



The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

INSIDE



Deacon/retired pilot serves as mentor, friend to University of West Alabama students

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Recent high school grads may find gap year with Nehemiah Teams appealing option

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Judson College nears 20% of needed pledges

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BLESSED

BY BLESSING OTHERS

Tornado brings Fultondale Baptists new ways to serve community

By Grace Thornton
TAB Media

Mark Gainey said he will never forget the sight of flashlight beams bobbing all around his church as volunteers worked in the dark to get supplies together for the community following the Jan. 25 tornado.

“The devastation was about eight blocks to the church’s north,” said Gainey, pastor of Fultondale First Baptist Church.

It took him an hour and

a half to get to the church after the EF-3 tornado plowed more than nine miles through his community.

On the way, he wondered if the church would be standing when he got there.

In April 2011, before Gainey was called to the church, storms had badly damaged its buildings and it had taken several years to rebuild.

“In 2011, they were numb and in shock,

asking ‘How do we pick up the pieces?’ This time, immediately the response was, ‘We weren’t hit; let’s help the people who were,’” Gainey said.



GAINEY

It’s now been two months since the tornado devastated the Fultondale area, including damaging two church members’ homes and destroying one.

In the wake of the storm, nearby Walker Chapel Baptist Church became

the headquarters for Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers, and Fultondale First became the place where people brought donations of household items, food, water and clothes.

Generous people

Gainey said it’s been amazing to see the generosity of people from across the state and Southeast who have donated supplies.

“We’ve been serving lots of families with immediate needs like clothing and bedding, (See ‘Helping,’ page 6)



Bedding and other supplies are organized for the Fultondale community and stored in the worship center of First Baptist Church after the area was damaged by a tornado Jan. 25.

Photo courtesy of Fultondale FBC



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Photo by Cynthia Watts

An Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief chainsaw team clears limbs from a fallen tree off a house in Center Point following the Jan. 25 tornado there.

First person: Disaster Relief helps meet immediate needs

As a team of Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers worked in Center Point to clear a yard following the Jan. 25 tornado that struck the area, a 79-year-old homeowner, Jeff Schatz, spoke to his son on the phone.

“There are a bunch of bumble bees in my yard,” he said, describing the yellow hats and jackets of the chainsaw team.

Overwhelming needs

The volunteers were helping clear the downed trees from Schatz’s deeply sloped backyard — a job too big for him alone.

Many ask why people volunteer with Disaster Relief.

The needs are overwhelming, and the Scripture says, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Matt. 25:40) and “Bear one another’s burdens” (Gal. 6:2).

What does ABDR do? We minis-

ter to those impacted by disasters, handing out Bibles, water, toiletries, gift cards for meals and food, sometimes taking them to the grocery store — whatever it takes to meet their immediate needs.

We get up at 4 a.m. and fix breakfast for the volunteers. We prepare three meals a day, wash the dishes and disinfect the tables. In mass feeding situations, thousands of people are fed at each meal.

We wash the clothes of volunteers, first responders and sometimes local residents and return the laundry dried and folded. We also provide showers and make sure the facilities are sanitized between uses.

We share with them. We listen to them. And sometimes we are quiet and allow them to cry.

We ask about their relationship with the Lord and pray with them. We long to lead nonbelievers to a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. (Cynthia Walker Watts)

Upcoming Disaster Relief training

Birmingham Metro

Baptist Church at McAdory,
4954 Eastern Valley Rd., McCalla
▶ April 15–17

Statewide

Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief
Center, 118 Jesse Samuel Hunt
Boulevard, Prattville
▶ March 27 — Communications

▶ March 27 — Shower and
Laundry Unit

▶ April 8–10 — Chaplain

▶ April 9 — Cleanup and
Recovery

▶ April 9–10 — Chainsaw

▶ April 9–10 — Mass Feeding

Register and find more
information at sbdr.org/events.

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 13.

RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

By Jennifer Davis Rash

President and Editor-in-Chief



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@RashionalThts

Kudos to communications teams of our Baptist schools — they work hard

Our Alabama Baptist schools have been in the news a lot lately, and we've had the privilege of working with the communications teams at all three schools to help bring you the stories.

Last week's front page announced the new president-elect of Samford University in Birmingham — Beck Taylor.

The week before that, we shared the difficult financial news coming out of Judson College on the front page.

Both of these stories can be found online at tabonline.org, and updated information about Judson is on pages 5, 8 and 12 of this issue.

In January, the University of Mobile garnered headlines when Sarah Thomas was announced as the first female referee at the Super Bowl. Thomas is a UM graduate.

A February article on UM shared about the school's first doctor of nurse anesthesia practice program, and the article on page 15 of this issue shares another update from the school.

UM is preparing students for ministry with an emphasis on practical skills through the new Center for Christian Calling, formerly the School of Christian Studies.

And this year marks the 60th anniversary of the university's founding — how exciting!

We'll have more information on the anniversary as the date nears, but an interview with UM President Lonnie Burnett about the anniversary and much more is available in our TAB Talks podcast from Jan. 11.

Find this episode of TAB Talks at thealabamabaptist.org/podcast/university-of-mobile/.

Interviews with Samford's incoming president and Judson President Mark Tew also can be found on the TAB Media Group YouTube channel.

The ability to cover all that is

happening at our three schools is made possible with the help of the communications teams.

Multiple people on each of the campuses work together to pull off all aspects of telling their school's story.

Sometimes it is dealing with a major news story. Other times it is promoting a new degree program or development.

And all the time, it requires showcasing the school's top aspects, marketing to various audiences and helping provide experts as sources when appropriate.

We won't be able to name everyone who works in various ar-

reas related to communications, but I did want to give a shout out to a few of the ones our team deals most directly with day in and day out.

Judson College — Mary Amelia Taylor and Katlin Bailey

Samford University — Betsy Holloway, Kristi Metz, Jessica Black, Kristen Padilla and Morgan Black

University of Mobile — Lesa Moore and Kathy Dean

Thanks for all your hard work in keeping the news of our schools in front of the students, faculty, staff, administration, trustees, alumni, donors, friends and future students. 🙏

Thank you for the next set of Love Packages contributions



Photos by Jennifer Davis Rash



Only six weeks after the first delivery of 4,000 pounds of Bibles and Christian literature, the TAB Media storage area is filled nearly to capacity again thanks to the incredible generosity of Alabama Baptists.

Your Voice



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

'Father, forgive them': Following Jesus' example

By **Ben Birdsong**
Author, speaker and minister

Forgiveness. It is something that we so often want to receive for ourselves, yet so often find it extremely difficult to extend to others. As we approach Holy Week and the death of Jesus on the cross, forgiveness stands at the center of the narrative.

At the cross, Jesus purchased our forgiveness by going to the cross as our substitute.

As Jesus hung on the cross, He was dying the death that you and I deserved to die. He was taking the punishment that we were due.

As we approach the first saying of Jesus from the cross, it shouldn't surprise us that Jesus is extending the same forgiveness to others that He is purchasing for us at the cross.

Luke 23:34 says, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Jesus' first words from the cross are a prayer. He begins by calling out to His Father.

In the moment of crucifixion, Jesus was facing great pain and suffering so it would be natural for Him to call out to God for relief or rescue, yet Jesus is calling out to God for the rescue not of Himself but of others — those who were murdering Him.

The fact that God's forgiveness could be offered to the murderers of Jesus means that there is no one who is too far from God's grace.

There is nothing you can do that takes you to a place beyond the reach of the forgiveness of God through Jesus.

Jesus goes on to pray that the people "do not know what they do." They don't understand the magnitude of their sin nor the power of forgiveness being bought for them by Jesus at the cross.

For the crucifixion team, this is simply another day on the job. They don't understand that the Jesus they are putting to death will in three days defeat death by resurrection and bring them new life.

When we come to the extension of forgiveness by Jesus to His enemies at the cross, we must understand that forgiveness comes at a great cost, that no one is too far from grace and that in the midst of His darkest moments Jesus is still a God who pursues those who stand under the judgment of God.

So today, who do you need to share the gospel message of forgiveness with?

During the Easter season, you have a great opportunity to begin a conversation about the true meaning of the holiday.

It's not found in bunnies and spring colors, but in a God through Jesus who pursues broken people with His grace and forgiveness even in the darkest of moments.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Excerpt from "Words from the Cross: 7 Statements that Will Transform Your Life," a 7-day devotional exploring Jesus' final words on the cross, with illustrations by Pete Collins.

The God who created human beings knows what kind of life works best for us.

Some things are obvious — don't steal, don't lie, don't murder — and human society clearly works better that way.

Some things are counterintuitive: care for the vulnerable, find your life by serving others, forgive when wronged, love your enemies.

Yet that way of life ultimately proves most satisfying, for in following it we become the persons God intended us to be.

Philip Yancey
"Vanishing Grace: Bringing Good News to a Deeply Divided World"

I've heard these words over and over again: "If I forgive, I'm just letting him off the hook!" No. That's not what forgiveness is. It is moving the guilty from your hook to God's hook.

We don't have the ability to let the offender off the hook of the potential consequences he or she may face, such as ruined relationships, crippling guilt, social isolation, financial repayment, or even criminal punishment.

But we can take the person off of our emotional hook and put him or her onto God's hook and trust Him to deal with that person justly and rightly.

June Hunt
"How to Forgive ... When You Don't Feel Like It"

Make a 'God Loves You' Plan

The most generous thing we can give others is the good news of God's love. How? By devising a personal "God loves you" plan for those we want to reach.

Think of some ways you can let others know of your love and of God's. Some examples may include:

► Finding a ministry to the homeless, families facing food insecurity or children in need of tutoring. Connect with a Christian relief organization. Partner with

those trying to touch people who are in need of God's love.

► Making a list of people you don't like (yes, we all have some folks like that). Begin praying for them as Jesus instructed.

► Thanking the Lord afresh for His great love for us, even while we were "yet sinners" (Rom. 5:8).

Love is only good when expressed, and we can all do that. Find someone today and remind them of God's never-ending love.

David Jeremiah
Pastor and author

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“Spring shows what God can do with a drab and dirty world.”

VIRGIL A. KRAFT

Methodist minister (1910–1988)

Doing things “for God’s glory” means making sure that he is recognized as God and praised as God in what we do. This means we cannot eat or drink or do anything else as if we are the center of the universe, because that glorifies us, not God.

Jared C. Wilson

**Assistant professor of pastoral ministry at Spurgeon College
Kansas City, Mo.**

Millions of Christians have been praying for over a year that God would protect us from the coronavirus. Effective vaccines have been produced in direct answer to prayer. God-ordained government officials have approved and encouraged their use. There is no scriptural violation or prohibition.

Christians are to obey all lawful governmental authorities. Obedience is highly valued by God and puts us under His umbrella of protection. The best course of action is to take the vaccine and leave the results to God.

Dr. Bob Cosby

Birmingham, Ala.

“Isaac’s servants also dug in the Gerar Valley and discovered a well of fresh water. But then the shepherds from Gerar came and claimed the spring. ... Isaac’s men then dug another well, but again there was a dispute over it. ... Abandoning that one, Isaac moved on and dug another well. This time there was no dispute over it, so Isaac named the place Rehoboth (which means

‘open space’), for he said, ‘At last the Lord has created enough space for us to prosper in this land’” (Gen. 26:19–22).

Heavenly Father, thank You for all things. Father, be with us when we are digging where You have planted us and we are sabotaged. Father, be with us when we are performing the work You have charged us to do and we are bypassed. Father, be with us when the ideas we have presented are hijacked by others. Father, thank You for being with us when Your blessings and Your promise make room for us. Glory be unto God. In Jesus’ name we pray and praise You for the promise. Amen.

Author Vernet C. Nettles
vendailypray.com

Judson College perspectives

It is extremely fulfilling to see how [my daughter] Lauren has grown and how she loves Judson and the people like she does. She has really stepped up and taken the reins of her education and her life and has grown a lot spiritually and academically here. She is committed to her four years at Judson.

Stephen Wilson
Mobile, Ala.

The programs and degrees at Judson focus on shaping students to look more like Jesus. You don’t get that anywhere else.

[At Siloam], we have Bible studies every Wednesday night and Sunday morning for the [students]. We are over here to help with moving in. The underclasswomen follow the president and first lady and the seniors in cap and gown over to Siloam on Rose Sunday at the beginning of the school year.

It’s just a very, very tight relationship between us and Judson. We are so glad to be just a small part of the girls’ Judson experience.

Josh Watford
Associate pastor, Siloam Baptist Church, and husband of Judson alumna, Rebecca, who is a Judson adjunct professor

My daughter [Kayla Oliver] went from Judson to seminary in Waco (Texas). She had a lot of influences here who led her on that path. I feel for certain if she had not come to Judson she would not have followed that path. ...

When she comes home from Waco she comes through Marion and stays at Judson, then she comes home (to Odenville). Judson is her second home.

She has just gotten a position working with a youth group at Elmont Baptist Church in Texas. She would not be on her life path if it wasn’t for Judson.

Rhonda Oliver
Mother of Judson alumna Odenville, Ala.

From the *Twitterverse*

@timkellernyc

There is no evil that the Father’s love cannot pardon and cover; there is no sin that is a match for His grace.

@tonymerida

“Through preaching, the congregation is protected in its purity, encouraged in its battle, healed in its sufferings and established in its confession.” —Herman Bavinck

@brianmills247

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: “The physical presence of other Christians is a source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer.”

@brocraige

“Earth is receding! Heaven is opening!” —Dwight L. Moody. May heaven come down and glory fill our souls as we worship the one true God today.

@ostrachan

There are no VIP Christians, celebrity pastors, or extra-special believers. There is King Jesus, and following in his wake, there are “slaves of Christ.”

@MattSmethurst

God is not a killjoy. He just opposes what kills joy. —@JohnPiper

@andrewhebert86

You can be very sure of this: When God starts to do something in and through a church, Satan will do all he can to kill, steal and destroy through division, dysfunction, distraction and disobedience. Bet on it.

@drtonyevans

We are called to be “holy bold” with the right heart, not just with facts devoid of love, but with clarity, conviction and compassion.

@jasonkeithallen

“Nothing created has ever been able to fill the heart of man. God alone can fill it infinitely.” —Thomas Aquinas

@Rgallaty

“If we function according to our ability alone, we get the glory; if we function according to the power of the Spirit within us, God gets the glory. He wants to reveal Himself to a watching world.” —Henry Blackaby

@RebeccaMcLaugh

Jesus isn’t a relic of the ancient world. He is our modern world’s best hope.

@deaninserra

What is the role of this story in the story of redemption? I read the Bible through the lens of that question.

A volunteer sorts donated clothing at Fultondale FBC after an EF-3 tornado hit the surrounding community on Jan. 25. Many volunteers gathered at the church in the days following the storm to help.

Helping people bridge the gap



Photo courtesy of Fultondale FBC

Fultondale churches work together to meet immediate, ongoing needs

(continued from page 1) diapers, you name it, everything,” he said. “It’s been really cool to see people contact us in different ways, and our church and our people have been blessed by being able to bless other people.”

Long-term needs

The need for those kinds of donations is winding down, Gainey said, and now they’re working with Fultondale city officials to help residents with more long-term needs.

That means providing ongoing food supplies as well as helping people bridge the gap of lost income and figure out what to do about housing.

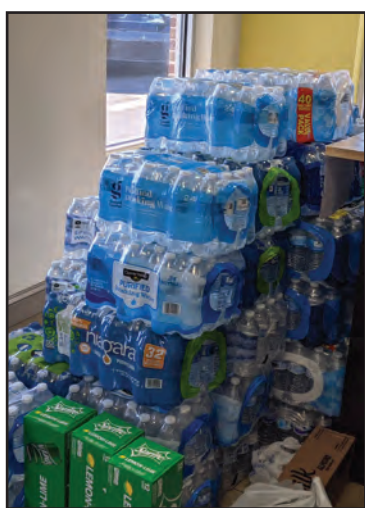


Photo courtesy of Fultondale FBC
Following the Jan. 25 tornado, Fultondale FBC became the hub for provisions like bottled water and toiletries.

Ricky Thacker, pastor of Walker Chapel Baptist, said he stays in frequent touch with city officials,

and so far he hasn’t heard of any great needs for home rebuilding.

It seems many of those who lost houses in the heart of the damage either have insurance or have made other arrangements.

The “skirt” of the damage surrounding the area was mostly industrial and commercial buildings.

Many businesses were damaged, and even if they’ve since been repaired and reopened, their employees lost weeks of income, Gainey said.

Monetary donations

“We’ve talked with the managers and gotten so many monetary donations to help,” he said.

“It won’t replace what employees lost, but we were able to give them some \$100 and \$200 donations just to say, ‘God loves you.’ God’s plan is to use His church to meet needs, and the greatest need is the gospel.

“God has opened up avenues for gospel conversations that never would have happened otherwise.”

Gainey said churches also have been able to step into a role to help connect monetary donations for people in need.

Many donations have come in, and while the City of Fultondale isn’t able to accept and redirect those, Fultondale Cooperative Ministries — a partnership

of local churches across denominational lines — is.

“It was formed years ago to operate and oversee our Community Food Bank, but we also partner for relief efforts like this,” Gainey said.

Working together

For years, their work together has been minimal, but this crisis paved the way for churches to work together like never before, he said.

Gainey said it was “beautiful” seeing that “mosaic come together naturally.”

“You never want a tornado to hit your community, but God has used it in lots of ways,” he said. 🙏

Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief team assists Fultondale homeowner

On Jan. 25, 84-year-old Jean Hadley sat on the bottom of the basement steps in the Fultondale home where she has lived for 58 years as a tornado tore away the roof and most of the walls from her house. She held on to a bench as the wind and rain pounded.

When the deafening noise of the storm and the rain stopped, Hadley made her way out of the house through the tossed furniture and debris. She was walking down the driveway, in one piece but soaking wet, as her daughter drove up in her car. They were so grateful to see each other safe and sound.

Over the next three days, Hadley went back to her house to salvage what she could. But so much was destroyed — her house and everything in her back yard, including her car, a boat, jet skis, travel trailer and a storage shed, all gone.

Devastating loss

She was able to save her clothes and a few items, but by the fourth day, staying at her daughter’s home, the loss was beginning to sink in.

As Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief trailers approached Hadley’s house on New Castle Road in Fultondale, the area hardest hit by the storm, several cars filled the driveway. Family and friends came



Photo by Cynthia Walker Watts
A tornado tore away the roof and most of the walls of Jean Hadley’s home in Fultondale on Jan. 25.

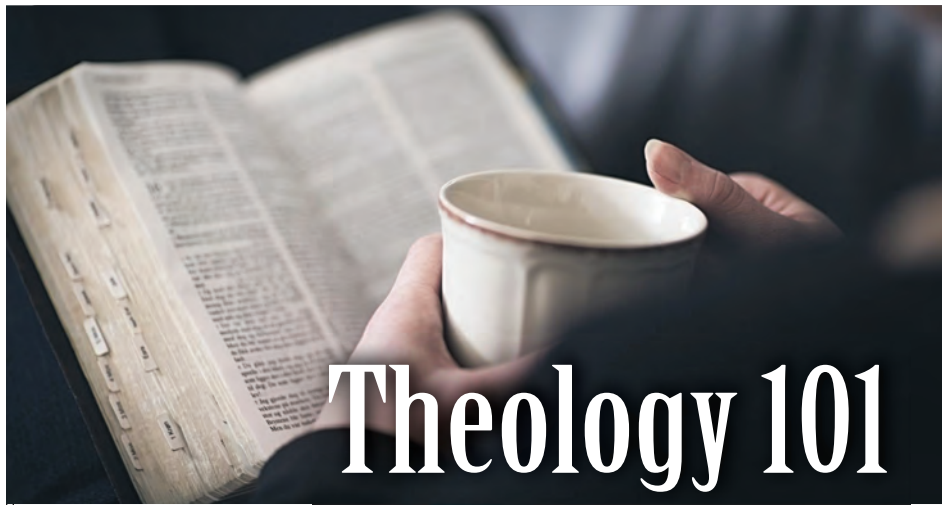
in groups to help clear the multiple trees and debris covering the yard as well as clear items in the house. Hadley had cared for most of the

children in the area in her own home for 35 years, and now her friends wanted to help.

Chainsaw crew

A chainsaw crew from the Birmingham Metro Baptist Association worked to remove the huge trees in the backyard. Most had saws, another kept the saws sharpened. Volunteers pulled smaller limbs into a pile. Another crew member picked up limbs with the skid steer to move them near the street for pickup.

And as they worked, volunteers asked Hadley’s family — what’s next? Her answer: She plans to rebuild. (Cynthia Walker Watts)



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Hope Springs Eternal

For God's Creation

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
TAB Media

We have previously considered how hope for Christians individually and the Church collectively extends into eternity. This week we ponder how the hope of all creation also reaches into eternity in fulfillment of God's promise of a future transformation.

In speaking of this future hope that embraces all of creation, Romans 8:19 promises that it "eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God." This hope receives further explanation in the verses that follow: "For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8:20–21).

Marred in the garden

When the first human pair fell into sin, it marred what God had declared to be good when He brought the subhuman world into being, according to the repeated divine commentary, "And God saw that it was good" (Gen. 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25), along with the summary divine conclusion: "God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good" (Gen. 1:31). And then sin intruded through human disobedience.

In the present age, the created order is beset by cycles of decay and death. Even so, God's promise was that having subjected all of His creation to frustration, it was done "in hope." In God's fu-

ture, His creation will be renewed into a new heaven and new earth, as spoken of in Revelation 21:1 and guaranteed by the divine promise, "Behold, I make all things new" (Rev. 21:5).

Hope in Christ

Just as there was an all-embracing inclusion of the created order in humanity's fall into sin, so that fallen order will be embraced in the restoration of Christians to glory. Thus, creation's future hope is inseparably connected with the hope given individually to each Christian and collectively to the Church.

Instead of annihilation at the end time, creation will undergo a divine transformation into newness when God makes all things new. Admittedly, eye has not seen nor heart imagined what God has in store for His children, so we cannot fully envision what He has for His whole creation. By faith, "we hope for what we do not see" and thus "eagerly wait for it with perseverance" (Rom. 8:25).

The present outcome of our future hope in Christ is stated in 1 John 3:3: "Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." ✠

Jerry Batson is a retired Alabama Baptist pastor who also has served as associate dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University and professor of several schools of religion during his career.



Communities clean up following March 17 storms

A strong storm system passed through Alabama on March 17, spawning a few tornadoes and heavy rains that caused damage, but no deaths, in several Alabama communities.

"I was expecting the worst and praying along with a lot of other folks for anything less than that," said Mark Wakefield, disaster relief strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. "My counterpart in Mississippi has given a similar report — small pockets but no long-track tornado destruction. It could've been so much worse. I'm grateful that it isn't."

In west Alabama, Moundville was hit hard, with several homes and structures in the area destroyed. Homes near Silas in Choctaw County also were damaged.

In Cullman and Chilton counties, homes were damaged and trees were downed in the March 17 storms.

The day before, Calvary Baptist Church, Butler, in Choctaw Baptist Association, flooded. Pastor Joshua Whitaker said water poured into the church's sanctuary, classrooms and fellowship hall. (TAB)

The kitchen of Calvary Baptist Church, Butler, was flooded March 16, causing damage in the church's community food pantry. The fellowship hall, eight classrooms, the nursery and a portion of the church sanctuary also flooded.

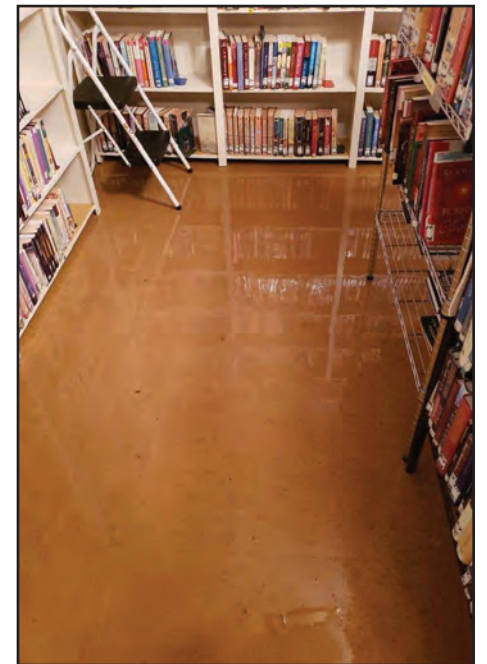


Photo by Joshua Whitaker

The library at Calvary Baptist Church, Butler, (above) was flooded as storms passed through Choctaw County on March 16, ruining all the books on the lower shelves, according to Pastor Joshua Whitaker.



Photo by Joshua Whitaker



Photo by Vasha Hunt/weather.com

A home in Moundville was destroyed when an EF1 tornado struck the area on March 17. No one was inside the home at the time. At least four tornadoes touched down in Alabama as the storm system passed through the state.



What does the woman who directed the **WMU Training School** have in common with four executive directors of **state WMU organizations**?

What do they have in common with **14 of the first 40 Protestant missionaries to China**, or the **first and 100th Baptist missionaries to Japan**?

What do they have in common with a college student who spends her summer breaks **investing in missions efforts** in Alaska, or a woman **supporting her Christian brothers and sisters** in Myanmar?

These women, though separated by centuries and continents, earned an education and discerned a vocational calling at **Judson College** in Marion, Alabama.

Equipping women to **make an impact for God's Kingdom** in their communities and the world — no matter their vocation — has been the mission of Judson College **since 1838**.

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Reaching young people for Christ

Deacon/retired pilot shows unconditional love to University of West Alabama students

By Bill Sorrell
TAB Media

In mentoring University of West Alabama students, Pat McGahey uses some hard-rock gospel. He often uses this well-known warning: “Sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay and cost you more than you want to pay.”

McGahey first heard the words from Buddy Leach, a former support guitarist for Lynyrd Skynyrd and the Allman Brothers Band. The two met on a missions trip to Honduras in 2011 and later served on three more trips.

Reaching young people for Christ, encouraging them and discipling them in their faith is a calling for McGahey, a deacon at Christian Valley Baptist Church, Coatopa.

He and his wife Sara open their home to students, host Bible studies and provide meals and even lodging when students need a place to stay.

“I keep my house open for them to have another place to go other than the party group,” McGahey said.

Life-changing decision

A retired Northwest Airlines pilot, McGahey, 75, said he lived 33 years without Christ and has had 42 years with Christ. He shares God’s word and tells college students how it changed him.

“Of the Christian students that go to college, 44% lose their faith,” he noted. “I have observed that a lot of Christian students are not in the Word and it affects their spiritual maturity.

“I see a lack [of biblical literacy], of not knowing God’s word. I am surprised at how many young people don’t understand the Trinity. I am very honest with them — I don’t hold any punches.”

Salvation and grace

McGahey says one of the reasons he is so passionate about mentoring young people is because he “was raised in a home knowing nothing about Jesus.” He went through confirmation for six weeks at the Episcopal church his mother had joined, but the lessons focused on

history rather than discipleship.

“There was nothing on salvation and grace. Afterwards I didn’t have a clue of why the man was hanging on the cross,” McGahey said.

He said he has seen a lot of good, bad and ugly in his life, and he uses those experiences to point students toward the gospel.

“I have been there, done that. It’s not worth it. When they come to campus the world is there — sex,

drugs, alcohol. The world will not lift you up. The world will pull you down. If people are in a habitual state of sin, the consequences are not good. Be aware you’ll suffer the consequences,” he said.

Now he reinforces the truth of God’s plan: “God created us for one reason, to have a personal relationship with Jesus. It took me a while to figure that out.”

He said he understands the temptations young adults face in college.

“Before my experience with Christ, before being saved, there were a lot of things I got involved



Photo courtesy of Pat McGahey
University of West Alabama student Josh Allums (right) was the first of many students Pat McGahey has mentored.



Photo courtesy of Pat McGahey
Pat McGahey and his wife, Sara, attend the wedding of Krista Mattix, a student at University of West Alabama. Reaching young people for Christ, encouraging them and discipling them in their faith is a calling for McGahey.

with that were outside the will of God.” As he has related his own experiences, McGahey has developed trust and a bond with students.

“God has brought some awesome people into my life,” he said.

A new calling

After serving in the Marine Corps, McGahey began an aviation career that lasted from 1966 to 2001. While based in metro Atlanta, McGahey was ordained as a deacon at Westside Baptist Church in Snellville, Georgia, in the early 1980s. The couple moved to Livingston, Sara’s hometown, in 2001 and built a house on a 75-acre farm.

The last thing on his mind when moving to Alabama was mentoring and discipling young people, McGahey said, but now he attends weekly Fellowship of Christian Athletes meetings on the UWA campus.

During the years he has had a Bible study in his home, McGahey has encountered many hurts students talk to him about, a lot of them due to divorce. Once again, McGahey’s experience helps.

The first 10 years of his marriage, he didn’t know the Lord and “didn’t know how to be a godly husband or father,” McGahey said, who now has three children and eight grandchildren.

He asks students where they are in their walk with Christ.

“If you don’t understand the words ‘death to self,’ you haven’t reached a relationship with Jesus,” he tells students. “You’re not where you need to be in your walk with Christ. Do you truly know Him if you don’t understand death to self?”

Love of Christ

McGahey wants to show unconditional love and seeks to help without judging.

“You may wonder why this 75 year-old has interest in you,” he tells them. “Young people are the future of this country. The future doesn’t look real good right now. Are they going to step up and be who God calls them to be?”

“If you say you are going to follow Christ, are you going to be obedient and live for Him?”

“Does Jesus really love me that much?”

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IN JESUS CHRIST.**



“Does Jesus really love me that much?” When nine-year-old Tia* asked such an innocent and honest question, she really wanted to know. Tia did not know much about Jesus. She and her little sister were raised by a single mother who wasn't around that often. The home the girls lived in was unclean, and they would go days without a proper meal. There were also days where they had no electricity. The girls were hungry and neglected.

Because of your generous support, Tia and her sister were placed in one of our foster care homes. While they were showered with love, good meals and encouragement, there was still healing to be done.

On Easter Sunday, their foster mom shared with them about what Jesus has done for us, and that's when Tia asked if He

really did love her that much. **That day, she asked Jesus into her heart to stay there forever!** *Tia's time with us was short, but the impact made is eternal.*

Other children like Tia, who are hungry and neglected, need your support. You can help children just like Tia find hope and healing in Jesus Christ.

Visit alabamachild.org/easter to make a difference today.



**Alabama Baptist
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**Name and photo have been changed for privacy purposes.*

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THANK YOU!

Thank you to everyone who made a Grace Gift to Alabama Baptist Children's Homes. To learn more about Grace Gifts or how to make one, visit alabamachild.org/give or call 205.982.1112.

'Great investment'

Recent high school grads may find gap year with Nehemiah Teams appealing option

Taking a gap year is an appealing option for many recent graduates, and studies show growing numbers of students are choosing to pursue other interests before starting college.

Significant influences in students taking gap years include the desire to travel, experience new cultures, take a break from school, gain life experience and volunteer.

The International Mission Board's Nehemiah Teams program is providing an opportunity for students to take a gap year to serve on the missions field.

Unreached groups

Nehemiah Teams offers summer missions opportunities for students to serve among unreached people groups, and this fall a new initiative called NT365, an IMB gap year, will be

launched for high school and college graduates, ages 18 to 23.

NT365 is designed to help students discover God's purpose for their lives and discern their role in fulfilling the Great Commission.

Alabama natives Jess and Wendy Jennings founded Nehemiah Teams in 2004 while they were living in Southeast Asia. The Jennings are now the student strategists for the Southeast Asian peoples region.

Jess said NT365 will utilize programs already in place to offer an opportunity for high school or college graduates to be involved in cross-cultural missions.

As part of this new IMB gap year, students will attend Advance Operations Training which is designed to disciple, develop and commission students to serve.

The Jennings have been conducting this three-month training in the Philippines since 2012.

Through the training, Jess and Wendy have trained 72 young adults: 65 Filipinos, one Indonesian, three Nepalese and three U.S. Americans.

Hands On program

NT365 will also involve the existing Hands On program. Hands On provides an opportunity for students and young adults to serve overseas for a semester.

Jess Jennings said many Hands On requests go unfilled, and NT365 will allow more Hands On requests to be met with student missionaries.

Students will serve in Southeast Asia in as many

as four countries. Students will begin by attending the Advance Operations Training in the Philippines for three months.

The students will join young adults from other Southeast Asian countries.

At this training, the students will serve with their cohort in two deployments in two different countries for four to six weeks.

Jennings said the spring NT365 participants will fulfill a Hands On job request in a fourth country.

During the first three months, young adults will be involved in church planting in villages close to the training site.

For the two short-term missions assignments and Hands On assignment, students will fill a specific request made by IMB personnel. This aids IMB workers as they move toward reach-



IMB photo

ing their people groups with the gospel, Jennings said.

"As a church planter and long-term missionary, our number one goal for this IMB gap year is that students will fit into the field strategies of the ... personnel requesting them," he

said. "Nehemiah Teams is very intentional in meeting field needs to impact the unreached."

Nehemiah Teams also places a strong emphasis on investing in young adults.

"We are intentional in helping students grow in their walk with the Lord, become world Christians and then moving them to obey the Great Commission for life," Jennings said.

Missions experience

George Siler, the student team manager in the IMB's mobilization department, spoke to the value of the program.

"Many young people are questioning the traditional path of pursuing higher education right after high school," Siler said. "This IMB gap year puts together the elements of mission service, cross-cultural

experience and Christian education in a surprisingly affordable package. This is a gap year that is a great investment of your life, not a postponement."

Jody Dean, associate professor for Christian education at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, said the seminary and Leavell College are partnering with Nehemiah Teams to offer course credit through the school's mentoring program and involvement in NT365.

Students at Leavell College can earn 18 credit hours, and students at NOBTS can earn 22 credit hours.

Sandy Vandercook, professor of English and education and associate dean at Leavell College, said NT365 provides an excellent opportunity for students who may not be ready to immediately move from high school to college.

"They may not yet know what they want to study, nor ... have a direction for their careers. A gap year can provide invaluable experience related to skills of living in general, particularly since they will not be living at home," Vandercook said.

Learn more at tabonline.org/nt365. (IMB)



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Alabama Department of Archives and History photo

Since the founding of Judson College in 1838, more than 6,200 women have earned degrees, including those pictured above in this historical photo from the late 1800s.

Judson College nears \$1 million in pledges

Judson College has received nearly \$1 million of the \$5 million in pledges needed to remain open this fall.

As of March 19, alumnae and friends of Judson have made commitments totaling \$911,630 to support Judson in the 2021–2022 fiscal year, which begins on June 1, 2021, and ends on May 31, 2022.

Judson is accepting donations currently through the giving portal found at judson.edu and also seeks financial commitments to provide the funds needed to operate the college on a daily basis.

‘Deeply grateful’

Every dollar given to the Judson College Fund is allocated for specific purposes, including institutional scholarships to students in need, faculty and staff salaries and improvements to campus buildings, according to Judson College President Mark Tew, who expressed appreciation for the support the college has received so far.

“Judson is deeply grateful

for the response the college’s friends and supporters have shown during the month of March,” Tew said. “The college has begun receiving both cash gifts and commitments for the coming fiscal year. Any funds received now will be stewarded and will carry over to next year. The main focus of the commitment campaign is to determine the level of support the college can anticipate during its next fiscal year.

“Think of it as a ‘prove the tithe Sunday’ that has been prevalent in Baptist life

through the years,” Tew noted.

Those wishing to commit financial help for the upcoming fiscal year are asked to complete an online form to document that commitment.

Go directly to that form at this link: tabonline.org/support-judson.

To give now, go to judson.edu to give online or send gifts by mail to:

Judson College
Office of Development
302 Bibb Street
Marion, AL 36756 (TAB)



Photo by Tracy Riggs

Judson College holds graduation on the lawn of Jewett Hall in June 2020.

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

Union Hill Baptist Church in Oneonta, Alabama, is earnestly seeking God’s choice for the full-time pastor to lead our small-town congregation. Prayerfully consider mailing your resumé to: ATTN: Pastor Search Committee, 2919 County Highway 39, Oneonta, AL 35121 or email: sparks@unionhillbaptist.org.

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

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.

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 resumés is Wednesday, March 31.

STUDENT MINISTER

The Baptist Church at McAdory is seeking a full-time student minister for middle-high school grade students with experience in leading and developing young people. More information regarding the position is available upon request. Please send cover letter, resumé and questions directly to the church at: ATTN: Personnel, 4954 Eastern Valley Road, McCalla, AL 35111 or by email to: personnel.bcm@gmail.com.

YOUTH PASTOR

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

STUDENT MINISTER

Parkway Baptist Church in Creve Coeur, Mo., is now accepting resumés for a part-time student minister. The student minister would be responsible for leadership and vision-casting for an established middle-

high school student ministry. The position has a competitive compensation package including benefit options. Interested applicants may send a letter of interest, resumé, references and statement of faith to: student-search@parkwaybaptist.net or by mail to: Student Search Committee, Parkway Baptist Church, 12465 Olive Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63141-6499.

OTHER POSITIONS

SHOCCO SPRINGS IS HIRING

We are currently looking for resident summer staff to join our team to serve thousands of guests this summer! If you are college-aged and looking for a job-ministry-life-changing experience — RSS is for you! Learn more and apply today at shocco.org/summerstaff. We also have seasonal, part-time positions open in all departments including guest relations, lodging services, lifeguards, food service, recreation and grounds. If you live within commuting distance to Shocco and would love to work alongside us in ministry this summer, we welcome you to apply at shocco.org/employment.

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EARTH ANGELS IN-HOMECARE, LLC

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MINISTRIES

NEW: STORIES PODCAST

Have you checked out TAB Media’s new Stories serial podcast yet? If not, then you’ll want to catch the first season featuring Sammy Gilbreath, state missionary in evangelism with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. And if you have listened to season one, then be on the lookout for season two. It’s coming soon. TAB’s Grace Thornton writes and produces the shows. Listen to the Stories podcast anywhere you get your podcasts or at thealabamabaptist.org/explore/stories.

TAB DIGITAL

In addition to the print edition The Alabama Baptist also releases a weekly digital edition of the newspaper to every subscribers’ email. The digital edition comes in pdf form as well as part of an app and is included with all subscriptions. The digital edition has the same content as the print edition — including full color on all pages — and can be accessed anytime as long as you have internet. The app edition also offers expanded content. To update your email address and find out more about the digital edition options, contact subscribe@thealabamabaptist.org.

TAB PREVIEW

TAB Preview provides a sneak preview of the weekly stories featured in The Alabama Baptist to the church leadership of 2,000 churches across the state. The weekly newsletter is distributed by email. It is interactive with links to stories and easy access to The Alabama Baptist’s social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. It also features ads that are clickable and link directly to websites. To sign up email news@thealabamabaptist.org. For ad information, email ads@thealabamabaptist.org.

Word Search

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Christian Crossword

By Judy Ellis Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

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Across

1. Because the enemy hath said against you, _____. (Ezek. 36:2)
4. 16th letter of the Greek alphabet.
6. Color.
12. ____ seed.
15. ____ the chief. (1 Chron. 26:10)
16. ____ the son of Jair slew Lahmi. (1 Chron. 20:5)
17. A branch of the military. (abbr.)
18. Paid. (abbr.)
19. Doctor. (abbr.)
20. I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning _____. (Lev. 26:16)
22. And when ____ defied Israel. (2 Sam. 21:21)
23. Pharaoh's daughter drew him up out of the water. (Ex. 2:5)
26. Hot or cold drink.
27. These things have I written unto you concerning them that ____ you. (1 John 2:26)
28. Sons of Benjamin.

29. New Testament. (abbr.)
31. Sound of laughter.
32. The Lord is thy ____ upon thy right hand. (Ps. 121:5)
34. Crush.
36. If ____ be blameless, the husband of one wife. (Titus 1:6)
38. Have ____ weightier matters of the law. (Matt. 23:23)
40. Judah's firstborn.
42. Direction.
43. ____ not vain repetitions. (Matt. 6:7)
45. Determined to send ____ unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea. (Acts 11:29)
49. South American grass.
50. A continual ____ given him of the king. (2 Kings 25:30)
52. Drink waters out of thine own _____. (Prov. 5:15)
53. Revise.
56. Her majesty. (abbr.)
57. And in those days shall men ____ death.

- (Rev. 9:6)
58. After Joel and before Obadiah.

Down

1. Prayer ending.
2. Child of Aram. (Gen. 10:23)
3. Publish in the palaces at _____. (Amos 3:9)
4. Cooking vessel.
5. The sixth captain for the sixth month was ____ the son of Ikkesh. (1 Chron. 27:9)
7. Isaac's eldest son.
8. Remember that thou in thy ____ receivedst thy good things. (Luke 16:25)
9. Lunar module. (abbr.)
10. We are ____ and fatherless, our mothers are as widows. (Lam. 5:3)
11. Deep and ____.
13. Saul of ____.
14. Any of various nucleic acids.
21. Welcomes.
23. We would know therefore what these things ____.
24. Bounce off.
25. Now the coat was without _____. (John 19:23)
27. ____, Meshach and Abednego.
30. Thy lips are like a ____ of scarlet. (Song of Sol. 4:3)
33. Opposite of "live."
35. Went forth toward Geliloth, which is over against the going up of _____. (Josh. 18:17)
37. Screams.
39. Indian hut.
41. Having faithful children not accused of ____ or unruly. (Titus 1:6)
44. Spanish. (abbr.)
46. And they came to ____, where were 12 wells of water. (Ex. 15:27)
47. Female sheep.
48. ____ ye well. (Acts 15:29)
51. Direction.
54. District attorney. (abbr.)
55. Then Nebuchadnezzar came near ____ the mouth of the burning fiery furnace. (Dan. 3:26)

3 stories you should know



AP photo by Jeffrey Collins

The South Carolina House (shown above on Feb. 17) is one of several legislative bodies seeking to enact abortion limits, including outright bans on abortion intended to test the Roe v. Wade decision. Dozens of bills to restrict abortion access are working their way through GOP-controlled state legislatures, emboldened by a conservative-leaning Supreme Court. Read the latest news on pro-life legislation and decisions at tabonline.org/abortion. (AP)

Israeli experts discover more Dead Sea scrolls

Israeli archaeologists on March 16 announced the discovery of dozens of Dead Sea Scroll fragments in a desert cave and believed hidden during a Jewish revolt against Rome nearly 1,900 years ago.

The fragments of parchment bear lines of Greek text from the books of Zechariah and Nahum and have been dated around the first century based on the writing style, according to the Israel Antiquities Authority.

They are the first new scrolls found in archaeological excavations in the desert south of Jerusalem in 60 years. The Dead Sea Scrolls, a collection of Jewish texts found in desert caves in the West Bank near Qumran in the 1940s and 1950s, date from the third century B.C. to the first century A.D. They include the earliest known copies of biblical texts and documents. (BP)

IRS extends 2020 tax filing deadline to May

The federal income tax filing due date for individuals for the 2020 tax year will be automatically extended from April 15 to May 17, 2021, the IRS has announced.

The move is in part due to provisions of the American Rescue Plan Act that affect the taxes individuals will owe. Because the legislation became law on March 11, tax preparation software must be updated to reflect the tax code changes.

The most significant changes of the new law relate to the expanded child tax credit and the way unemployment benefits are taxed.

Quarterly estimated tax payments are still due on April 15. State filing and payment deadlines are set by individual states and vary.

Find more information and helpful links at tabonline.org/2020-taxes. (TAB)

Headline news from around the Southeast

Arkansas

New Beginnings Pregnancy Center in Benton, Arkansas, established in 2003, offers both practical and spiritual aid for women and their families. In addition to providing material resources such as diapers and wipes to expectant mothers, the center offers ultrasound exams, pregnancy testing, confidential counseling, mentoring, parenting classes and Bible studies. “As we help them in motherhood, we’re pointing them to Christ,” said Executive Director Janet Dixon.

Florida

Although the pandemic has created challenges in making personal connections, a group of missions-minded youngsters recently connected with first responders in their community to thank them for their service. Children at Heritage Community Church in Fruitland Park, Florida, gave first responders 40 mason jars filled

with Lifesaver mint candies with attached tags that read, “You’re a lifesaver!” The children also created a brightly colored “Thank you” banner for the first responders, the Florida Baptist Witness reported.

Georgia

Heritage Baptist Church in Calhoun, Georgia, started a cross-making ministry that has allowed church members to share the gospel with the surrounding community. What started with a layperson using scrap wood to make 10 crosses expanded to donations of lumber to make more than 2,700 six-foot-tall crosses scattered throughout the community.

Mississippi

Mississippi Governor Tate Reeves on March 11 signed into law Senate Bill 2536 prohibiting biological males from competing in girls’ and

women’s sports as transgender athletes. The Mississippi bill was created in response to an executive order signed by President Joe Biden on Jan. 20 that will “in effect do away with the banning of biologically male transgender athletes who want to compete in female sports,” the Baptist Record reported. The Mississippi legislation is likely to face legal hurdles.

Tennessee

The pastor of a Southern Baptist church affiliated with the Tennessee Baptist Mission Board has resigned after his church was disfellowshipped by the SBC Executive Committee, the Baptist and Reflector reported. Antioch Baptist Church in Sevierville, Tennessee, was disfellowshipped on Feb. 23, for employing Randy Leming Jr., who confessed to two counts of statutory rape in 1998. Leming announced his resignation on Sunday, Feb. 28.

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

► **Carl Head Jr.**, minister of music at Lakeview Baptist Church, Montgomery, died Feb. 21 of COVID-19 complications. He was 67.

A Montgomery native, Head earned a degree in music education from Troy University and studied at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He served many churches as a worship pastor, including 21 years of ministry at Lakeview Baptist. He and his brothers were well known in the area for their voices, singing in revivals and other events at Baptist churches in the Montgomery area.

Head also worked as a general contractor for nearly 40 years, most of that time spent managing Head Construction.

He is survived by his wife, Gail; daughter, Emily; sons, Trey and Brian; and six grandchildren.

JUDSON ASSOCIATION

► **Todd Evans** is the new pastor of **First Baptist Church, Abbeville**. He most recently served as pastor of Parkview Baptist Church, Decatur, for 21 years. Before that, he was pastor of Corinth Heights Baptist Church, Haleyville, for seven years. Evans earned a bachelor's degree from Samford University, a master of divinity from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and a doctor of ministry from Beeson Divinity School. He and his wife, Meia, have five children.



EVANS

MADISON ASSOCIATION

► When **Grace Akin** was 43, her church — **Westlawn Baptist, Huntsville** — asked her to consider taking a job there as secretary and financial secretary.

She and her husband, Jim, had arrived there with their family eight years before, returning to the arsenal after he'd been stationed in Germany. They "fell in love" with the church when they visited it in 1967.

And when her husband died after returning from the Vietnam War, Akin found Westlawn to be a comforting home for her and her children.

"I told them I would consider the job, but if I wasn't doing it well, they should let me know," Akin said. "And I told them I would let them know if I felt like it wasn't what God was calling me to."

Fast forward 43 years, and Akin has spent exactly half of her life in that role, which she says is "not a job but a ministry."



AKIN

"I've enjoyed it and grown with it," she said. "It's such a sweet, loving church family, and I've loved the community and meeting and helping other people."

Akin retired at the end of February, but she quickly told her congregation she isn't leaving the church, just the office.

"I wouldn't want to be anywhere else," she said. "This is where we as a family stayed, and we never doubted that this is where the Lord brought us."

ST. CLAIR ASSOCIATION

► **Mike Shaw** is interim pastor of **Central Baptist Church, Trussville**. Shaw retired as pastor of First Baptist Church, Pelham, in 2014 and has served in interim roles since then.



SHAW

OTHER

► **Ray Burdeshaw** wrapped up his time as acting president of the **Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers** in December. Dwain Kinard is the interim acting president.

Burdeshaw had served as chairman of the board for ABRC before becoming acting president in 2013. At the beginning of 2007, he had retired after 21 years at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions where he directed the office of worship leadership and church music.

Kinard, the current chairman of the ABRC board, is acting as president until a search committee recommends a new president.



BURDESHAW

University of Mobile to emphasize calling

The University of Mobile is preparing students for ministry with an emphasis on practical skills through the new Center for Christian Calling, formerly the School of Christian Studies.

The new name is part of an initiative to expand the university's foundation of biblical, theological and historical studies with an increased focus on practical, hands-on skills.

Douglas Wilson, dean of the Center for Christian Calling, said experienced leading pastors in Alabama Baptist churches and across the Southern Baptist Convention, including University of Mobile and Christian Studies alumni, will serve as visiting faculty members or adjunct instructors for university courses and conferences.

The name change includes a change in structure. Beginning in July 2021 when the changes go into effect, the Center for Christian Calling will be composed of four programs:

- Theology, for students called to a teaching ministry
- Intercultural Studies, for students called to domestic and international cross-cultural ministry
- Christian Ministry, for students called to pastoral and staff-related church ministry
- Graduate Studies, for students pursuing master's and advanced degrees and training in the areas of biblical studies, theological studies and worship leadership (in collaboration with UM's Alabama School of the Arts).

Degrees offered include Bachelor of Science in Christian ministry, Bachelor of Arts in intercultural studies, Bachelor of Arts in theological studies, Master of Arts in biblical and theological studies and Master of Arts in worship leadership and theology. For more information, go to umobile.edu/christiancalling. (UM)

Persecuted church

Christian pastor, mother raped in attack in eastern Uganda

KAPYANI, Uganda — Muslim extremists raped a female Christian pastor in December in eastern Uganda.

The 50-year-old widow and mother of five (name withheld for protection) was returning to her home in Kapyani after making Christmas preparations at her church. As she approached swamps near Lake Kalyango, a person asked for assistance.

When she stopped to help, other people came from the bushes, she said. One told her she had been warned about converting Muslims to Christianity and that what was about to happen would be a lesson to her.

She passed out during the attack, regain-

ing consciousness three hours later. A relative found her and took her to a clinic. She was hospitalized and missed the church's Christmas celebration.



Wikimedia

In addition to trauma, the woman has experienced severe headaches and chronic pain, local sources said.

Uganda's constitution and laws provide for religious freedom, including sharing one's faith and converting to another religion. Muslims make up about 12% of Uganda's population. (MS)

ONEMISSION: The Great Commission ONEPROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANYMINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries



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WORSHIP LEADER:
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How would you rate your growth?

Americans more likely than others to report strengthening of faith, family during pandemic

Close to 30% of American adults state that the COVID-19 pandemic has strengthened their personal faith, and about 40% say it has tightened family bonds.

A Pew Research Center survey conducted

last summer revealed that Americans are more likely than survey respondents in 14 economically developed countries to affirm the positive impact of the pandemic on religious faith.

Americans also believe the pandemic has strengthened the religious faith of Americans overall.

For example, while 28%

of American adults report that the pandemic strengthened their personal faith as well as the religious faith of their fellow Americans, only 10% of British adults say their personal faith is stronger, and 14% think the faith of Britons overall has increased.

In Japan,

only 5% of survey respondents report the pandemic has strengthened their personal faith and the faith of fellow citizens.

Variety of responses

The median for the 14 countries that were part of the survey is 10% who report a strengthened personal faith and 15% who re-



Unsplash.com

port a stronger faith among people in their country.

Those who are more religious are more likely to say the pandemic has strengthened their faith and that of others in their country.

Among white evangelical Protestants in America,

49% say their faith has grown, and 43% think the faith of Americans has been strengthened.

Still, a majority of Americans (68%) state that the pandemic has not changed their religious faith much, and 4% report their religious faith is weaker.

Among Americans, 47% say the religious faith of their fellow citizens has not changed much, and 14% report that religious faith in America has weakened as a result of the pandemic.

Impact of shutdown

Even with the cancellation of religious activities and in-person services throughout the world, a median of just 3% throughout the 14 countries say their

own religious faith has weakened.

Survey respondents in several countries that were hit hard by the pandemic early in the spring of 2020 report that family relationships have strengthened in their countries.

In Spain, 42% of respondents said family relationships are stronger; in Italy, the United Kingdom and America, 41% of respondents thought so.

Family bonds

As Americans experienced lockdowns, economic turmoil and fears about becoming ill or dying with the virus, 50% of adults report family relationships have not changed much and 8% say they were weakened.

With many younger adults in America moving home during the pandemic, young Americans are more likely than older Americans to say their family relationships have strengthened.

Half of adults ages 18–29 say their family bonds have strengthened, compared with 38% of those 50 and older.

For the full report, go to tabonline.org/pew-covid. (Margaret Colson)

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For March 28

Explore the Bible

By Benjamin Stubblefield, Ph.D.

Visiting Assistant Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



WORSHIPPED Luke 19:28–48

“No thanks,” was a common response to my grandmother’s offer of whatever “food” she’d just cooked in the kitchen. My grandmother would always reply: “You just don’t know what you’re missing.”

To this day, I still don’t know how she swallowed canned asparagus or cottage cheese and tomato sandwiches on white bread that was toasted to charcoal black. She ate it like she’d stumbled upon the secret to happiness. And I was glad too — glad she survived the meal.

While I know Luke doesn’t have in mind my grandmother’s overcooked toast, I do think he is aiming at the same principle in our passage.

What is to some worthy of celebration is to others worth revulsion. Jesus arrives in Jerusalem catalyzing His disciples to praise Him and His opponents to plot against Him. As He makes His way to Jerusalem, He makes imminent the great question of discipleship: “Who do you say that I am?”

Obey (28–34)

We don’t know if Jesus prearranged the pickup of the colt with the owners or if Jesus’ popularity was enough incentive for them to let Jesus borrow it. But what we do know is that Jesus knew where it was, that it was tied, that it had never been ridden and exactly how to procure it.

However Jesus came to have the donkey, what is obvious is that Jesus is in control of these moments with total authority.

And this is a lordship that those involved in these verses recognize. The disciples follow His instructions in detail. The owners let go of their animal without hesitation, for “the Lord has need of it.”

They are marvelous examples of Christian obedience, aren’t they? Similarly, Christ may have need of us to give whatever and go wherever. Will we, like these brethren, go and give the same?

Praise (35–38)

The scene unfolds, and Jesus be-

gins His descent to Jerusalem. It is a fanfare event, as the “whole crowd” of His disciples, praising God loudly and joyfully, are laying down their coats like a red carpet.

Luke helps us recognize the gravity of this moment by framing it in the context of at least three OT connections. Consider that like King David in 2 Samuel 19, Jesus, Son of David, reenters Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives. Jesus, like David, also comes weeping, with one difference: David, remembering his sin, wept over his own ruin. Jesus comes weeping over ours.

Consider also the allusion to Zechariah 9:9, that God’s Messiah would come upon a colt to silence all that threatens His people. And consider that Psalm 118:26, quoted in verse 38, was written to occasion Israel’s anointed king leading pilgrims to the temple.

Jesus’ followers rightly understand this as enthronement — the anticipated moment when their Rabbi fulfills God’s promises. They are right, and so are we, to praise Him.

Worthy (39–40)

Stunningly, instead of praise, the Pharisees offer rebuke (see also v. 14). Jesus’ response — that the rocks will erupt in praise — is ironic. Darrell Bock, senior research professor of New Testament studies at Dallas Theological Seminary, writes, “That which is lifeless knows life when it sees it, even though that which is living does not.”

Creation can recognize Christ, even if His own people won’t.

This is a tragic indictment, and it should serve as a sobering warning to us: We can love all the things of religion but miss the God of it.

I really don’t think my grandmother’s choice in cuisine was good, no matter how much she liked it. But she believed it was and that I didn’t know what I was missing. Likewise, Luke’s Gospel here calls us to choose Christ, who is worthy, and to learn from the grave mistake of the Pharisees, who had yet to know what they were missing.✝

Bible Studies for Life

By Rony Kozman, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies, Samford University



THE DEATH OF JESUS John 19:8–11, 16b–18, 28–30

God created us in His image (Gen. 1:26–28). God gave us a mission to rule the world on His behalf. We were tasked with advancing God’s kingdom. But instead of filling the earth with God’s righteous reign, we have filled the earth with sin, death and violence. Instead of ruling the world together in harmony as God intended, the male and female sought to rule one another (Gen. 1:26–27; 3:16). Sin subjugated Cain (Gen. 4:7). Sin and death ruled the world.

Jesus’ arrest and crucifixion were under God’s control. (8–11)

God did not abandon His creation. One of the overarching themes of the Bible’s story is how God’s kingdom would come to earth. God did not leave the world to be ruled by sin and death. God’s purpose for creation would not be defeated. His kingdom would come.

And in His plan, at the appointed time, the Father sent His Son into the world (Gal. 4:4–5) to defeat the dominions of sin and death and to establish God’s kingdom and reign in the world. The death and resurrection of Jesus — the King — is how God reestablished His kingdom on earth. It was all according to God’s plan (John 19:11).

Jesus suffered the cruel punishment of crucifixion for us. (16b–18)

John 19 presents Jesus’ death as the crucifixion of the King. John shows us the paradox of Jesus’ enthronement. Jesus takes His throne upon a cross. He wears a “crown of thorns” and He is given a “purple robe” (v. 2). Jesus is accused of claiming to be a king and rivaling another ruler — Caesar (v. 12).

Pilate asks, “Shall I crucify your king?” (v. 15), and the sign that hung on the cross identified Jesus as “the King of the Jews” (v. 19). Jesus is the crucified King. The crucified Christ. (“Christ” is not Jesus’ last name; it is a title that indicates that He is the promised King of Is-

rael who would establish God’s kingdom.) This Christ takes His throne as King of the Jews and as ruler of the world through His suffering and death.

Jesus’ death completed the work necessary for our salvation. (28–30)

Jesus is both the crucified King and the slaughtered Passover Lamb. According to John, Jesus died on “the day of Preparation for the Passover” (19:14). This reminds us of the Jewish Passover festival that commemorated the Exodus, and the final plague, where God killed every firstborn Egyptian son but spared the firstborn sons of Israel.

God instructed the Israelites to sacrifice a lamb, and to smear the blood of the lamb over the doorway and on the doorposts, and death would not strike the Israelites. Jesus is the Passover Lamb whose sacrifice rescues us from death. And as the Lamb of God, He also rescues us from sin. As John the Baptist announced when he saw Jesus, “Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29.)

By His death, Jesus rescued us from the two kings who usurped God’s reign and ours — sin and death. Those who are in Christ receive the forgiveness of sins, and they are freed from the reigns of sin and death. Jesus is the King. We share in Jesus’ death and resurrection. And we rule with Christ and advance God’s kingdom throughout the world (Rom. 5:17).

God has created the world anew through Christ. Jesus’ death was the decisive act of God’s re-creative act.

In the crucified Christ, we behold the new human (John 19:5), and through Christ’s death, God’s new creation is as good as finished (v. 30).✝

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MEDIA REVIEWS

By Minnie Lamberth & Martha Brown

TAB Media

Fiction with a southern flair, pastor's memoir among book selections

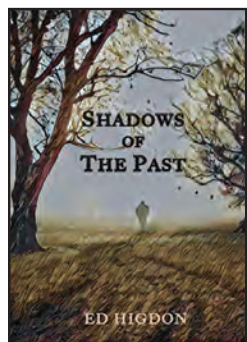
Shadows of the Past

Ed Higdon.

Soncoast Publishing, 2020.

Shadows of the Past" is a Depression-era story set in a hunting preserve in Clayton, Arkansas. In a sense, the town itself is the main character — and the developing of its flourishing economy is the main event.

The story is told through the activities of a large cast of characters — one of whom is Emily Martin, the proprietor of the hunting preserve and a widow with two young children. She has recently become engaged to



Richard Barton, who helped her maintain the preserve after her husband's untimely death.

Leading citizens of Clayton play a role, including George Graves, the wealthiest man in town and a key to the redemptive theme.

In addition, Judge Harper and Sheriff Cloud have developed a "work release" program for local prisoners to earn money for their

return to society by working on projects to expand the preserve. There's also a church that doesn't make a distinction between hunters at the preserve, residents of the town or occupants of the local jail.

When a reporter from Chicago arrives to write a feature article on the preserve, the attention leads to new opportunity, and expansions begin to take place as the townsfolk build other businesses to support the preserve.

The story follows one business idea after another in a detailed account, covering 332 pages and 91 chapters, of a town that begins to flourish as lives and relationships are restored. (Minnie Lamberth)

Angels at Work: God's Providence

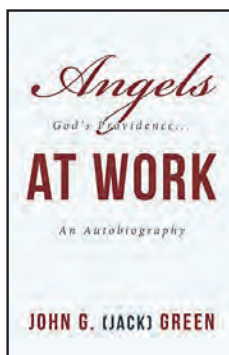
John G. (Jack) Green.
Westbow Press, 2020.

Jack Green's life story has many extraordinary details, beginning with his childhood in Birmingham during the Great Depression. As an 8-year-old boy, Green helped support his family by selling magazines at the courthouse.

When he was 10, he lost that job to an older teen because of child labor laws. Thanks to the assistance of a creative grocer, however, Green began selling bags of fudge to those same customers.

While at the courthouse, he became fascinated with court reporting, and at age 13, signed up for typing and shorthand to pursue a career as a court stenographer.

When Pearl Harbor was bombed, he was just 16 — too young to



enlist. But his stenography skills opened up an opportunity to record notes for a secret effort in Tennessee that would become known as The Manhattan Project.

Sometime later, while serving in the Army Air Corps, he witnessed tests of the atomic bomb that came from that project.

After World War II, Green felt God's call to vocational ministry — much to his young wife's surprise. As he wrote, "If God's call was real and undeniably sacred, it was not something to treat as an arguing point but as a goal. If the call was genuine, God would see it done."

These are among the tidbits Green shares in his autobiography, "Angels at Work: God's Providence."

He describes encounters with individuals — angels in human form — that God put in his path to lead him through many years of Christian ministry.

Also key to this ministerial history is his late wife Mary Edna, who was his soulmate for 72 years and who served alongside Green as he served as pastor of churches in Alabama, North Carolina and Florida, and in South Korea. (Minnie Lamberth)

The Key to Everything

Valerie Fraser Luesse
Revell, 2020.

Peyton Cabot is 15, and life is hard. His father, suffering from traumas of World War II, has died following a tragic accident. His girlfriend's parents have sent her to south Florida because they think she and Peyton are getting too serious. Life seems to be dealing Peyton one blow after another.

As a 15-year-old, Peyton's father had ridden his bicycle from St. Augustine, Florida, all the way to Key West to reunite with the love of his life, Peyton's mother. So Peyton

decides to make the same journey on his bicycle in hopes of finding himself and his future.

As he retraces his father's journey, he encounters people his father met and sees places his father visited. His journey ends with a long-awaited reunion, but along the way, Peyton's adventure reveals to him the key to everything that was and will be important to him.



This latest novel from award-winning writer Valerie Fraser Luesse, senior travel editor at Southern Living magazine, follows "Missing Isaac" and "Almost Home."

Luesse lives in Birmingham and is pianist at First Baptist Church, Harpersville.

Information for book clubs is available at her website, valeriefrazerluesse.com, or by email at valerieluesse@gmail.com. (Martha Brown)

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.

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Sharing God's love

SBC relief workers in Armenia expand efforts to include refugees following recent conflict

More than 100 years ago, an 18-year-old girl staggered into an American relief camp set up along Russia's border with Armenia.

Immediately, a nurse came to her side. "Are you in pain?" she asked. "No," the girl replied, "but I have learned the meaning of the cross."

Slowly, the girl pulled her sleeve down, revealing on her bare shoulder the figure of a cross burned deeply into her flesh. For seven days, Turkish assailants in her village had asked her whether she would follow Mohammed or Christ.

"Christ, always Christ," she replied daily. In response, one segment of the cross was branded on her shoulder each day. On the last day, her captors told her she would die the following day if she didn't reject Christ.

Fortunately, she escaped that night. But this girl wasn't alone in her suffering, and many Armenians never escaped. On April 24, 1915, the Ottoman Turks ruling in the region had launched a genocidal program against the Armenian people group. As a result, as many as 600,000 Armenians may have died on that day alone.

A Eurasian nation the size of Maryland with the geography of western Colorado, Armenia is recognized as one of the first countries

in the world to accept the Christian religion. Often, as in the genocide of 1915, they became targets of persecution. For this reason, the Armenian people even today show great pride in their country's Christian heritage.

Even though they value this national heritage, many Armenians have no personal relationship with Christ, and many have a limited knowledge of God's word. But recent conflict in the region between Armenia and its culturally Muslim neighbor, Azerbaijan, has opened doors for gospel outreach among the Armenian people.

Regional crisis

The crisis began when, in late September, fighting once again erupted between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The conflict centered around a contested territory called Nagorno-Karabakh — an enclave within Azerbaijan that is roughly the size of Delaware and that was largely populated by ethnic Armenians. To the Armenians, the contested region is known as Artsakh.

According to the Wall Street Journal, the conflict led to 5,000 deaths on both sides, and it forced more than 100,000 civilians to flee their homes. Most fighting ended Nov. 9 with a Russian-brokered ceasefire.

One family with Missouri Baptist roots is taking advantage of the op-



IMB photo

Armenian Christians gather here at San Sirkis Armenian Church in Tabriz to worship every Sunday, though the number of those attending is dwindling. Many Armenians in Tabriz have sought better lives in Europe, Canada or the United States. Rarely do more than 25 people show up for worship.

portunity to share God's love amid the hurt that the people of Armenia feel. David Smith grew up in a Missouri Baptist church in St. Louis and felt God's call to missions during a Missouri Baptist Convention Super Summer event in the late 1980s. During college, he met his wife — then a nursing student in Oklahoma — while they were both training for a summer project in Africa.

Today, the Smiths serve as Southern Baptist relief workers, having spent two decades working with the people of Armenia. In the aftermath of recent conflict, they have worked with local churches to help refugees from the region of Artsakh.

Through funds from SEND Relief Global, they have helped to provide clothing, hygiene and household items, blankets and other necessities. They've helped train Armenian doctors how better to counsel and treat soldiers with PTSD, and they've brought comfort to doctors struggling from "compassion fatigue."

Smith hopes these efforts to help

the Armenian people amid hardship will strengthen relationships and open new avenues for gospel witness.

Prayer needs

Smith urges Southern Baptists to continue praying for the region:

- ▶ That there would be peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan
- ▶ That God would bring His comfort to the families of those who have died because of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan
- ▶ That, in Christ, churches would grow in unity
- ▶ That God would pour His Spirit out in both Armenia and Azerbaijan, so that people would hear the gospel, repent and trust in Christ
- ▶ That God would bless the Smiths and their two children as they continue their work in the region. (IMB)

EDITOR'S NOTE — Names have been changed for security reasons. For more information on the recent conflict in the region, go to tabonline.org/armenia-news.



IMB map