



# The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

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Image Church Facebook photo

Ryan Ivy, a Mobile native, speaks to the group gathered at Image Church in Las Vegas on its launch Sunday in February. Ivy and his family are among a large number of NAMB church planters who receive support from Annie Armstrong Easter Offering funds.

## Broken for brokenness

### Mobile native called to church planting moves family to Las Vegas

By Grace Thornton  
TAB Media

Until Ryan Ivy moved to Las Vegas in 2018, Mobile was the only home he'd ever known.

He felt the Holy Spirit working in his heart at a

young age, then felt the call to ministry at 11.

"As I grew up, I began to prepare for the call that God had on my life, and then I went to the University of Mobile," Ivy said.

He became the associate pastor at Crawford Baptist Church, and he learned and grew. But it wasn't long before he felt like God was calling him outside the city limits of Mobile and perhaps even beyond the borders of Alabama.

"I took a missions trip to Philadelphia, worked with a church planter and saw church planting the way it looks in the Book of Acts," Ivy said.

"I saw them engaging the community and making disciples and saw how a church can be birthed from that."

#### 'God spoke'

And when the church planter asked him when he was going to get involved in planting himself, that lit a fire in him.

"I came back home, and I was tag-team preaching

through the Book of Acts with our pastor," Ivy said. "God spoke to me through His word in that time, and others affirmed that call, and my wife and I began to pray about where we might go."

He had an opportunity to go on a vision trip to Las Vegas, and while he was there, God gave him a heart for the city, he said.

"I was broken for the brokenness there," Ivy said. "So I got my wife, Kierstin, to

(See 'God,' page 6)



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Photo by Maggie Evans

Gary Fenton (right), vice chair of TAB's board of directors, and Kristen Padilla (left), director of the Center for Women in Ministry at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School, announce the Jennifer Davis Rash Endowed Scholarship at Beeson, named in honor of Rash's 25th anniversary at TAB.

# TAB board endows Rash scholarship at Beeson

By Grace Thornton

TAB Media

The Alabama Baptist's board of directors announced a new \$25,000 scholarship endowment Feb. 25 in honor of TAB Editor Jennifer Davis Rash's 25th anniversary at the publication.

The Jennifer Davis Rash Scholarship Endowment will provide scholarships at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School to help underrepresented minorities in Southern Baptist churches further their theological education.

Rash's 25 years of service show her commitment to "serving TAB and Alabama Baptists," said Rob Jackson, chairman of TAB's board. "As we were thinking about the best way to honor her in that, there was no better way than providing a scholarship so that women and other minorities might be able to further their education at Beeson, a place Jennifer attended and loves."

## Kingdom legacy

Rash has a heart for furthering the kingdom of God, and the students who benefit from the scholarship will be part of that legacy now, Jackson said.

Gary Fenton, who also serves on TAB's board of directors, said Baptists have been blessed by Rash's contributions at TAB.

"We're very grateful for her 25

years of service to The Alabama Baptist," Fenton said. "We are so grateful for the innovative approach she's bringing at a time when Baptist news publications are in the process of changing and often declining."

## 'Excellent example'

Kristen Padilla, director of The Center for Women in Ministry and manager of marketing and communications at Beeson Divinity School, called Rash "an excellent example of a woman who has used her theological training and gifts for the service of the Church."

"As a Beeson alumna, Jennifer represents Beeson Divinity School extremely well and has played a pivotal role in the formation of Beeson's new Center for Women in Ministry as an advisory board member," Padilla said. "This new scholarship in her name will encourage and enable more women like Jennifer who are called by God to serve Him in Christian ministry to receive theological training."

Rash earned her master of theological studies degree from Beeson in 2007.

The scholarship was announced during the executive committee meeting of TAB's board of directors. The first scholarship from the endowment will be given in Fall 2022.

To give to the new endowment, go to [beesondivinity.com/giving](http://beesondivinity.com/giving).

## 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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The crossword puzzle can be found on page 17.

# RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

**By Jennifer Davis Rash**

President and Editor-in-Chief



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@RashionalThts

## Do you assume the best or worst in people as a first response?

**T**he puffy shoulders on my wedding dress dated me for a while, but with the latest clothing trend showcasing exaggerated shoulders, I might just have a retro sensation safely stored away.

I would love to see a revival of a few other things, and topping that list is the benefit of the doubt.

Do you remember a time when we gave that — the benefit of the doubt — to each other? When we didn't jump to conclusions without making sure we had all the facts?

Do you remember knowing people well enough to know when something seemed out of character for them? And then reaching out to them to talk and work through whatever seemed off?

Do you remember assuming the best in people, even when they misspoke or mishandled a situation?

I remember, and I miss it.

Did I always get it right? Not at all. Were there times others would have understood me better if they had given me the benefit of the doubt in a specific circumstance? Absolutely.

But the moments we didn't practice this show of grace were

rare. They were the exception, not the rule.

We seem to have shifted from "exception" to "rule," but I believe we can get our "benefit of the doubt" back in shape.

### *1. Practice, practice, practice.*

It's an age-old concept and one we all know. To excel in any area requires practice. Start today and watch your muscle memory eventually take over.

### *2. Look beyond the sound bite.*

Headlines are written to grab your attention, but they can't provide the full story. Social media posts and TV sound bites capture punchy comments, quotable moments and one layer of someone's opinion, description or explanation.

To fully understand requires reading, listening and/or researching. It requires time and attention.

### *3. Get to know the person you seem to dislike.*

Taking the time to hear someone's heart and how he or she came to a certain conclusion, why he is passionate about a certain cause or where she is struggling to make a decision changes everything.

It doesn't mean we will agree

nor that we have to accept the findings. It doesn't mean we will become best friends and meet for coffee every Thursday.

But it does mean we are working to fully understand what is taking place. It also means we respect the other person's right to his or her own opinion and reasonings.

### *4. Find the good in every situation.*

Romans 8:28 gets us every time, doesn't it?

And while I'm not trying to over-spiritualize the basic concept of offering the gift of the benefit of the doubt, I do want to emphasize the importance of looking for the good and how finding the good provides hope and peace.

Sometimes the good is bigger than our individual situations, and may even mean we had to sacrifice something significant in our own lives.

### *5. Model and mentor.*

Once we are back in shape ourselves, we can help build a world of "benefit of the doubt" providers.

Showcase your moves and encourage others to give it a try. Say out loud to others, "I am confused by the decision too, but I'm going to give the group

the benefit of the doubt and trust that the members did their homework."

Or maybe, "That seems really out of character for her. I'm going to call her up and find out what's really going on. Something must be wrong — or maybe we don't have all the facts."

And also, "I can't support his stance and I'm sure I can't convince him to change his mind, but I'm still going to reach out to see if I can learn more about his reasoning."

You'll know what to say.

The main thing is the visible action of doing the work to assume the best in others as our first response — not only to demonstrate an intentional effort to better understand, but also because the Bible tells us that every human being is made in God's image.

1 Peter 3:8 says it well: "Live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble."

James 4:11, 1 Thessalonians 5:11 and John 13:34–35 are also helpful reminders.

Being a child of God extends beyond our personal relationship with Him. The fact is, we will never reach the end of the line of people we are called to love and value.✝

# Your Voice



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

## 4 steps for better church health in a time of unhealthiness

By Rick Lance

Executive director, Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

For at least a year now, we have been coping with a pandemic that has taken the lives of a half-million Americans and millions of others across the globe.

We are still facing some uncertain times. However, there are hopeful signs that this extended pandemic may be abating soon.

During this time, churches have had to adapt in ways never before considered. Mostly the news of these efforts to adjust and adapt are positive. Some churches are struggling more than others.

As we continue to face the uncertainties of this pandemic, I would

like to suggest we view the future of church life in terms of church revitalization. What I am offering as a strategy is for us to look at this recovery period as a two- to three-year timeframe.

The natural thought is that when the cloud of uncertainty leaves us, we will bounce back into the pre-COVID period; that is, we will be back to an old normal.

I do not see that in the near future. In my mind, every church will have to have some kind of church revitalization experience. If that is the case, then we must develop the healthiest mindset for the future through four areas:

### Prayer

Like many of you, I have struggled to maintain a prayerful mindset during this time of unhealthiness. One would think that would not be a problem, but it can be for sure. Fear, frustration and fatigue have been some of the challenges to a healthy mindset during this period.

Uncertainty always creates a sense of fear and anxiety. That is a natural response, and we should not be ashamed to admit it. Prayer can be so therapeutic when we experience these emotions.

Prayer has a way of helping us stay connected to the One who knows the future. Prayer brings us together in almost inexplicable ways. The small things remain small, and the main mission looms large before us.

### Patience

As we pray we can develop a sense of patience with ourselves and with others. In the future, our patience as church leaders will be tested even more than in the past.

We will expect a quick comeback from the days of the COVID period. I am inclined to believe that will not happen as desired.

Coming back to in-person worship and small groups like Sunday School will take more time than we may think. Be as patient with yourself and others as you can be. Patience almost always pays off.

### Perseverance

Closely aligned with patience is

the virtue of perseverance. When we are frustrated and fatigued, the tendency is to give up or back off. We have to develop the mindset of perseverance in order to withstand this tendency.

The Bible is replete with examples of perseverance. Moses and the children of Israel persevered in the midst of a prolonged time of living in the wilderness. There they had an extended course on how to depend upon God and to prepare for the promised land.

Perhaps this pandemic has been our wilderness experience preparing us for better days of service ahead. I pray that is the case.

### Prudence

When I am asked “How can I pray for you?” almost without exception I say, “Pray that I will have sense enough to pray for daily wisdom, for I am wisdom-challenged.”

That response is a genuine one. Just like you, I can feel overwhelmed with all that is happening around me that I feel a bit helpless — but never hopeless.

Praying for wisdom, as admonished by James 1:5, will keep us centered. This kind of praying will remind us that God is still on His throne. No pandemic has changed that reality. It will also help to be humble before God.

This mindset of prayer, patience, perseverance and prudence is something of a template of thinking that can help us approach the future in a healthy, Christ-honoring way.

## A far greater glory awaits

Because of God’s grace and the hope founded upon it, Paul reaffirms that he does not “lose heart,” and he assures his readers that they need not do so either.

All of our sufferings take their physical toll. As Paul acknowledges, our outer nature is “wasting away.”

But the toll on our outer nature cannot touch our inner nature where the Holy Spirit dwells.

No doubt Paul’s troubles and sufferings were intense and unending. But from the eternal standpoint, the apostle deemed

them as light and “momentary” compared to the “eternal weight of glory.”

Paul’s afflictions and their physical effects are plain to all who observe him. But no worries, replies the apostle, for they are only transient.

Paul is grounded in the truth of eternal life, and he is therefore occupied with the unseen and eternal.

**The late Jim Barnette from Sunday School commentary he wrote on 2 Corinthians 4:16–18 in Feb. 20, 2020, issue of TAB**

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

EDITOR’S NOTE — Adapted from an article originally posted at [ricklance.com](http://ricklance.com).

“I’m just happy to give what I can to support missionaries.”

BRODY BREWER

12-year-old missions supporter at Pathway Church in Redlands, California

Is my life compelling evidence that there is a living God of the Bible? The incarnation and resurrection of Jesus Christ is God’s undeniable evidence to man that He is alive and well.

But the question remains, “Is my life compelling evidence that God is alive and that He loves me and a lost world?” Is your life compelling evidence that He is alive? When people meet you and when they get to know you, do they stand in awe of a living, loving God living through you?

**George Yates**  
Church health strategist  
Alabama Baptist State Board  
of Missions

Maybe you are like me and see prayer as an area of your life that is

deficient, in need of repair, or just ordinary.

The good news is that God wants to teach us to pray, and He invites us to spend time with Him to better appreciate, understand and utilize this precious gift.

Stan Parks said, “Your prayer life now is ordinary to you. Add something to it to make it extraordinary for you. Then keep repeating that process.”

**Pastor Darryl Brunson**  
Expedition Church  
Livingston, Montana

The word “lost” refers to any who exclude God from life; “saved” means, among other things, that our life has been reunited with God.

This truth is but one ingredient or facet or essential for effective Christian ministry. Other essentials include discipline, vision, wisdom, decision-making, courage, forgiveness, humility, integrity, zeal and insight.

Let us not fail to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and forever. Amen” (2 Pet. 3:18).

**Morris Murray Jr.**  
Jasper, Ala.

The only thing you contribute to your salvation is the sin that made it necessary.

**Pastor Matt Mason**  
The Church at Brook Hills  
Birmingham

## From the *Twitterverse*

### @drbobterry

While Jesus is representing me in heaven, may I reflect him on Earth. While he pleads my cause, may I show forth his praise.

— God Enjoyed

### @JackieHillPerry

“Enoch walked with God.”

“Noah walked with God.”

“Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared ... and said to him, “... Walk before Me.”

“... whoever says he abides in Him ought to walk in the same way in which He walked.”

Walk with God Saints.

### @RevKevDeYoung

The promises of God are so inviolable that no threat — from outside the church or from inside — can render them null and void. Surely that is good news.

### @CSLewisDaily

“If you’re thinking of becoming a Christian, I warn you, you’re embarking on something which will take the whole of you.”

— C.S. Lewis

### @MattSmethurst

You may face hardship this week. God has not promised you ease. But you won’t face it alone. God has promised you Himself.

### @Rgallaty

“Revival is falling in love with Jesus all over again.” — Vance Havner

### @SamGreer\_PSG

More gospel conversationalists and less gossip conservationists.

### @JustinEGiboney

When we talk about what the church needs to do to survive, it’s

important to define what’s meant by survival. Gaining greater numbers while denying moral convictions and not calling congregants to personal transformation is death not survival.

### @MichaelHyatt

You really can achieve more by doing less. The key is to set hard boundaries, cull your tasks and activity list, and cultivate other interests.

### @bigvox

As we all head to worship on this Lord’s Day, let us not make one classic mistake ... thinking the message we are about to hear is something someone else needed to hear.

### @DrRobertSmithJr

“Our allegiance must not be to Capitol Hill, but to A Hill Far Away ... not to the White House, but to our Father’s House.”

## Pray for your pastor

There are so many reasons to pray for your pastor. He stands before crowds large and small who are listening.

When he gets the words right, he comforts the hurting and shines a light in darkness and clears a path for the lost. When he gets it right, he shows people Jesus, gives them hope, and helps them stand.

But when he gets it wrong, he can hurt people in ways they may never recover from, simply because they trust him in the deepest and most personal matters of life.

► Pray for your pastor’s words. Every day, people come to his office seeking advice about personal matters, issues on which he may or may not have a clue.

► Pray for your pastor’s purity. His television brings in the same channels as yours. He has the same temptations to impurities in thought we all face.

► Pray for your pastor’s choices. Should he answer the phone tonight or let it ring? Respond to a need or stay home with the family? Spend his morning in the study or in the community knocking on doors? Confront the troublemaker in the church or leave him to the Lord?

► Pray for your pastor’s attitude. Better he always think of himself as the servant of the servants, always giving thanks that the Father chose to put such an unworthy one in such a place of service, and always looking for ways to bless those around him.

Luke 17:10 provides every one of us, particularly us pastors, with the best statement of who we are and what we are about: I am only an unworthy servant just doing my job.

Pray for your pastor, friend. So much depends on it.

—Joe McKeever

*EDITOR’S NOTE — Adapted from an article originally posted at joemckeeper.com.*

# 'God was already at work'

## Annie Armstrong Easter Offering supports missionaries planting gospel roots across North America

(continued from page 1)  
come out here and see it with me."

The couple couldn't get past the fact that the city was 92% lost, had a large homelessness problem and had many children in need of foster care.

"The percentage of lostness was 95% just a few years ago, so we knew God was already at work, and we wanted to join Him," Ivy said.

So he and his wife joined the ranks of North American Mission Board missionaries who are working to reach the estimated 275 million lost people in North America.

All of those missionaries are supported in some way by the Annie

Armstrong Easter Offering, 100% of which goes directly to fund missionary work. The national offering goal this year is \$70 million, and the Alabama goal is \$6.25 million.

This AAEO season of giving begins with the Week of Prayer for North American Missions, set this year for March 7–14. The week will highlight stories of missionaries who, like the Ivys, are supported by the AAEO. (For more information, see story, page 7.)

All of them benefit from the offer-

ing, and all of them need prayer support to stay strong in the work to which God has called them.

For the Ivys, AAEO funds have



Photo courtesy of Ryan Ivy

Ryan and Kierstin Ivy and their son, Samson, originally from the Mobile area, have planted their lives in Las Vegas to plant Image Church.

helped carry them through to where they are today. When they first got to Las Vegas, they began an apprenticeship with WALK Church through NAMB's Send Network for church planters.

"It's been awesome; we've learned a lot," Ivy said.

With guidance and support from their team, he and his wife moved into a community called Mountain's Edge with the idea that one day

they would plant a church there.

### 'It broke my heart'

"[Mountain's Edge] has 60,000 people without a single evangelical church," Ivy said. "Coming from an area with a church every half mile, it broke my heart to think that 60,000 people didn't have an evangelical church they could attend in their own community."

Ivy and his wife began getting to

*"[Mountain's Edge] has 60,000 people without a single evangelical church. Coming from an area with a church every half mile, it broke my heart to think that 60,000 people didn't have an evangelical church they could attend in their own community."*

Ryan Ivy  
NAMB church planter



Photo courtesy of Ryan Ivy

Ryan Ivy (right) greets people at the launch Sunday of Image Church in Las Vegas. Ivy said he and his wife, Kierstin, felt God calling them to church planting, and then felt burdened for the unreached of Las Vegas specifically.

*“It’s hard to put into words just how different Las Vegas is than what you think it is. We pray they would be known for the revival that’s happening here instead of the sin it’s known for.”*

Ryan Ivy  
NAMB church planter

know their neighbors as best they could during COVID-19.

In February, they had their first service at their new church plant, Image Church, with a core group of around 25 people.

### Prayer needs

Ivy asked for prayer that God would bring people to them, as well as a children’s minister to work alongside them.

“It’s hard to put into words just how different Las Vegas is than what you think it is,” Ivy said. “We pray they would be known for the revival that’s happening here instead of the sin it’s known for. And we’re expectant as we pray for that.”



NAMB photo by Ben Rollins Photography

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, Victor Moura’s church plant started streaming their church services online. Moura, a 2021 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering missionary, and his church have focused on maintaining a strong sense of community, and that approach has drawn people in, both young and old.

# Week of Prayer for North American Missions

Here’s a preview of the stories for this year’s Week of Prayer for North American Missions, set for March 7–14:

### Day 1

More than 300,000 South Asians call the Greater Vancouver area home, many of them Sikhs and Hindus. Shahid and Maroofa Kamal are doing their best to show them that they don’t need many gods or gurus — just the one true God.

### Day 2

In east Atlanta, racial and socioeconomic tensions are high. But Ryan and Tricia McCammack are seeing God bring reconciliation in their multicultural church plant.

### Day 3

Victor and Ludmila Moura had a comfortable life in Brazil but felt God calling them to leave it all to plant a church for Brazilians in Boston.

### Day 4

Anders and Jessica Snyder believe that when God takes a dying church and revives it, it can



NAMB photo by Ben Rollins Photography

After COVID-19 hit, Bobby Williams, a 2021 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering missionary, and Next Level Church started offering their services online and even conducted a virtual Vacation Bible School for children in the community. Williams’ wife, LaKeisha, offered health advice through video chats because of her public health background, and the church continued to serve meals to the community on a regular basis.

be a picture of resurrection to the community. They’re seeing that happen in Nampa, Idaho, where they’re leading a church “replant” and seeing lives changed.

### Day 5

Joshua Valdez says youth in his area — which is mostly Hispanic and Navajo — struggle with hopelessness. Hunger, substance abuse and suicide are rampant. But he’s seeing Jesus change lives through Bible studies at his church plant in Farmington, New Mexico.

### Day 6

Parts of New Orleans feel “forgotten” — they’ve taken a long

time to rebuild, or even get a grocery store back, since Hurricane Katrina. So Bobby and LaKeisha Williams are investing their lives to connect the community with needed resources and new hope in Jesus.

### Day 7

God rescued Jacob Zailan out of a cycle of using drugs, selling drugs and doing time. Now he’s taking the gospel to the streets of Sanger, California, to reach people stuck in the same kind of life — people who “would scare people who go to most churches.” (TAB, NAMB)

*Prayer guides and videos with these stories and more are available for individuals, groups and churches to download or order for free. For more information visit [anniearmstrong.com](http://anniearmstrong.com) or [alabamawmu.org/offerings](http://alabamawmu.org/offerings).*

**The 2021 Week of Prayer for North American Missions is March 7–14.**

# EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

## 86-member group guides accountability, cooperation for SBC

By Art Toalston  
TAB Media

Each Alabama church, the State Board of Missions, the International Mission Board and North American Mission Board — all are part of the fabric of Southern Baptist life.

Less visible in the fabric is the SBC Executive Committee.

It has 86 members — at least a third of whom are laypeople — representing 41 state and regional Baptist conventions from across the country.

Alabama members of the Executive Committee are Jim Averett of Birmingham, Benjamin F. Kelly Jr. of Montgomery, Paul S. Hicks of Hayden and Phyllis Ingram and Neal Hughes, both of Pike Road.

Within the Southern Baptist Convention, the 104-year-old Executive Committee is a key point of accountability to churches that their gifts for national and international missions and ministries are rightly distributed through the Cooperative Program.

The SBC's bylaws assign a range of responsibilities to the Executive Committee. While it has no direct authority over trustees of the IMB, NAMB or other entities, it is assigned an "advisory capacity on all questions of cooperation" between the convention's entities,

### Difficult discussions play out at February EC meeting

Meeting in person for the first time in a year, about 80 percent of the 86-member SBC Executive Committee gathered in Nashville, Feb. 22–23. Most of the others joined the committee meetings virtually but did not have opportunity to vote.

While TAB anticipated tense conversations dealing with the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission and others, it was a surprise topic — related to Southwestern Seminary — that captured most of the attention.

Southwestern recently settled a lawsuit involving two of its trustees, which resulted in those trustees resigning. But before the lawsuit was settled Feb. 8, the trustees were suspended because of alleged "misconduct."

The SBC EC attorneys argued

that only messengers to an annual meeting can take that action. Southwestern officials pushed back, and the in-person discussion Feb. 23 became heated.

The result? An EC task force was formed to study the issue.

A separate task force focused on ERLC concluded its work Feb. 23 with a report basically noting: "ERLC is functioning within the bounds of its ministry assignment, how well is up to the board of directors (and it is) undeniably, yes, impacting CP funds," said task force chairman Mike Stone.

While no vote was taken on the report, the action items will be considered by EC officers and staff, according to Stone.

In other news, four churches were disfellowshipped. For more information, see page 17. (TAB)

as well as between the SBC and state convention partners.

Last year amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the Executive Committee was part of the decision to call off the convention's annual meet-

ing in Orlando, drawing from the SBC constitution's provision for a "grave emergency."

It was the first such cancellation since 1945 during World War II.

Otherwise, the Executive Committee carries the lead role in facilitating each year's annual meeting — from convention and exhibit hall arrangements to meetings of the Resolutions Committee and other committees.

#### Ministry assignments

Following are added details about the Executive Committee's work and history and its makeup. The Executive Committee's

service role is reflected in the two words — "Assist churches" — that frame each of the six ministry assignments that the convention has placed with the body:

**1. Conduct** the work of the convention "not otherwise assigned" to an SBC entity as well as any issues that may arise between convention sessions

**2. Provide** a news service (Baptist Press) to distribute "regular news releases about Southern Baptists" and to provide a news operation during each year's annual meeting

**3. Provide** a public relations service tasked to: "Interpret the Southern Baptist Convention to internal and external publics," including the journal SBC LIFE and the sbc.net websites

**4. Oversee** the Southern Baptist Foundation's work within the SBC and with other Baptist and evangelical bodies and individuals in estate planning and investment management primarily for funds to support Southern Baptist causes

**5. Promote** cooperative giving, setting forth the Cooperative Program as "the basic channel of support for the ministries of the state conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention"

**6. Develop and distribute** resources "applying biblical principles of stewardship" to help Southern Baptists grow in their commitment to Jesus Christ.

#### Convention finances

To buttress the SBC's financial integrity, the Executive Committee's various responsibilities in the convention's bylaws include:

► Providing a yearly "consolidated and comprehensive financial statement" of the convention and its entities, certifying generally

*The 104-year-old Executive Committee is a key point of accountability to churches that their gifts for national and international missions and ministries are rightly distributed through the Cooperative Program.*

accepted accounting principles for assets, liabilities and receipts during the year

► Recommending to the convention a comprehensive budget for the SBC and its entities. The current year's Cooperative Program Allocation Budget distributes 50.41% of CP receipts from the states to the International Mission Board; 22.79% to the North American Mission Board; 22.16% to the SBC's six seminaries; 1.65% to the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission; and 2.99% to the EC and SBC operating budgets.

## History

The Executive Committee was established during the 1917 SBC annual meeting in New Orleans after a year of deliberation by a 14-member Committee on Consolidation of the Boards.

The initiative was sparked by a motion at the 1916 annual meeting in Asheville, North Carolina, by Manson Horatio Wolfe, a Dallas businessman and longtime chairman of the deacons at First Baptist Church during George W. Truett's pastorate. Wolfe's proposal: "to create one strong Executive Board which shall direct all of the work and enterprises fostered and promoted by this Convention."

Though Wolfe chaired the committee, it faced opposition to a centralized convention structure. Its 1917 report affirmed separate entity trustee boards and called for a seven-member Executive Committee "representing different parts of the Convention territory" to act in behalf of the body between annual meetings.

In 1927 — two years after the creation of the Cooperative Program — the Executive Committee established offices in Nashville and restructured to allow for a growing membership.

Seven men have led the body over the years: Austin Crouch, 1927–1946; Duke K. McCall, 1946–1951; Porter W. Routh, 1951–1979; Harold Bennett, 1979–1992; Morris H. Chapman, 1992–2010;

Frank S. Page, 2010–2018; and Ronnie W. Floyd, 2019-present.

## Current membership

Executive Committee bylaws provide for one member representing the Dakotas, Iowa, Minnesota-Wisconsin and Montana; two members for state conventions with 250,000 or more church members; three members for 500,000 church members; four for 750,000 church members; and five for 1 million church members.

At least one-third of Executive Committee members must be individuals not employed by a church or denomination entity.

Committee members, who are eligible to serve two 4-year terms, are nominated by the SBC Committee on Nominations and approved by messengers at each year's annual meeting.

Additionally, the SBC president and recording secretary and president of Woman's Missionary Union serve on the Executive Committee as ex-officio members.

The Executive Committee meets for two days each September and February and meets twice in conjunction with the SBC annual meeting.

The following links provide more information:

► The Executive Committee's bylaws can be accessed at [sbc.net/about/what-we-do/legal-documentation/bylaws](http://sbc.net/about/what-we-do/legal-documentation/bylaws)

► EC ministry assignments can be found at [sbc.net/about/what-we-do/legal-documentation/organization-manual](http://sbc.net/about/what-we-do/legal-documentation/organization-manual)

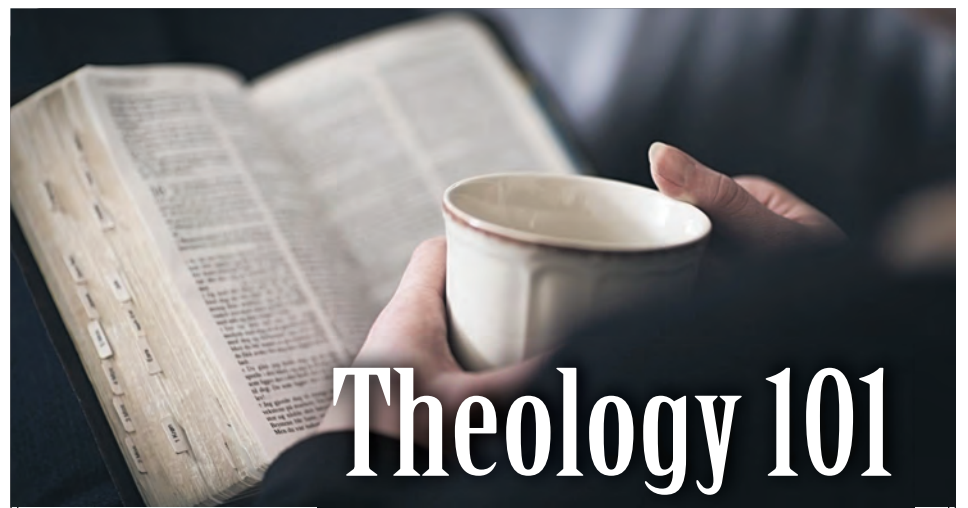
► A roster of its current members is available at [sbc.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/SBCEC.pdf](http://sbc.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/SBCEC.pdf)

► A staff listing is at [sbcec.org](http://sbcec.org)

► CP allocation monthly reports are posted at [sbc.net/cp](http://sbc.net/cp).

A book on the first six decades of the Executive Committee by the late Albert McClellan, titled "The Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1917–1984," is available at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com).<sup>✚</sup>

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# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## Love Does

# Praising the Lord

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.

TAB Media

Last week Theology 101 dealt with the idea of wholehearted praise. This week takes a closer look at the discipline of praising the Lord by dwelling on the concluding psalm of what is often called the "songbook" of the people of God at worship. Very early this biblical book became known as *Sepher Tehillim* — "the Book of Praises" or later as simply *Tehillim* — "Praises."

The vast majority of the psalms contains some expression of praise. This week's focus is on the concluding "song." Every verse of Psalm 150 contains two or more exhortations for God's people to praise Him. Hence, more than a dozen times, praising the Lord is the theme. With Psalm 150 as the guide, take note of how the Bible's book of praises addresses the where, why, how and who of praising the Lord.

## Where to praise

The opening verse of the psalm tells us that praise is to be offered in the Lord's house and in His heaven. Praise is to be heard in the sanctuary or place of worship. Not only is the church to be a house of prayer (Matt. 21:13), but it also should be known as a house of praise.

Additionally, the praise of God is to be heard in His mighty firmament or expanse of heaven.

The second verse of Psalm 150 draws attention to why such praise should be offered. The reason is twofold: for what He does

and for Who He is. What the Lord does is termed His mighty acts or powerful deeds. Not only does His conduct give birth to praise, but His character does as well.

God's abundant and excellent greatness call for praises. A season of meditation on His perfection is motivation for ceaseless praise.

## How to praise

The next three verses catalog the vast variety of means to sound the Lord's praises: wind instruments, stringed instruments and percussion instruments. To these accompaniments, the list adds the dancing of the worshippers themselves. These means are not for human demonstrations that seek to garner recognition or praise for the performers but are intended to extol the greatness of the Lord.

The final verse of the psalm answers the question of who should praise the Lord with the summary expression: "everything that breathes." Every living creature is envisioned as engaged in praising the Lord. Dare any of us choose to opt out?

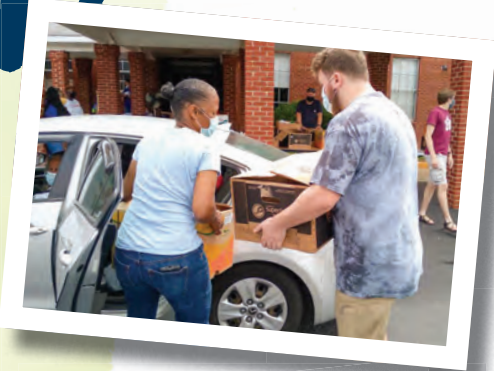
Fittingly the psalm ends as it began, with a hallelujah or "praise the Lord."<sup>✚</sup>

*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.*



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

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# ‘Broken and lost’

## Former MLB star Darryl Strawberry urges pastors, churches to share faith boldly

By Grace Thornton  
TAB Media

Darryl Strawberry says he’s thankful he had a praying mother.

He had a life many would call the definition of successful — a major league baseball career and four World Series wins. But the former right fielder uses a different adjective to describe what his life looked like at the time.

Destructive.

He said he was a “broken, heathen, womanizer, alcoholic, drug addict, sinner.”

But then Strawberry’s mom died, and he and his sister found her journal. She had written a prayer there — “God, knock my son off his throne and save him.”

She saw what he really needed, he said — not fame, and not money, but Jesus.

“God did exactly what she was praying for me,” he said. “He got me from a pit and was calling me to a pulpit.”

### God’s perfect plan

That’s the message Christians have to share, Strawberry told those listening at the Sharing Hope conference held Feb. 21 at Valleydale Church, Hoover. Sharing Hope — the State Evangelism Conference put on by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions — offered limited seating with social distancing and masks and also streamed live online.

About 220 attended in person while an additional 120 met for a Spanish-language conference at the same time led by Ramon Vielza, Southside campus pastor for Calvary Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

Strawberry, who closed the evening, said God’s perfect plan for His people is for them to share the gospel with others.

“May we never forget that we were broken and lost at one point,” he said.

Mac Brunson, Valleydale’s pastor, had kicked the evening off with a visual representation of that message — he baptized Ray White, a man he had spent two years praying for, that White would be open to the gospel.

Then Brunson preached from Acts 15, setting the scene of what it was like for the Apostle Paul and other Christians at that time and how they were winning many people to the Lord without all the technology available today to spread the Word.

“They had no cell phone, no libraries. How did they win so many people when they had nothing? And today



Photo by Doug Rogers

Darryl Strawberry, former MLB player and World Series champion, speaks to those gathered at Valleydale Church, Hoover, for the 2021 Sharing Hope conference.

we have everything, and we are losing people,” Brunson said. “We’ve lost a sense of call to take the gospel. We’ve lost any passion we had to take the gospel to a world that is lost and dying and going to hell.”

He encouraged pastors to be soul winners themselves and change the culture of their church that way.

“An evangelistic pastor will have an influence on his church,” Brunson said. “If we are evangelistic and we teach this to our people, it will strengthen them and give them the courage to go out and share the gospel. If you’re not going to be evangelistic, what are you doing being in the ministry?”

He challenged pastors to encourage each other to share the gospel and lead their church to do the same.

“An evangelistic church will impact the culture it’s in,” Brunson said.

### Pray for lost

During the conference, Frank Jones provided pre-session music, and Kirkwood Bullis and Valleydale Worship led the conference in singing.

Daniel Wilson, director of the SBOM office of evangelism, organized the evening, and Sammy Gilbreath, SBOM evangelism event and training specialist, led an altar call at the end and asked everyone in attendance to pray specifically for one person they know who does not know Jesus.

The Spanish-speaking conference was organized by Annel Robayna, church planting strategist focused on Hispanic work with the SBOM.✝

For more information about the Sharing Hope conference, visit [evangelizeal.com/sharinghope](http://evangelizeal.com/sharinghope).

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# 3 stories you should know



Photo courtesy of New Life Church, Minsk

Government authorities in Minsk, Belarus, on Feb. 17 seized the building of New Life Church, the largest and most influential evangelical church in the country of about 10 million. Police ordered approximately 70 believers, praying in the church at the time, to vacate the building under threat of arrest. Church members have met outdoors since the seizure of their building, a converted cow shed. Learn more at [tabonline.org/new-life-minsk](http://tabonline.org/new-life-minsk). (TAB)

## Myanmar protests turn violent, concerns mount

The military coup that began Feb. 1 in Myanmar has grown increasingly violent as supporters of the military clashed with protesters advocating for the release of the country's elected leaders.

Concern is growing for the country's ethnic and religious minorities. Myanmar is a predominantly Buddhist country. The Baptist World Alliance has issued a call to prayer for Myanmar. BWA member bodies include some 1.7 million people and 5,800 congregations.

A Judson College graduate living in Myanmar told The Alabama Baptist that she fears her country will become "like North Korea" if the military coup stands.

Read her perspective on the conflict along with more on the history of Baptist work in Myanmar at [tabonline.org/myanmar](http://tabonline.org/myanmar). (TAB)

## Equality Act passes House, moves to Senate

The U.S. House of Representatives on Feb. 25 passed the Equality Act, a sweeping bill that would expand the definition of "sex" in civil rights law to include sexual orientation and gender identity.

The legislation, filed as H.R. 5, would revise every title of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to add these categories as new protected classes in the federal code.

The bill passed the House 224-206. It now moves to the Senate, where 60 votes are required to overcome the filibuster, which would bring the bill to a vote.

In its current form, the bill would likely fall short of this threshold as it did in 2019 when the bill passed the House but died in the Senate.

Read more about the bill and its potential effects on religious liberty at [tabonline.org/equality-act](http://tabonline.org/equality-act). (TAB)

## Headline news from around the Southeast

### Florida

Idlewild Baptist Church in Lutz, Florida, has paid off more than \$38,000 in school lunch debt for students in Hillsborough County public schools and Pasco County schools. The church was already involved in ministry to schools through tutoring, mentoring, planning teacher appreciation events and gathering school supplies. Paying the school lunch debt was one additional way the church could demonstrate God's love and provide hope during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Mississippi

At age 83, Bill Duncan is the man Mississippi churches are apt to call as interim when they aren't quite ready for a full-time pastor. Now in his third year as interim pastor at Siloam Baptist Church in West Point, the retired pastor, director of missions and church planter has provided pulpit supply and held eight interim posts with

little interruption since 2002. He paused at age 75 for open heart surgery but credits God for good health and a "tremendous desire to keep serving."

### North Carolina

Baptists on Mission volunteers in North Carolina have been serving those impacted by a Feb. 15 EF3 tornado that tore through two counties in the state, the Biblical Recorder reported. At least three people were killed and 10 were injured. Damage was widespread. "Through [disaster response], we have a chance to meet deep physical and emotional needs while opening a door for eternal discussions," said John McIntyre, senior pastor of Wrightsville Beach Baptist Church.

### South Carolina

South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster signed into law on Feb. 18 a bill to prohibit abortion after a fetal heartbeat can be detected, a ban

commended by Southern Baptist leaders. The bill was suspended by a district judge the next day for a 14-day period. The Associated Press reports that 13 states have passed similar legislation, and all such laws have been suspended as they face court challenges. Arkansas passed a similar ban on most abortions on Feb. 22.

### Tennessee

When the rental home of an Iraqi family of seven was demolished by fire in Knoxville, Tennessee, the displaced family spent a sleepless night in a local business where the father works. The next day, the family found a temporary home through the partnership of several local congregations and ministry groups. "We ... want to show the love of Jesus through Christian hospitality," said Cindy Hood, founder and director of Welcome House, one of the ministries that facilitated the family's move into their temporary housing.

# Alabama news

## OBITUARIES

► **William “Bill” Whitfield**, longtime pastor of Cypress Shores Baptist Church, Mobile, died Dec. 20, 2020. He was 90.

Whitfield served with the U.S. Marine Corps and met his wife, Nell, at a bus stop in Mobile while he was in Pensacola for pilot training. The family returned to Alabama in 1965 for him to attend Mobile College (now University of Mobile).

He later studied at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, and earned a doctorate from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Whitfield became the first full-time pastor of Cypress Shores Baptist in 1971. He served there 20 years, retired and then became pastor to seniors at Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile.

At one point during his ministry, he also served as interim director of missions for Mobile Baptist Association.

Whitfield is preceded in death by his wife. He is survived by his son, Billy; daughters, Kim and Carrie; nine grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren.

► **Michael “Chad” Massey**, pastor of First Baptist Church, Dawes, died Dec. 23, 2020. He was 49.

Massey felt a call to ministry after working many years for his family’s business. He became minister of music and youth for Bethany Baptist Church, Bolingbroke, Georgia. He then served as pastor of First Baptist Church, Unadilla, Georgia, for three years before coming to First, Dawes.

Massey received a bachelor’s degree in biblical studies, a master of divinity degree and an honorary doctorate degree from

Northwestern Christian University in New Port Richey, Florida.

Massey is survived by his wife of 30 years, Amy; son, Aaron; and daughters, Marissa and Paige.

► **James “Jim” Barnette**, pastor of Brookwood Baptist Church, Mountain Brook, and longtime professor at Samford University, died Feb. 22. He was 59.

Barnette had served as senior pastor at Brookwood Baptist Church in Mountain Brook since 2016. Prior to that, he served as the church’s teaching pastor since 2008.

Barnette earned his undergraduate degree at Samford in 1983 and master of divinity and doctor of philosophy degrees at

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

In 1994, Barnette returned to Samford as minister to the university. He joined the faculty as a full-time professor in 2005. Barnette also directed Samford’s Preministerial Scholars program. He retired from Samford earlier this year.

For many years, Barnette also wrote quarterly Sunday School commentary for The Alabama Baptist.

Barnette is survived by his wife, Deanna; son Nicholas; daughter Hannah; and one grandchild.

## ALABAMA CRENSHAW ASSOCIATION

► **Parker Bowen** says God brought a lot of change to his life in 1976 — he married his wife, Tanja, and the week they returned from their honeymoon, he got a call to serve as pastor of his first church.

Fast forward to 2021, and he’s had a long and fruitful ministry serving as a bivocational pastor of Alabama Baptist churches. He had served 20 years as pastor of Highland Home Baptist Church before he recently retired, and for 23 years before that, he led Bradleyton Baptist Church, Grady.

Getting to know those congregations and the others he served before them was a “privilege,” he said.

Bowen plans to stay at Highland Home Baptist as an associate pastor, filling in for new pastor Jeremy Hendrick, whose civil service job takes him away periodically. He said Hendrick is “outstanding” and the church is “like family,” so he’s looking forward to being “one of many active men in the church” in the years to come.



WHITFIELD



BOWEN



FURR

## BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

► Since 1993, **Gary Furr** has served as pastor of **Vestavia Hills Baptist Church**, and as he retired at the end of February, he said he did so “with a great deal of gratitude and thanks.”

Jennifer Jaquess, chair of the church’s personnel committee, said Furr’s “incredible spirit and tremendous gifts have made all the difference in so many of our lives and countless others beyond the congregation.”

Before coming to Birmingham, Furr served as pastor at churches in Georgia and Texas. His total pastoral ministry has spanned 41 years.

He holds a bachelor’s degree from Carson-Newman College (now University) in Jefferson City, Tennessee; a master’s degree from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina; and a doctorate from Baylor University in Waco, Texas.

He also is a graduate of the Academy for Spiritual Formation through Upper Room Ministries, and a graduate of the inaugural class of Leadership Vestavia Hills.

Furr has served on various boards and councils in the Birmingham area and statewide through the years and is a conference speaker and a published author.

He also has served as an adjunct professor at Samford University and Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham.

He and his wife, Vickie, plan to continue to serve as members of Vestavia Hills Baptist.

## Persecuted church

### *Pregnant Christian miscarries after beating by Hindu extremists*

DEWADA, India — A pregnant woman lost her baby after being beaten by Hindu extremists who attacked Christians at a New Year’s Eve celebration.

Leela Bai, 25, was eight months pregnant when she was pushed down and repeatedly kicked in the stomach until she was unconscious. She delivered a stillborn baby boy in an ambulance; two hospitals refused to treat her.

Thirty Hindu extremists attacked Dewada village, accusing tribal Christians of converting people. The extremists asked police to

arrest the Christians under the recently passed “anti-conversion” law of Madhya Pradesh state. The law allows conversions, but only

upon pre-approval. Christians in the village fled to nearby mountains.

The extremists are suspected to be members of the Hindu nationalist organization Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the “parent” of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party. Attacks on Christians have increased since Prime

Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP came to power in May 2014.

India was No. 31 on Open Doors’ 2013 World Watch List of places where it is most difficult to be a Christian; in 2021, India is No. 10. (MS)



MASSEY



BARNETTE

# Bivocational ministers' conference focuses on evangelism, discipleship

By Dianna L. Cagle

TAB Media

**B**ivocational ministers gathered online Feb. 20 for the Alabama Baptist Bivocational Fellowship's first ever virtual conference.

"We need to stand with each other and encourage one another," said Tim Henning, president of the Bivocational Fellowship and pastor of New Beginnings Fellowship, Trussville. "This has been a great day for me. I have been so refreshed."

Usually a two-day retreat held at Shocco Springs Conference Center in Talladega, this year's event was a one-day meeting hosted online and livestreamed from NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville.

Speakers included Henning; NorthPark pastor Bill Wilks; Jacky Connell, pastor of Eden Westside Baptist Church, Pell City; and Kevin Blackwell, executive director of Samford University's Ministry Training Institute and disciple-making and teaching pastor of The Station Church, Bessemer.

Connell shared about his personal journey in the pastorate.

Henning shared from 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10.

## Making disciples

"Paul had only been in Thessalonica four, maybe five weeks when he planted this church," Henning said. "He started leading people to Christ, started the discipleship process."

Paul wasn't sure if the church had continued, but Timothy reports that not only had it continued, but it was growing.

"They're strong; they're aggressive," Henning said.



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

Beverly Martin, a member of the tech crew at NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville, operates one of the cameras used for livestreaming the Bivocational Pastors Online Conference on Feb. 20.

"They are carrying on the work of the Great Commission."

Henning challenged participants to share the gospel once a week for three months, highlighting several evangelism strategies that might be used.

Wilks, author of the D-Life discipleship curriculum, shared five steps to building a disciple-making culture

for church revitalization: pray it through, unite your leaders, develop a process, rethink the model or ministry and set some goals.

"The best way to experience revitalization in your church is to build a disciple-making culture," he said.

Wilks pointed to the church referred to in Acts 6:7. It didn't have buildings, budgets or technology, but the Word continued to increase and the number of disciples multiplied.

"They multiplied greatly because they had ... disciple-making people," Wilks said.

Blackwell said he has heard many bivocational pastors express frustration in the past few months.

"You are currently in the most difficult season

of ministry that you have ever faced," Blackwell said. "Some of you, frankly, are completely exhausted."

Blackwell offered three pieces of advice from Paul, Jesus and Peter. Paul says, "Take a firm grip" (Phil. 3:12-14); Jesus says, "Take a freeing rest" (Matt. 11:28-30); and Peter says, "Take a focused resolve" (1 Pet. 5).

## Care for people

"God's entrusted to you to care for the people He died for," he said. "We lay down our lives. I don't know if there's a higher privilege. I also don't know if there's a greater burden."

The Fellowship's officers for 2021 are: president, Tim Henning; vice president, Benjie Miller, pastor of Bynum Baptist Church, Eastaboga; and treasurer/secretary, Ken Wells, pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church, Scottsboro.

The fellowship hosts a Facebook group at facebook.com/groups/bivoministries.

For more information, contact Henning at 205-613-7235. 🌿

Place a classified ad for \$1 per word. For more information email ads@thealabamabaptist.org.

**TAB Media**

## TAB CLASSIFIEDS

### 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 resumé to: fbcloxleypastorsearch@gmail.com.

#### BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Seeking bivocational pastor for Alabama Gulf Coast Southern Baptist church. Church has about 40 members and a lot of room in the sanctuary for growth. Seeking a pastor who has a heart for people and preaches the unchanging word of God. Church is in an area that has great potential for increasing attendance. Experience preferred but not required. Please send resumé to: Bayside Baptist Church, ATTN: Pastoral Search Committee, P.O. Box 533, Lillian, AL 36549, or email to: bsbcillian@gmail.com.

#### BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

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

#### 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 resumé to: southside@sbcandalusia.com or Southside Baptist Church, 1213 West Bypass, Andalusia, AL 36420.

#### 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 posi-

tion profile, email Dr. Tom Smiley, executive pastor, Lakewood Baptist Church, Gainesville, Ga. at: tsmiley@lakewoodlife.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. Resumés and videos may be emailed to: kim@yorkbluffbaptist.com. The deadline to receive resumé is Wednesday, March 31.

### OTHER POSITIONS

#### 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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# Someone You Should Know

## JAMES "SONNY" CONAWAY

By Leigh Pritchett

TAB Media

James "Sonny" Conaway, 93, of Anniston has been recognized by his church for 61 years of perfect Sunday School attendance. No matter the obstacles, he finds a way to be in Sunday School.

Once, he was granted a courtesy discharge from a hospital long enough to attend class. Another time, while on a business trip in New York, he walked 22 blocks — one way — to a Baptist church on two consecutive Sundays.

During this global pandemic, Sunday School comes to Conaway's kitchen

table each week, thanks to deacon and teacher David Naugher. Conaway worked more than 55 years at Union Foundry.

**Q: Describe where you focus your greatest ministry efforts.**

A: Attending Sunday School, without fail.

**Q: Who are or were the most influential people in your faith life? Why?**

A: That would be my mother, Era Lee Hardin Conaway, and my father, Henry Lee Conaway. Secondly, it will be my grandfathers, L. Jesse Conaway and James Asa Hardin. I

was not sent to church; I was carried. We went as a family. When we moved to Anniston, we still went as a family until I was 21 years old. At that point, I went into the Army and that ended us going to church together.

**Q: If there was one thing you could tell your younger self about faith, what would it be?**

A: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). Without faith, where will you go? To me, you've got to have faith. And I am a believer in God.

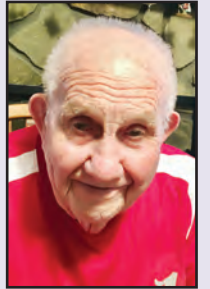
**Q: Have you ever read a book or heard a song that changed the way you think about God and faith? What was it and what did you learn from it?**

A: "This is the beginning of a new day/ God has given me this day to use as I will/ I can waste

**MINISTRY:** Faithful church attender

**CHURCH NAME:** Golden Springs Baptist Church, Anniston, in Calhoun Baptist Association

**LIFE VERSE:** "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold." (Prov. 22:1)



it or use it for good. ..." (from the poem "A New Day" by Heartsill Wilson). I am a lover of poems. I don't know where I came across it — somewhere in my late teens or early 20s. That helped me turn my life around. That made me think about what I wanted to do with my life. I wanted it to be successful by being a good person, a good Christian, a churchgoer, a hard worker, a good father and a good husband. Also, "The Bridge Builder" (a poem by Will Allen Dromgoole

about building a bridge across a chasm to benefit the next person to travel that way). I read it in school at Spring Garden. It stuck with me for years.

**Q: Does your church have any special traditions that mean a lot to you? What are they?**

A: The Annie Armstrong Easter Offering and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. I definitely believe in them. We need to share our thoughts of religion to all people.✝

### DO YOU KNOW A PERSON WHO SHOULD BE FEATURED AS Someone You Should Know?

Send his or her name, a contact number and the reason you think he or she should be featured to Someone You Should Know, c/o The Alabama Baptist, 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209, or to news@thealabamabaptist.org.



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# WEEK OF PRAYER FOR NORTH AMERICAN MISSIONS and Annie Armstrong Easter Offering

## MARCH 7-14, 2021

(or choose any time that works best for you during the Easter season)

[alsbom.org/annie](http://alsbom.org/annie)

In addition to the prayer guide provided by the North American Mission Board, here are some missionaries and church planters from Alabama who are serving across our state and nation. Please take a moment and lift each one of these up in prayer!



Day 1

**Elaine Shaneyfelt**  
Junction Church  
Calgary, Alberta



Day 2

**Mike and Charity Waldrep**  
Area Missionaries  
Kenai, Alaska



Day 3

**Joseph and Kristen Gibbons**  
Favor City Church  
Las Vegas



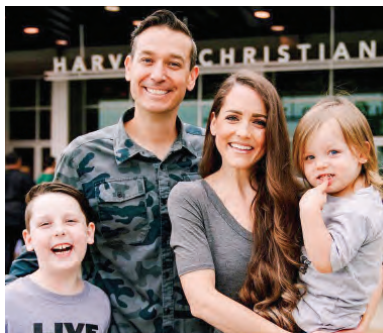
Day 4

**Blakely and Melissa Winslow**  
Christian Challenge  
Colorado School of Mines  
Golden, Colorado



Day 5

**Lynn and Lori Darnell**  
The Bridge Ministries  
Geraldine



Day 6

**Jason and Mary Powell**  
Jesus City Church  
Montgomery



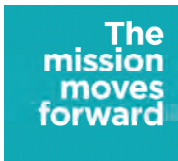
Day 7

**Devins and Carol Jackson**  
The Body of Christ Church  
Huntsville



Day 8

**Britton and Jessica Latham**  
Church at the Oaks  
Tuscaloosa



For more information about missionaries from Alabama serving around the world, please visit [a18c.org](http://a18c.org).

To request a prayer guide to help you pray for our Alabama Baptist church planters, contact Lynn Graham, [lgraham@alsbom.org](mailto:lgraham@alsbom.org), (334) 613-2244.

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

# 4 churches disfellowshipped from SBC

By **Diana Chandler**  
Baptist Press

The Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee disfellowshipped four churches from the denomination Feb. 23 for adverse policies and practices including employing convicted sex offenders and affirming homosexuality within their memberships.

Disfellowshipped for affirming homosexuality were Towne View Baptist Church in Kennesaw, Georgia, and St. Matthews Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky.

Antioch Baptist Church in Sevierville, Tennessee, was dropped for employing a pastor who confessed to two counts of statutory rape.

West Side Baptist Church in Sharpsville, Pennsylvania, was disfellowshipped for employing as its pastor a registered sex offender.

The EC decisions came during an executive session Feb. 23, following the recommendations of the SBC Credentials Committee. The decisions were announced in a plenary session at the close of its two-day meeting in Nashville.

The SBC repurposed the Credentials Committee in 2019 to make inquiries and recommendations for action regarding instances of issues that call into question a church's relationship with the SBC.

"We take no pleasure in recommending that a church is not in friendly cooperation with the convention," Credentials Committee chairman Mike Lawson said.

"We would like nothing more than for all our churches to be in harmony on such vital issues. But when the available information shows clearly that we are not, it is necessary to take action.

"We are grieved, but we believe it was the right decision to recommend and will continue to pray for all involved."

## Towne View Baptist

Towne View Pastor Jim Conrad said he regrets being disfellowshipped and will now evaluate the church's relationship with the Georgia Baptist Mission Board and the Noonday Association.

"We are grateful for our relationship with the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention over the history of our church, and we remain committed to share God's love in and through Jesus with everybody and to welcome anybody who can profess Jesus as Lord into the fellowship of our church," he said.

Towne View made the decision to accept a male homosexual couple with their three adopted sons who sought membership there in October

2019, Conrad has said, and at the time lost 30% of its membership. But he remains committed to his decision.

"We see them as all of us," he said of homosexuals, "as children of God created in the image of God, and anyone who can profess Jesus as Lord should be welcomed into our church."

## St. Matthews Baptist

The Kentucky Baptist Convention was the first to disfellowship St. Matthews, dropping the church in 2018 over its support of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship that affirms homosexuality.

The church had continued its affiliation with the SBC.

St. Matthews Pastor Bob Baker wasn't available for comment. But when the KBC disfellowshipped the church, Greg Barr, who led the church in 2018, described the decision as "disheartening."

"The Kentucky Baptist Convention had an opportunity to demonstrate to a divided nation that we do not have to agree on everything in order to love each other and partner together in carrying out the mission Jesus called us to. Unfortunately, the Convention chose a different course," Barr told the Louisville Courier-Journal.

"Our church believes that unity and difference of opinion can co-exist in the service of our Lord."

## Antioch Baptist

Antioch Baptist employs as its pastor John Randy Leming Jr., who pleaded guilty to two counts of statutory rape for oral sex with a 16-year-old congregant when he pastored Shiloh Baptist Church in Sevier County.

He pleaded guilty in 1998 to the offenses that occurred in May and June of 1994, when he was 31, and lost his appeal of the concurrent 18-month sentences.

Leming has served at Antioch since March 2014, according to the SBC Annual Church Profile. He could not be reached for comment.

## West Side Baptist

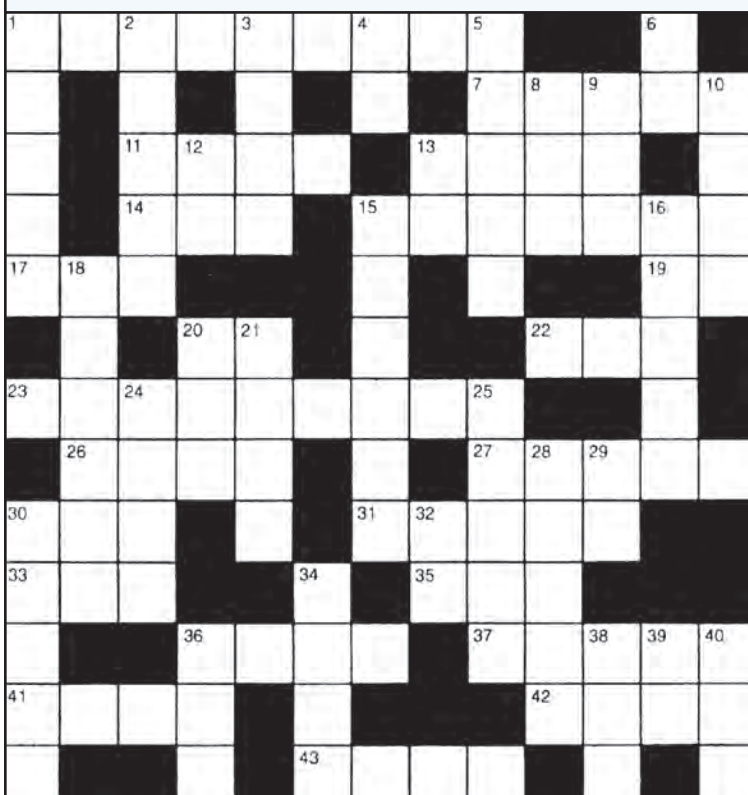
West Side Pastor David Pearson is listed on the National Sex Offender registry for his 1993 conviction of aggravated criminal sexual assault of a child in Denton, Texas.

Contacted regarding the EC's action, Pearson said he had no comment.

West Side Baptist Church was previously disfellowshipped by the Baptist Resource Network of Pennsylvania/South Jersey but continued to affiliate with the SBC.✠

## Christian Crossword

By Carol Stengel Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



### Across

1. A name of Christ. (Rev. 1:8)
7. \_\_\_ not ye against the Lord. (Num. 14:9)
11. We ought to \_\_\_ God rather than man. (Acts 5:29)
13. Why do the heathen \_\_\_? (Ps. 2:1)
14. Though they be \_\_\_ like crimson. (Isa. 1:18)
15. O spare me, that I may \_\_\_ strength. (Ps. 38:13)
17. Many will \_\_\_ in that day. (Matt. 7:22)
19. Direction on the compass.
20. Academic degree. (abbr.)
22. I will \_\_\_ my tabernacle among you. (Lev. 26:11)
23. He hath given \_\_\_ unto all men. (Acts 17:31)
26. Two men \_\_\_ up

- into the temple to pray. (Luke 18:10)
27. \_\_\_ of me. (Matt. 11:29)
30. A charge for professional service.
31. Condescend.
33. Internal Revenue Service. (abbr.)
35. Whom \_\_\_ ye that I am? (Luke 9:20)
36. \_\_\_ found grace in the eyes of the Lord. (Gen. 6:8)
37. Israel came by the way of the \_\_\_. (Num. 21:1)
41. In his favour is \_\_\_. (Ps. 30:5)
42. God doth \_\_\_ with man. (Deut. 5:24)
43. Abstain from all appearance of \_\_\_. (1 Thess. 5:22)

### Down

1. \_\_\_ them that curse you. (Luke 6:28)
2. We beheld his \_\_\_. (John 1:14)
3. Seeth his brother

- have \_\_\_. (1 John 3:17)
4. Trust \_\_\_ the Lord with all thine heart. (Prov. 3:5)
5. Come boldly unto the throne of \_\_\_. (Heb. 4:16)
6. \_\_\_ that overcometh. (Rev. 3:5)
8. The self as distinguished from others.
9. Girl's name. (abbr.)
10. Lead astray.
12. Ye will not believe, though it \_\_\_ told you. (Hab. 1:5)
13. Prefix meaning "again."
15. It \_\_\_ upon the earth 40 days and nights. (Gen. 7:12)
16. \_\_\_ into his gates with thanksgiving. (Ps. 100:4)
18. How ye ought to \_\_\_ every man. (Col. 4:6)
20. A roll.
21. Many of them also

- which used curious \_\_\_ brought their books together. (Acts 19:19)
24. You are the God who \_\_\_ me. (Gen. 16:13)
25. Behold, he calleth \_\_\_. (Mark 15:35)
28. Joseph was sold into \_\_\_. (Gen. 37:36)
29. Is there any taste in the white of \_\_\_ egg? (Job 6:6)
30. The whole body \_\_\_ joined together. (Eph. 4:16)
32. Used to form plurals.
34. He hath \_\_\_ every thing beautiful. (Eccles. 3:11)
36. The kingdom of heaven is like a \_\_\_. (Matt. 13:47)
38. Suffix meaning "belongs to."
39. Old Testament name for God.
40. To glide on water or snow.

# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For March 7

## Explore the Bible

By Benjamin Stubblefield, Ph.D.

Visiting Assistant Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



### NEIGHBORS? Luke 10:25–37

#### The Exchange (25–29)

“I’ve told you a hundred times not to sit on the arm of that chair!” I’ll admit I said that probably a little too forcefully to my 7-year-old daughter. I was frustrated that I had to (again) correct her on how to treat our furniture. To this she calmly replied, “Daddy, I’m not sitting on the arm of the chair; I’m crawling over the arm of the chair.” “Hmm,” I mumbled. “You have the makings of a future lawyer, but you’re still in trouble.” While it’s undeniably true that she’s a lot cuter than our lawyer in Luke 10, my daughter’s strategy for self-justification and his are very much the same.

He knew the law; he respected the law; he wanted to keep the law. But he approached the law like a complex, coded system of legal definitions and technicalities. And what he’s asking Jesus to do is to help him limit the sorts of people whom he’s legally obligated to love.

Although unstated in the text, it’s reasonable to suppose that, like most of his countrymen, our lawyer here has a few enemies, rivals and a general animus toward Romans and Samaritans. But if they aren’t his “neighbors,” then he’s perfectly justified before God to spite them. “The law,” he might argue, “even permits it.” He’s zeroing in on the letter of the law and neglecting its intent.

But Jesus is having none of it. Rather, the Master Teacher exposes his attempt to evade the spirit of the law and falsely justify himself. It’s a familiar experience to all of us, isn’t it? The Holy Spirit reveals our unrighteousness (John 16:10), no matter how cleverly we try to hide it by self-justification.

How wonderful is the miracle of heaven-sent conviction that leads us to seek a proper Savior!

#### The Story (30–35)

Theologian Tim Keller points out that what’s fascinating about this story is that it is different from how some of us might have tried it. I think I would have reversed the roles of the characters, so that the Jewish

man is the hero and the Samaritan was receiving care, not giving it. And I would end it with something like, “You should love people like that Jewish man loved the Samaritan. That’s how God wants you to treat everyone.”

But Jesus does it better. Because the man on the road is a Jewish man, the Jewish lawyer more naturally identifies with him. Jesus is therefore pushing him to see himself on the road, where no religious officer or countrymen will help because perhaps they’re not technically required to consider him their “neighbor.” Jesus forces him to think, “Do you know what you would want, in that moment? You would want someone, anyone to love you.”

And that’s the genius of Jesus’ parable. Jesus doesn’t get sucked into a fruitless discussion over whom the law requires us to love and allows us to hate. His parable forces the lawyer to consider not, “How should I treat others?” but, “How would I want others to treat me?” Note how toward the end of the passage, Jesus doesn’t answer the lawyer’s initial question but flips it on him. In other words, Jesus is teaching the lawyer to focus less on figuring out who he does not have to love and focus more on loving others in a way that he hopes others would love him.

#### The Challenge (36–37)

The call to discipleship is a call to mercy. More radically, it is a call to show as much compassion as you would hope to be shown yourself. And there is the real challenge.

Weren’t we all ruined sinners, left for dead, (as the hymn goes) “weak and wounded, sick and sore”? Nobody like us could help us — no religiosity, no club, no creed. What we needed was an Outsider. A Foreigner, sent from heaven, who would, at great personal cost to Himself, help, heal, love.

That’s how we needed to be, hoped to be and are loved in Christ, our “Good Samaritan.” And that’s the quality of neighborliness that He calls us to show all others.✠

## Bible Studies for Life

By Rony Kozman, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies, Samford University



### THE NATURE OF GOD John 14:8–11, 15–26

When we ask about the nature of God, we are asking “what is God?” Scripture reveals many things about God’s nature. He is eternal and has life in Himself. He is the Creator, and all creation depends on Him for its existence. God is all-knowing, almighty and good. But who is this God who is the fullness of life, truth, love and power?

Scripture tells us that this God is the God of Israel who revealed Himself as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This God is one and three.

There is one God, one divine essence, who eternally exists in three persons — the Father, the Son of God and the Holy Spirit. This is the Christian doctrine of the Trinity which Christians throughout the ages confess as the faithful expression of Scripture. The Son and Spirit have the same divine essence as the Father.

As the Father is eternal and uncreated, so also is the Son who is eternally generated from the Father, and so also is the Spirit who eternally proceeds from the Father. The Nicene Creed — the most widely affirmed statement of faith from the fourth century — describes Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as “God of God,” “true God of true God,” “begotten not made, of one essence with the Father.” And the Holy Spirit is no less divine: He is “the Lord, the giver of life,” and the one whose voice has spoken to us in Scripture.

#### To know Jesus, the Son of God, is to know the Father. (8–11)

The Gospel of John takes us into the inner life of God. Earlier in John 14, Jesus tells His disciples that He will soon depart (i.e., He will die and rise again) and go to the Father. Jesus reassures them that they know where He is going (v. 4). But Thomas is puzzled (v. 5): he does not know where Jesus is going, so how can he know the way there? Jesus responds, “I am the way and the truth and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him” (14:6–7).

Jesus tells us that we know both His destination and the way there. God the Father is His destination, and the Son of God is the way there. We already know the Father (i.e., the destination), since we know the Son.

The Son reveals the truth and the life of the Father (14:6) because the Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father. But if the Son who reveals the Father to us has departed from earth, then how can we know the God of life and truth?

#### The Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit to continue the work of the Son. (15–26)

Jesus says that when He goes to the Father, He and the Father will send the “Spirit of Truth” who proceeds from the Father (vv. 15–16; John 15:26–27). The Spirit teaches us about the Son (vv. 25–26) including His commands (vv. 15–16). The Spirit of Truth reveals the Son who is the Truth (v. 6) who reveals the Father. Although the Son ascended to the Father, the Son is in us (v. 20) through the Spirit who is in us (v. 17).

Who is the God who has eternal life in Himself? He is the Father who revealed His life and love to us in the life, death and resurrection of His Son; He has sent the Spirit to reveal the Son to us. And what must we do to share in the love of the Father, Son and Spirit?

Jesus wants us to share in God’s life and love. We who love, believe and obey the Son (vv. 15, 21, 23) are loved by the Father and by the Son (v. 21).

The Holy Spirit teaches us about Jesus and His commands and helps us love the Son and keep His commands (vv. 16, 25); and then we enter into the love of the Trinity (v. 21). And Jesus commands us: “Love each other as I have loved you” (John 15:12, 17).✠

# MEDIA REVIEWS

By Tracy Riggs

TAB Media

## Magician, minister David Garrard turns retrospective in 'Thanks Dad!'

**A** labor of love and a story that needed to be told. That's how David Garrard — retired minister, professional magician and author — talks about his book, "Thanks, Dad! Fruits of a Father's Faithfulness."

The book is a series of stories about experiences David had with his father, Forrest Garrard Jr. Each chapter details a special time in his father's life or ministry and includes a life lesson. The chapters can be used as devotionals or for small group discussion.

"Dad had some things really figured out about ministry, about family, about relationships, and his story needed to get told," David said.

The labor of love started nearly three decades ago as a way for David to process the suddenness of his father's death in 1993.

"I was looking for a way to deal with all of the feelings I had ... to put down on paper just how much he meant to me. I just started writing. One story led to the next," David said.

The pandemic provided the opportunity to put the stories together in a book, David said.

### 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.



Photo courtesy of David Garrard

David Garrard visits Dover Baptist Church in Shelby County, Kentucky, the church his father, Forrest, served as pastor while in seminary.



As described by his son, Forrest Garrard was "not the best preacher I ever heard, but absolutely hands-down the best pastor I ever knew. He was the most incredible people-person, always actively interested in someone else. It was always, 'What can I do to help you?'"

### Introduction to magic

Forrest also introduced his son to magic.

"Dad was the one who saw [my] real fascination with magic, and Dad had taken me as far as he could. [So he] went and found somebody who knew a lot more, and that's what opened up the big world of magic for me. What if Dad had not done that? This has been a huge part of my vocation," David said.

When David started listening to rock-n-roll music as a teen, Forrest didn't like it himself. And even though he got some pressure from church members, Forrest trusted

God, his own judgment and his relationship with David enough to give his son freedom to choose.

Thus, David said he "was totally caught up in the music but not caught up in any way in the rebellion [of the 1960s]."

When the Beatles' "White Album" was released, David's parents weren't in love with the idea of him having it. But "it was under the tree on Christmas morning," David remembered.

"I think about my relationship with my own kids. It's pretty good, but it's not like that," David said. "You [have to] give yourself grace, but it shows how unique and how special Dad was."

David equates this relationship to the one God wants with His children — to walk through life together — the good, the bad and the ugly.

"As far as the parent/child relationship went, we didn't have an agenda," he said. "Because we kept that relationship current, whenever something would happen, we were in a position to respond. We didn't have a talk; we had an ongoing conversation."

### Difficult times

David also recalls a difficult period in the family's life. In the chapter, "A Bump in the Road," David shares how his father was once asked to step down as pastor of the church he was serving.

In a vote of confidence, more than half the congregation sided with Forrest, but he decided to "walk away quietly and trust God to provide," David recalled.

God did. The church paid Forrest until he found a position in another local church. The family didn't even have to move from their dream home.

"It's easy when things just sail along. But what about when things don't sail along? That's when you find out what you're made of, and that's when you find out if you believe what you say you believe," David said. "It's one of the times Dad's Christlikeness really showed."

A verse David has relied on in recent years is Psalm 31:14–15a: "But I trust in you, O Lord. I say, 'You are my God.' My times are in your hands."

"It's the promise of presence," David said. "No matter what happens to me or around me, God is always with me. If you can hang on to that truth, that'll work."✝

For more information about "Thanks, Dad!" or to book Garrard for live or virtual events, visit [davidgarrardmagic.com](http://davidgarrardmagic.com).

# 'Manna drop'

## Southwest Georgia church responds to community's growing hunger crisis

By Lanell Downs Smith  
TAB Media

When First Baptist Church, Cairo, Georgia, hosted its first "manna drop" last August, the need for food was so great in the community that many area residents lined up two hours before the event's opening.

Volunteers handed out 400 boxes of nonperishable food, frozen meat, dairy products and produce that day at the drive-up distribution held at the church. But that was just the start.

As word of the food ministry spread throughout his congregation, Pastor Chris Allen said church members responded generously and within the next few days donated enough money to fund another distribution, nicknamed a "manna drop."

At that event last November, volunteers from the church gave away 500 food boxes in 2 1/2 hours.

### Amplified needs

The church's drive-up food ministry began as a response to the coronavirus pandemic. Allen recalled watching the pandemic amplify the needs of his rural community in southwest Georgia, where many people already were battling poverty.

Last summer, he met with the church's missions committee to discuss community needs and to strategize how First, Cairo, could best help.

"Of course, we are concerned

*"The hands-on ministry allowed our members to serve others, realize how blessed we are and get to know each other better."*

Gary Keve  
volunteer, FBC Cairo



Volunteers from FBC Cairo, Georgia, hand out boxes of nonperishable food, frozen meat, dairy products and produce at a free food distribution called a "manna drop." Photo courtesy of Chris Allen

with the spiritual need but from a physical need standpoint, we realized that people needed food," said Allen, who suggested the idea of doing a manna drop in partnership with Second Harvest of South Georgia, a hunger relief organization.

Second Harvest partners with local ministries to put resources such as canned and perishable food items within easier reach of the families who need them. A mobile food pantry and distribution events enabled the organization and ministry partners to supply more than 16 million meals in 2020.

According to Eliza McCall, Second Harvest's chief marketing officer, South Georgia has the highest

rates of food insecurity in the state and among the highest in the nation.

The need has increased drastically due to COVID-19, she added, but the region's ability to respond has decreased.

"At least one-third of our partner agencies have either changed or discontinued their ministries," McCall said.

### Long lines

At the same time, Second Harvest has increased its mass food distributions across South Georgia from once a year to three times a month, she said.

"We've been serving between 1,500 to 2,000 families at each of these, but we still have to turn people away," McCall said. "The lines are miles long waiting for assistance. We're seeing many families who need help that have never had to ask for assistance before now."

First, Cairo, already had worked with Second Harvest before the manna drop events, packing about 20 bags of food each week for

students at Cairo's Northside Elementary School. That partnership paved the way for the drive-up food ministry funded by money from the church's missions budget.

While COVID-19 has limited close interaction with recipients at the manna drops, Allen said people in every car receive a gospel tract and information about the church.

### 'Great opportunity'

"The church has a great opportunity and responsibility to help meet physical needs when possible," Allen said. "This leads to the opportunity to love on people and tell them that Jesus loves them also. Ultimately, our goal is to introduce people who are far away from God to His Son Jesus."

More than 50 First, Cairo, members ages 7 through 80 helped with the last "manna drop" by directing traffic, distributing gospel tracts, loading food boxes into cars and talking with food recipients.

Allen said the church is eager to love their community and to help residents know the love of Jesus. Food ministry events give the congregation opportunities to serve their community and to grow closer to one another despite pandemic-related restrictions.

"This ministry gave a greater opportunity for church members to be involved, especially on a Saturday," said First, Cairo, volunteer Gary Keve. "The hands-on ministry allowed our members to serve others, realize how blessed we are and get to know each other better."

And with funds set aside in the 2021 budget, Allen said the congregation has discussed hosting bimonthly food giveaways as a continued outreach to the Cairo community.

"I really think this is the beginning of an even larger opportunity to reach Cairo and Grady County for the Lord," he said. ✝