **South Sauty Baptist Church, Langston**. Stoner retired Dec. 31 as director of missions for Marshall Baptist Association.



CORLEY



JONES



FAIRCLOTH



HENDRICK



STEWART



PATTERSON



SEWELL

Persecuted church

5 Nigerian Christians kidnapped Christmas Day executed by captors

GARKIDA, Nigeria — Five of 11 Christians kidnapped Christmas Day in Garkida, Nigeria, reportedly were executed by Islamic terrorists.

The Islamic State’s AMAQ News released a Dec. 29 video showing five armed members of Islamic State West Africa Province behind five kneeling men with bound hands.

Each captive was ordered to state his name; each added, “I am a Christian.” All five were shot and killed.

The attack in Garkida began Christmas Eve and continued into Christmas Day; six Chris-

tians were killed and 11 kidnapped. In addition to the murders and abductions, ISWAP burned homes, looted shops and set fire to a hospital.

On Dec. 7, 2020, the State Department added Nigeria to its list of “Countries of Particular Concern” for engaging in and tolerating egregious violations of religious freedom. The State Department also maintains a list of “Entities of Particular Concern,” which includes several Islamic extremist groups operating in Africa and the Middle East.

Nigeria is No. 9 on Open Doors’ 2021 World Watch List of places where it is most difficult to be a Christian. (MS)



Morning Star News



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CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR

Buhl Baptist Church is seeking a full-time senior pastor. Please email resumé to: pinetucky06@gmail.com and mhicks3390@charter.com or mail to: P.O. Box 128, Buhl, AL 35446. Feel free to send questions as well and we will respond ASAP.

PASTOR

FBC Loxley, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking a full-time pastor to lead and shepherd our congregation. Under the Lord's leading, please send resúmes to: fbcloxleypastorsearch@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Verbena Baptist Church, Verbena, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor. Please email resúmes to: verbenabaptist@att.net.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Seeking bivocational pastor to lead and grow small Baptist church in Hayden, Alabama. Average Sunday attendance is 25-30. Experience preferred but not required. Although ministerial degree not required, candidate must exhibit desire to pursue biblical studies. Conservative theological perspective desired, with adherence to belief of inerrancy of scripture. Submit resumé to: sonyahumber@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Tates Chapel Baptist Church is seeking a bivocational pastor. Send resumé to: Tates Chapel Baptist Church, P.O. Box 38, Centre, AL 35960. Email: tateschapelchurch@tds.net, ATTN: Janet.

FULL-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC AND 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.

ASSOCIATE PASTOR/ MINISTER OF MUSIC

First Baptist Church of Woodstock, Alabama, is seeking a full-time candidate to lead our worship ministry. Please submit resúmes to: office@fbcwoodstock.org.

MUSIC MINISTER

York Bluff Baptist Church in Sheffield, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational music minister. This person should be mature in the faith, theologically sound, musically sound, organized and

passionate about growing a multi-generational music ministry. Resúmes and videos may be emailed to: kim@yorkbluffbaptist.com The deadline to receive resúmes is Wednesday, March 31.

MINISTER OF MISSIONS & OUTREACH

Mount Zion Baptist Church, Huntsville, Alabama, is seeking a minister of missions and outreach to help lead our church in reaching our community and our world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Interested applicants may obtain more information about the position through our web page at Mount Zion Baptist Church (mzbc.net) and send resúmes to: mountzion@mzbc.net, ATTN: Job Search.

YOUTH PASTOR

FBC Loxley, Alabama, is seeking a full-time youth pastor. Please send a resumé to: youthpastorsearchfbcloxley@gmail.com.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY DIRECTOR

Wanted: Children's ministry director who oversees a comprehensive birth to 5th grade program, leading paid staff and dedicated volunteers. This program currently consists (pre-COVID) of approximately 250 kids Sunday morning, Wednesday night and special programming. To receive a comprehensive position profile, email Dr. Tom Smiley, executive pastor, Lakewood Baptist Church, Gainesville, Ga. at: tsmiley@lakewoodlife.org.

CHILDREN'S MINISTER

York Bluff Baptist Church in Sheffield, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational children's minister. This person should be a creative, organized, self motivated/disciplined young adult. This person should be team oriented and good with children. Resúmes may be emailed to: kim@yorkbluffbaptist.com. The deadline to receive resúmes is Feb. 28.

OTHER POSITIONS

FINANCIAL ASSISTANT

FBC Birmingham is seeking a full-time staff member, with experience in Shelby systems preferred. Duties include accounts payable, payroll, general ledger and processing contributions. Please send resumé and cover letter to: cjames@fbcbhm.org.

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

The churches of Winston Baptist Association, in Winston County, Alabama, are seeking a man called of God to serve as our next director of missions. This is a full-time position. SBC

seminary training preferred. The director of missions will lead the Winston Baptist Association to advance the gospel through the cooperative effort of her member churches. If interested, please send your resumé to: wbadom@centurytel.net.

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MISCELLANEOUS

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Gambling, marijuana top legislative agenda

The Alabama Senate on Feb. 11 began debate on Senate Bill 214, a proposal by Sen. Del Marsh that outlines a sweeping plan to expand gambling statewide.

The bill proposes creation of a state lottery and five new casinos. Four of the casinos would be at the existing greyhound tracks in Birmingham, Mobile, Macon County and Greene County.

The Poarch Band of Creek Indians would operate the fifth site in northeast Alabama. The band already operates casinos in Atmore, Montgomery and Wetumpka, with jurisdiction under federal law.

Betting on sports would be allowed at the casinos.

Marsh's bill would require a change to the Alabama constitution, which would have to be approved by voters. The bill also seeks a compact between the state and the Poarch Band. Gov. Kay Ivey has repeatedly said she would not negotiate a

compact until voters approve gambling expansion.

Joe Godfrey, executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program, said any expansion of gambling will hurt Alabamians, including churches.

Churches will lose, he said, "as they are called upon to help families that will have lost everything ... through government-sanctioned and government-sponsored gambling."

Other efforts

Other legislative efforts in the 2021 session include:

- ▶ Legalizing medical marijuana and forming a commission to license growers

- ▶ Prohibiting gender change therapy for minors

- ▶ Allowing direct shipment of alcoholic beverages to Alabama homes

- ▶ Lifting restrictions on offering yoga to K-12 students.

Read more about these bills at tabonline.org/21-session. (Dianna L. Cagle)



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HUNGER CONTINUES TO BE ONE OF THE GREATEST PROBLEMS FACING OUR WORLD TODAY

An estimated 1 billion people do not have enough food to be healthy. Every day 25,000 people die from hunger-related causes. In our own country, approximately 49 million Americans struggle with hunger – nearly 800,000 right here in Alabama.

WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT IT?

You can give.

Participate in the Hunger Offering on **Sunday, February 21**, by giving through your local church (*designate your check for "Hunger Offering"*) or by sending a check to the State Board of Missions, P.O. Box 681970, Prattville, AL 36068-1970. You'll find helpful promotional materials at alsbom.org/hunger, including downloadable videos you can show in your worship service.

You can educate.

Download a copy of the *Hunger Offering Factbook and Guide for Teaching and Preaching* at alsbom.org/hunger or request one by contacting Lori Lockett at llockett@alsbom.org or (334) 613-2304.

You can pray.

Please pray for the hungry in our world and that through the ministries reaching out to them, many will receive physical assistance and also seek and find our Lord.

You can make a difference by participating in the 2021 Hunger Offering.



Photo by IMB

UPCOMING WEBINARS

BETTER SUNDAYS BEGIN ON MONDAY

February 23, 10-11 a.m.

If sports teams know the value of evaluating their games to improve future effectiveness, why aren't pastors and worship teams incorporating similar evaluative practices? That's the premise behind David Manner's book, *Better Sundays Begin on Monday*. Don't miss this opportunity to hear from David as he discusses evaluation tools for effective worship services.

MAKING MEMBERSHIP MEANINGFUL

March 9, 10-11 a.m.

God has designed the Body of Christ to function together to fulfill the Great Commission. Now more than ever the Church must see membership that "works" and not membership with "perks." Every believer is designed by God to function through the Body with their gifts and abilities. Join State Missionary Ken Allen with special guest Robert Mullins, pastor of Crossroads Community Church, as they discuss this timely topic.

EVANGELISM THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

March 10, 10-11 a.m.

During this informative hour, hear from a panel including Savannah Abney, CCO of Breezy Content, Chattanooga; Brian Harris and Lauren House, social media strategists at Dogwood Media Solutions, Montgomery; Johnny Ellison, pastor of Golden Acres Baptist Church, Phenix City; and state missionaries for evangelism Daniel Wilson and Matt Burford, as they discuss how to effectively use social media for evangelism.

MINISTERING OUT OF THE OVERFLOW: HOW TO BE ON FIRE FOR GOD WITHOUT BURNING OUT

March 23, 10-11 a.m.

This season of pastoral ministry has been challenging. Many pastors and church staff are facing emotional difficulties and burnout. If you are in need of a refreshing message then this webinar is for you. Join Richard Blackaby, president of Blackaby Ministries International since 2006, as he presents an encouraging message in light of the times.

Register for all webinars at PinnacleAlabama.org.

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTERS RETREAT

Saturday, February 20, 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. ONLINE

Speakers for the day are Tim Henning, pastor of New Beginnings Fellowship and president of the Alabama Baptist Bivocational Fellowship; Bill Wilks, pastor of NorthPark Baptist Church and author of *D-Life*; Jacky Connell, pastor of Eden Westside Baptist Church; and Kevin Blackwell, Assistant to the President for Church Relations at Samford University. There is no cost for the retreat, and the first 75 who register will receive a free copy of the book, *Turning Everyday Conversations into Gospel Conversations*, simply by requesting it. Visit alsbom.org/bivo for more information or to register.



Alabama **Hunger** Offering

GlobalHunger

bread for life.

SUNDAY
FEBRUARY 21

Beeson launches Center for Women in Ministry

By Grace Thornton
TAB Media

Kristen Padilla says she remembers crying real tears when she was 8 or 9 years old, distressed because even at that young age, she felt God calling her to ministry and she didn't know what to do with that. The only path she saw for ministry in her small, rural Southern Baptist church was to be a pastor like her dad — and she knew she couldn't do that, nor did she want to.



PADILLA

But as Padilla grew up and grew in her faith, the call only got stronger. “When I surrendered to a call to ministry in high school, I couldn't say no anymore. I trusted the Lord that if this was what He was leading me to do, He would see it through,” she said.

‘God-given vision’

She says her church in Texas was “very encouraging and affirming,” but they also didn't know how

to help her move forward. Some told her she might marry a preacher or maybe be the next Beth Moore.

“I wasn't sure what I could do or should do,” Padilla said, noting that she had a “bit of a crisis.”

At Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Arkansas, and later at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School, where she earned her master of divinity, Padilla said God put people in her path to help her explore what ministry

could look like within the framework of her Southern Baptist beliefs.

Now Padilla, who serves as Beeson's manager of marketing and communications, wants to help others do the same thing.

Beeson recently launched The Center for Women in Ministry, an idea Padilla says God planted in her heart six years ago.

“God gave me a vision for a center or a hub that would have concentrated efforts to

help and encourage women along their ministry journey to be faithful in gospel ministry for the long haul, to thrive in ministry and to be placed in ministry,” said Padilla, who serves as the center's director. “It will exist to encourage and equip women called to Christian ministry.”

Better equipped

That will start with Beeson's own female students, providing resources, events and mentoring “to help them thrive while they are studying and preparing for ministry,” she said.

From there, it will grow to include female students at Samford University, Beeson alumni who are in ministry or are looking for ministry roles to fill and other women in ministry who need resourcing to thrive in their roles but don't have Beeson ties.

The Center for Women in Ministry joins similar ministries at other seminaries, such as the Society for

Women in Scholarship at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, and the Women's Center at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

However, Beeson's center won't just focus on students; it seeks to resource women from their call all the way through their ministry years.

Padilla, author of the book “Now That I'm Called: A Guide for Women Discerning a Call to Ministry,” says Beeson's Center will not advocate for a certain position on women in ministry or make a statement about women's ordination.

Because Beeson is an interdenominational seminary, the center will also be interdenominational, offering support to women within the framework of their own denominations — just as Padilla was supported in her Southern Baptist faith.

It will also be a resource for male leaders who might want help knowing how to

Upcoming events

(held on campus)

► **Feb. 23** — Listening Lunch: Center for Women in Ministry

► **March 8** — Women's International Day Worship Service and Dessert Social

► **March 17** — Lunch with Dr. Catherine McDowell

► **March 30** — Lunch with Hannah Anderson

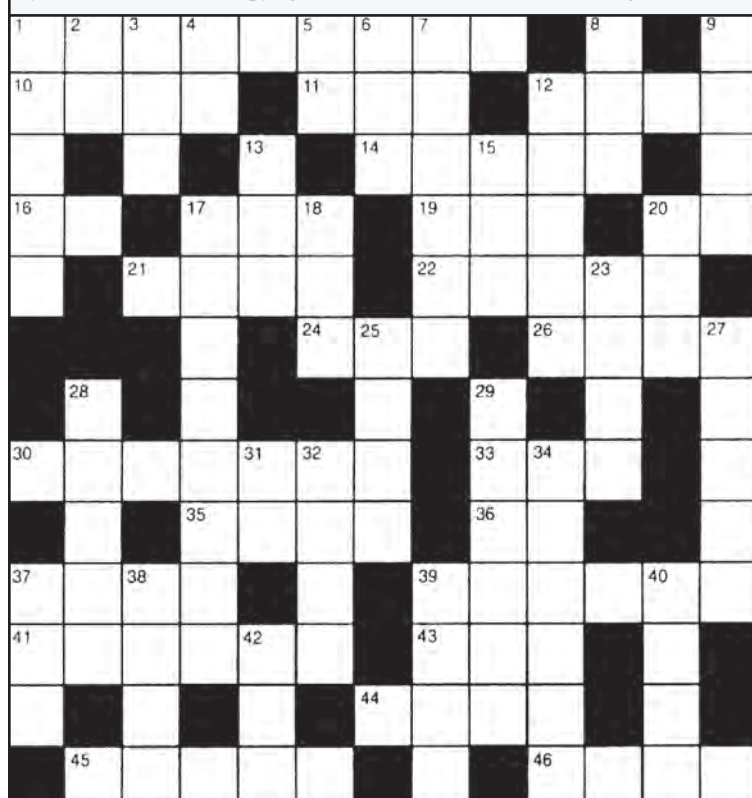
support women in their congregation who feel a call to ministry, she said.

“I've been very encouraged by conversations I've had with male alums and other male leaders not otherwise connected to Beeson who recognize a need to create spaces for women to serve in ministry,” Padilla said. “Many of them see women in their churches who have a call to ministry, and they are asking really good questions about how they can do better about equipping and encouraging them.”✝

For more information, email kpadilla@samford.edu.

Christian Crossword

By Martha Wall Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

1. ___ rather than choice gold. (Prov. 8:10)
10. John's place of exile. (Rev. 1:9)
11. In addition.
12. Supplicate.
14. Divine radiance.
16. Leave.
17. Earthen vessel.
19. 502. (Roman numeral)
20. Like.
21. Entice.
22. Church official. (Titus 1:6)
24. Lair. (Ps. 10:9)
26. Shade trees.
30. Treasured jewel. (Ex. 28:18)
33. Consumed.
35. Adam's grandson. (Gen. 4:26)
36. Thus.

Down

1. Solomon, and others.
2. Opposite direction. (abbr.)
3. Ancient.
4. ___ are not of the night. (1 Thess. 5:5)
5. And. (Latin)

Across

6. Derogatory name. (Ps. 22:16)
7. ___ bell. (Ex. 28:34)
8. Expression of dismay.
9. The ___ of the Lord run to and fro. (2 Chron. 16:9)
12. ___ goeth before destruction. (Prov. 16:18)
13. Clay's problem. (Jer. 18:4)
15. Medium for anointing. (Ex. 25:6)
17. The ungodly ... scorneth ___. (Prov. 19:28)
18. Though they be ___ like crimson. (Isa. 1:18)

20. His ___ brought salvation. (Isa. 59:16)
23. Otherwise.
25. Extremities.
27. Contained evidence of theft. (Gen. 44:12)
28. Goliath, for one.
29. Precious stone. (Ex. 28:20)
31. Over and in contact.
32. Early shipbuilder. (Gen. 6:13-14)
34. Labored hard.
37. Generous invitation. (Matt. 7:7)
38. Canola and corn.
39. High elevation. (Gen. 14:6)
40. An oasis. (Ex. 15:27)
42. A signal.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For February 21

Explore the Bible

By Douglas K. Wilson, Ph.D.
Dean of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



LOVED Luke 7:40–50

Luke often records events in which Jesus elevates marginalized people and simultaneously humbles self-righteous Pharisees. Perhaps Luke was particularly aware of the Pharisees and their exalted self-image because of his association with Paul.

More than any other apostle, Paul knew that Pharisees believed themselves to be without blame in their keeping of the law (Phil. 3:5).

In this particular encounter, Luke introduced the interchange between Jesus, a woman of the city and a Pharisee named Simon in verses 36–39. Simon offered Jesus hospitality by inviting the Master to his house for a meal.

Word spread that Jesus was there, and a woman of questionable character entered the house and anointed Jesus' feet with costly perfume, weeping and kissing the Master's feet and wiping His feet with her hair. The fact that she uncovered her head and let down her hair would have been shameful enough, but this was evidently an intimate encounter, and one that the host found to be embarrassing and inappropriate. Simon wondered whether Jesus was even a prophet if He was unable to discern the sinful character of the woman.

Love's Intensity (40–43)

Jesus was fully aware of His surroundings. He knew the woman's circumstances. He discerned Simon's thoughts. He also gauged the measure of love that each person had for Him by their behavior. In order to teach Simon a lesson, Jesus told him a story.

Like the Bantu storytellers of East Africa — who begin their stories with “Are you ready to listen?” — Jesus told Simon, “I have something to say to you.” When Simon responded in kind, Jesus told him a simple story.

Two debtors owed a creditor, with one owing 50 denarii and the other 500. Neither debtor was able to pay — keep in mind that a denarius was a day's wage. The creditor forgave both debts. With both bills canceled, who would love the creditor more?

Simon responded that the one with the greater debt would. This leads back to the woman.

Love Demonstrated (44–47)

This unnamed woman expressed her love for Jesus lavishly with her perfume, and she was willing to humble herself by touching and kissing His unwashed feet and washing them with her tears. By contrast, Simon failed to greet Jesus with a kiss upon His arrival, failed to provide water to rinse off His dusty feet and failed to provide olive oil for Jesus to groom Himself before the meal. This woman loved Jesus greatly because she was forgiven greatly.

Another anointing, which is often confused with this account, was Mary's lavish anointing of Jesus' feet at Bethany with expensive nard — almost a year's wages. On that occasion, Martha served the meal, and the recently resurrected Lazarus was in attendance (John 12:1–8).

Love and Faith (48–50)

When the Master extended forgiveness to her publicly, the Pharisee and his guests questioned His identity. “Who is this man who even forgives sins?”

Jesus had previously forgiven the sins of the paralytic man. This man suffered, perhaps due to no fault of his own. On that occasion, the scribes and Pharisees expressed that only God can forgive sins.

By contrast, this woman chose her profession, they likely assumed. No doubt the men in Jesus' company wondered what audacity or blasphemy Jesus was uttering by offering to forgive her.

People who are convinced of their own bent toward sin, their need for forgiveness and the price of their pardon through Christ's death and resurrection love Jesus deeply. Broken people who have found healing in Christ tell other broken people. Those who are convinced that other people are broken, but not themselves, find little reason to need or love Jesus. May our love for Christ grow with every passing day! 🌟

Bible Studies for Life

By Will Kynes, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Biblical Studies, Samford University



CONNECTING TO CHRIST'S BODY 1 Corinthians 12:12–24

Some in the Church, the body of Christ, value only those who share their gifts, seek to spread their influence by shaping others into their own image and denigrate those who differ with them. In medical terms, they become a cancer that privileges the success of their cell type over the health of the body as a whole. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul depicts the Church as a body which thrives through a unity that incorporates diversity — of gifts, ethnicities and social classes — with all serving each other for the common end of vibrant life.

God has designed the Church as one united body. (12–13)

In his context, Paul's emphasis on the unity of the church, in which all — Jew, Gentile, slave and free — share common baptism into the same Spirit, was a radical claim. Even the Apostle Peter struggled to accept the unity and equal status of Jews and Gentiles in the church (Gal. 2:11–16).

Paul, however, explains in Ephesians 2:11–19 that Christ's “purpose was to create in Himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which He put to death their hostility.” That “one new humanity” would then include other groups that the world separates, whether by race, class or gender distinctions (see Gal. 3:28–29).

All who belong to Christ equally share in the redemption He has accomplished. If Sunday morning remains the most segregated hour of the week, as Martin Luther King Jr. observed a generation ago, then the Church is failing to be the unified body that Paul envisions.

God has given believers roles and responsibilities within the body. (14–18)

Unity does not mean sameness, as if all distinctions between Christians are erased. That fundamental unity involves a diversity

of gifts, which various Christians express in different ways.

It's because of this fundamental common belonging, Paul argues, that the different parts we all play should not pull us apart and turn us against each other. In contrast to the divisiveness and tribalism currently plaguing our nation, the Church's vitality depends on this unity combined with difference — “many parts, but one body.”

God has made each Christian a necessary part of the body. (19–24)

The us-versus-them polarization that permeates our society implicitly acknowledges the failure of individualism. We need the support of others. Polarization, however, creates community through enforced conformity of the “us” and antagonistic opposition to the “them.” Unfortunately, this unhealthy divisiveness in unity's clothing often seeps into the Church.

Yet, Paul claims every part is necessary, and the weaker, less honorable and even unrepresentable parts of the body deserve our special care. Which specific gifts or members of Christ's body Paul has in mind here is unclear. In fact, it's probably best to apply his advice generally. Each of us has our strengths and weaknesses. Like the interchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the blood stream, the Church's vitality depends on our constant use of our strengths to support the weaknesses of others, and of their use of their strengths to build us up in our weaknesses. 🌟

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MEDIA REVIEWS

By Michael Foust

TAB Media

Netflix's uplifting film 'Penguin Bloom' is filled with lessons about life

Sam Bloom was a smiling, energetic mom of three in 2013, living the so-called “good life.” She had reached her childhood goal of becoming a nurse. Her husband was successful in his profession. They were traveling the world.

Then tragedy struck while on vacation.

Bloom was posing for a photograph at a scenic spot in Thailand when a rail composed of rotted wood collapsed, plummeting her 20 feet to the concrete below and breaking her back. Immediately, she was paralyzed from the chest down.

Formerly full of life, she was now angry, depressed and confined to a wheelchair. Unable to care for her family as she wanted, she often contemplated the “what ifs” of life — and wished she were dead.

But then a rescued bird entered her life — specifically, an injured magpie chick named “Penguin.”

The magpie was on a similar path as Bloom. Sam couldn't walk. Penguin couldn't fly. Both needed love, compassion and patience.

By caring for the magpie — and watching it recover — Sam regained her will to live.

The new Netflix film “Penguin Bloom” (PG-13) tells the true story



“Penguin Bloom”

Photo courtesy of Netflix

of Sam's inspiring road to recovery, as she relearned how to canoe and eventually represented her country, Australia, in the paracanoeing world championships. Around the time she learned to canoe, Penguin learned to fly.

It's one of the more inspiring films of the year.

Naomi Watts stars as Bloom. The film's themes of courage, resilience and a strong family bond, Watts said, can encourage moviegoers.

“Hopefully, it's something that we can all tap into, going on the journey with this family,” Watts told me.

“Penguin Bloom” has no explicit faith elements, but it's not hard to see God's hand throughout the plot. It teaches loving more, sacrificing more and making each day count. It also urges a focus on what we still have instead of what we've lost.

“I consider myself the luckiest man alive,” her husband tells her. “Because for a night, I sat thinking

I'd never see you again. But I did. I do, every day.”

The film also is mostly family-friendly, with only minor language (five notable coarse words). ClearPlay offers a filter.

Also worth watching this month:

Adults/teens

► **“The Black Church” (PBS)** — A two-part, four-hour series about the 400-year history of the black church in America, featuring interviews with a wide range of individuals, from BeBe Winans to Oprah Winfrey. Henry Gates Jr. (“Reconstruction”) is the host. It debuts Feb. 16/17 but also will be available at PBS.org.

► **“Blown Away: Season 2” (Netflix)** — Skilled glassblowers create mind-blowing artwork in a reality competition unlike anything else on television. Rated TV-14.

► **“Vindication” (Pureflix)** — Detective Gary Travis (Todd Terry)

solves crimes in this unique, 10-episode faith-centric series, which focuses not on the “who done it” but on the wrongly accused. Season 1 began streaming recently on PureFlix.com. (Season 2 currently is in production.)

► **“Safety” (Disney Plus)** — A college football player puts his promising future on the line to raise his younger brother. The plot is based on the real-life story of former Clemson player Ray McElrathbey. Rated PG for thematic content involving drug addiction and some language. ClearPlay offers a filter.

Children

► **“We Can Be Heroes” (Netflix)** — A group of superhero kids band together to save Earth after their superhero parents are abducted; produced by Robert Rodriguez, who gave us the Spy Kids series. Rated PG for mild action/violence.

► **“Jurassic World Camp Cretaceous: Season 2” (Netflix)** — Teens attending a dinosaur camp get into deadly trouble after they break the rules. Due to a few intense situations, it's probably best for older children. Rated TV-Y7. Animated.

► **“Shaun the Sheep: The Farmer's Llamas” (Netflix)** — Shaun the Sheep tricks the farmer into buying llamas, who are far more mischievous than Shaun envisioned. Rated TV-Y. Stop-motion animation. 🇺🇸

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.

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.

Harvest *fields*

IMB partners with 140 international Baptist conventions in fulfilling Great Commission

The International Mission Board's 175 years of ministry among the nations has resulted in the formation of 140 Baptist conventions and unions in 73 countries.

These conventions and unions are reaching their own people and are sending their own missionaries to spread the gospel. These Baptists come from myriad countries spanning the globe, from the Southeast Asian nations of Indonesia and the Philippines to Spanish-speaking countries like Ecuador and Cuba.

The IMB seeks to partner with and provide training for Baptists from these conventions and unions.

Amanda Dimperio, IMB's director of globalization, leads the effort to provide guidance to these partners. Dimperio said the IMB defines globalization as, "Working with our national partners to help them embrace their role in the Great Commission [and] seeking to encourage and expand their capacity to send and receive cross-cultural missionaries."

D. Ray Davis, IMB's church mobilization manager, explained the strategy: "Instead of U.S. churches sending internationals, we've recog-

nized it is healthier, more sustainable and more appropriate for IMB and our churches to invest our 175 years of experience in assessment, sending-support structures, training and strategic areas into national partners," he said. "We provide training and guidance to local churches and conventions overseas in helping them organize to send, but we also are expanding our overseas IMB teams to include global partners as team members."

Crossing cultures

The IMB refers to national partners serving on missionary teams as Global Missionary Partners. GMPs are cross-cultural missionaries who are affirmed and sent by a local church and sending entity in their home country. The GMPs are nurtured and affirmed by IMB personnel and work in cooperation with an IMB field team.

"A team in Africa may have IMB (U.S.-sent) missionaries and a Brazilian-sent missionary, or a Korean national may join an IMB team in North Africa," Davis said. "This is already taking place and is gaining momentum."

Dimperio said the international



IMB photo
IMB President Paul Chitwood walks in Colombia with an IMB team leader and a global missionary partner from the Western Baptist Convention of Cuba.

Baptist conventions that have sent the most GMPs are the Western Baptist Convention of Cuba and the Huayu International Missions Agency of Taiwan.

Five missionaries from the Huayu agency have recently been sent out to serve on IMB teams.

Cuban Baptists have four couples serving in Colombia, one in Uganda,

and soon, several more GMPs will be commissioned to serve in Northern Africa and the Middle East.

Prayer for more laborers

"We have prayed to the Lord of the harvest to send out more laborers into His harvest field, and we see Him answering that prayer in a great way," Dimperio said. "We are currently working with several other national Baptist conventions, mostly in Latin America, but also in Africa, Asia and Europe to help them send their first cross-cultural missionaries to serve in cooperation with IMB field teams. We hope to partner with many more in the future to share our resources of 175 years of experience, cross-cultural training and mentoring so that they can send and sustain their own missionaries."

Jeff Ginn, who works with IMB's American Peoples Affinity, said he and other leaders in the region, in conversation with local partners, set a goal of working with national partners and U.S. churches to send 75 GMPs by the year 2025.

To learn more about globalization in missions, email info@imb.org. (IMB)

GLOBALIZATION: *Mobilizing Global Missionary Partners*

2025 TARGET:

154,937

People dying daily without Christ

4,920

People groups remaining with little or no access to the gospel

Mobilize
500

Global Missionary Partners on IMB Teams by 2025

140

Global Baptist entities and networks who are potential partners

Praying for
25 of the 500

Global missionary partners to be sent in 2021

imb