



The Alabama Baptist

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

April 15, 2021

Vol. 186, No. 15
Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

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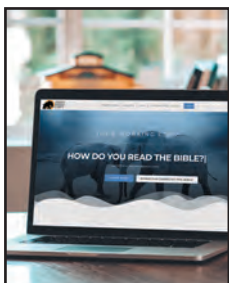
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VOYAGE

‘WITH A SACRED PURPOSE’

OM Ships celebrates 50 years of sailing gospel around the world

By Grace Thornton
TAB Media

Alice says she'd been interested in serving abroad for much of her life, but when she first heard of OM Ships, she didn't think living on a ship was for her.

"I thought, 'I don't think so,'" said Alice, who was in graduate school at Wheaton College in Illinois at the time. "But then I met Dave, and he had been with OM Ships for five years at that point."

So much to her surprise, Alice — who grew up attending Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville, and was actively involved in Lakeview Baptist Church, Auburn, while in college —

married into the ship life.

In 1992 — six months after their wedding — she and her new husband boarded Doulos, a floating city of 350 people from 45 nations. The ship was the second ship Operation Mobilization had purchased and put on mission. The first, Logos, had set sail in 1971.

World record

Doulos was purchased by OM in 1977.

By the time the couple boarded it in 1992, Doulos "was in the Guinness Book of World Records as the oldest ocean-going passenger vessel," she said.

Doulos was built in 1914, two years after the Titanic made her voyage. And Doulos had a very sacred purpose,

Alice said. As they traveled around the world, they would spend two to four weeks at a time moored in a port and spend that time investing in that place.

They distributed aid supplies, supported communities after natural disasters and helped the marginalized in society. They helped people learn how to deal with trauma and aided others in dealing with trauma. They did dramas and music as a way to share the gospel with the community.

They would also invite people aboard the ship for youth conferences, marriage conferences and other events.

And Doulos had something else to offer on board — a

bookstore filled with more than 5,000 titles of educational and Christian books and materials that the community could shop in.

"A lot of these places did not have access to Christian literature," Alice said, noting that the internet wasn't widely available at that time either. "We could have 10,000 visitors aboard in a day just for the book shop."

Since OM Ships started 50 years ago, (See 'Missionary,' page 12)



People stand in long lines to visit Doulos in Manila, Philippines, in 2007. Though Doulos stopped sailing in 2010, Logos Hope, a converted ferry, started serving in 2009 and still represents OM Ships today.

Photo courtesy of OM Ships International



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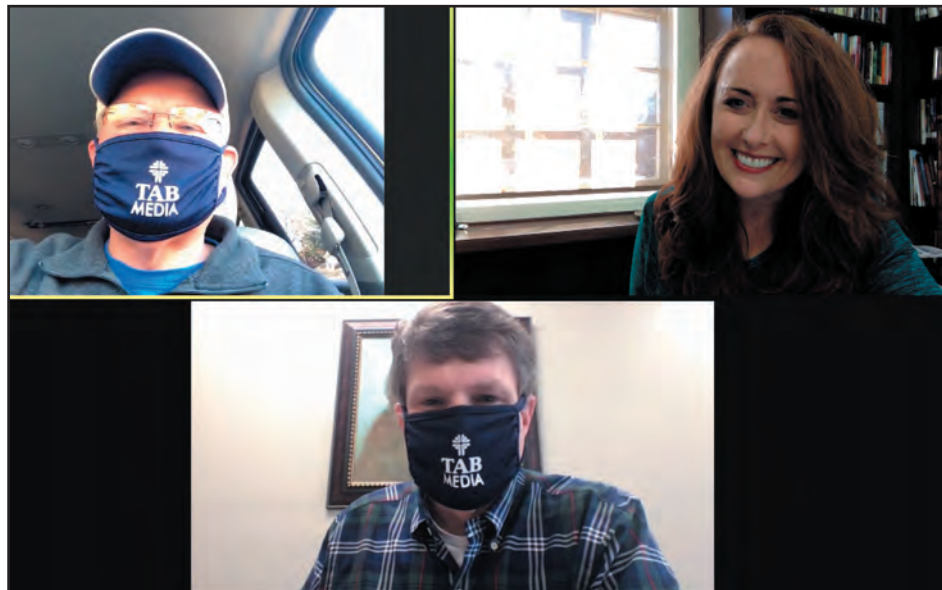
State mask mandate lifted April 9

After almost a year of required face coverings in Alabama, the mask mandate was lifted April 9.

Governor Kay Ivey confirmed the third phase of COVID-19 health

orders — Safer Apart Order — in a news conference April 7.

Masks or face coverings of some type are still encouraged while in public or in close contact with others, Ivey noted. (TAB)



Screenshot

TAB Media's Jennifer Davis Rash (top right) meets via Zoom with board of directors chairman Rob Jackson (bottom) and finance committee chairman Travis Coleman (top left) in February to prepare for the March 6 board meeting.



Photo courtesy of Charlie Martin
NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville, worship pastor Charlie Martin out and about with his TAB mask.



Photo courtesy of Bob Cosby
Bob Cosby reading his weekly copy of The Alabama Baptist while protected from the rain and COVID-19.



Photo courtesy of Scott Peters
Scott Peters, pastor of Bethel Baptist Church, Brent, prior to a Judson chapel service in which he shared the message.



Photo courtesy of Bob Christmas

Eric Boehm (left) and Bob Christmas, front door greeters at NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville, include TAB Media masks in their growing collection.

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

(ISSN 0738-7741; USPS 011-080)
© The Alabama Baptist, Inc.

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

Website: www.thealabamabaptist.org

Email: news@thealabamabaptist.org

or subscribe@thealabamabaptist.org

Periodicals postage paid at Hattiesburg, Miss.

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

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

Individual — \$34.95 per year (50 issues)

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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

One TAB Media staff member's take on joining the grandmother club

EDITOR'S NOTE — TAB's guest services coordinator Annette Brown has become a "Honey" in recent years, and it's been life changing for her. She shares her thoughts on becoming a grandmother below.

By Annette Brown

TAB Media

I'm relatively new to the "grandmother club," but I have to say this is one of the sweetest clubs I've ever been involved with.

I've only been a member of this wonderful club for three years — our grandson, Liam, just turned three, and we have added a beautiful little princess

to our tribe, Amelia James, who is one month old.

When I announced I was running as a candidate for this prestigious club and was seeking acceptance, I was bombarded with an outpouring of love and happiness from grandmothers all over the world.

The other grandmothers told me "there's just no other love like it!"

I mean, I knew how much I loved my daughter; how could I possibly love someone more than that?

But they were right! It's true what they say — "if you knew

how much fun grandkids were going to be, you would've had them first."

I get it — it's parenting without all the responsibilities. We focus on the FUN!

After much thought and consideration and surveying the long list of possible names to be called by this precious angel who hadn't even been born yet, I landed on the name Honey because it's sweet.

Becoming a grandmother has a magical effect on your outlook on life.

Things that I thought were so important pale in comparison to building a fort and having an impromptu sword fight — with little boys, everything becomes a weapon. And man, you should see my stick collection!

It's taught me to be in the present moment.

It's also taught me unconditional love and how to see the

world through the innocence of a child.

I believe becoming a grandmother has made me younger — younger at heart.

When you're a grandparent you have a longing for the future, to see what God wants them to be.

We know the best is yet to come. God willing, Barry will teach them how to hit a long drive straight down the fairway and how to slide into first base, and I'll share all my beauty tips on just how important purses and shoes really are — they can make or break an outfit!

But our most important job will be to teach them to love and honor God — teach them His precepts, His commands and just how much He loves them, and what He has done to spend eternity with Him.

We want to teach them that our God is their God — and He is so good. 🌈



BROWN



Photo courtesy of Annette Brown

TAB's guest services coordinator Annette Brown has only been a grandmother a few years — her grandson, Liam, just turned three, and they have added a beautiful little princess to their tribe, Amelia James, who is one month old.

Several grandparents on staff

Eight TAB Media team members are grandparents and all of them spend intentional quality time investing in the lives of their grandchildren. The current 25-plus kiddos range in age from one month to late 30s. The love and dedication these grandparents show is inspiring to all of us.

Your Voice



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

Words have power: Tips for using them well

By Pastor David L. Chancey
davidchancey.com

The Bible warns the tongue “is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire ... with it we bless our God and Father, and with it, we curse men ...” (James 3:5–10).

This muscle in our mouth has no bones, but is strong enough to break a heart, crush a spirit or slander a reputation. Once a word is spoken, it can never be retrieved. That’s why James wrote, “... let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (James 1:19).

That’s also why we have to be so very careful with our words — spo-

ken, posted or tweeted. Words either tear down or build up. Wouldn’t we rather be someone who builds people up? Or soothes troubled souls?

Words can bring order to chaos. Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address. Franklin Roosevelt’s steady encouragement during the Depression and World War II. Ronald Reagan speaking after the 1986 Challenger disaster. These speakers built unity during a trying moment and brought people together.

Words may be the most powerful tool available to mankind. How we use our words says a lot about our life. Whether or not our tongue and posts are disciplined says a lot about our spiritual maturity.

Here are some things to think about as we consider using our words:

- ▶ Think before you speak or post. If possible, have someone read through your post or tweet and get feedback on your tone or wording. Ask, “Is this post worth losing a friend (or a job) over?”

- ▶ We have to learn how to disagree without being angry and hateful. Surely, we can disagree without being disagreeable.

- ▶ What comes out of our mouth is determined by what comes into our mind — what are you thinking?

- ▶ Holding our tongue until anger passes leads to less regrets.

- ▶ Complaining shows lack of gratitude and is totally unproductive.

- ▶ Words of encouragement give people the boost they need to overcome obstacles and accomplish their tasks. They fuel confidence. Saying “I believe in you!” and “You can do it!” go a long way towards revitalizing someone.

I recently received a note from a friend who thanked me for sending him a copy of my newest book. He wrote, “Keep your good writing active. You have a good gift for the art.” That made my day!

How can your words make someone’s day today?

EDITOR’S NOTE — David L. Chancey is pastor of McDonough Road Baptist Church, Fayetteville, Georgia.

There is no point in changing that which does not need to be changed. However, it is a sin not to change or drop methods or traditions that are using up valuable resources, time and money. Practices, methodologies and traditions that are not leading us to accomplish the Great Commission need to be evaluated for transition or relinquishment.

The preservation of anything we consider normal, be it a tradition, methodology or regular practice, can easily become a sin factor in our individual lives and in the church.

Too often in the church and in our daily lives, we choose habit and repetition over biblical principles. Therefore, without realizing it we are turning our backs on God and His guidelines for us. All for the comfort of what’s familiar.

Would we not do well by evaluating between good and God’s best? If every church would honestly evaluate every ministry annually, how much more of God’s best Kingdom-centered ministry could be accomplished. Is it possible that most churches do not evaluate ministries due to the fear of offending ministry leaders or certain financial givers?

Many of our traditions and regular practices are not necessarily evil. They are simply outdated or they have run their course.

George Yates
Church health strategist
Alabama Baptist State
Board of Missions

He loves me ... He loves me not

We love because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

The fact that God loves you is irrefutable. After all, He gave His Son to die for you. But why does God love you? What is the fountain from which the waters of His healing love flow?

Some are sure God’s love flows from their behavior. If they please Him through clean living, right doctrine and involvement in church, then He loves them.

Others believe God’s love is based on their potential. They say, “God sees what I can become, and He loves me for what

I will be!” How would you feel if someone said, “I can’t love you like you are; however, I will love you because someday you will change.”

We would not rest joyfully in such love. The fountain from which God’s love flows is just one thing: His sovereignty. He can do what He wills; can declare what He pleases, and He has decided to love you. No one can do anything about this. He loves you, and that’s that! Hallelujah!

Bob Adams
Retired SBC pastor
Louisiana

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“There is no pit so deep that God’s love is not deeper still.”

CORRIE TEN BOOM

Though we are familiar enough with the image of Jesus as the Bread of Life that nourishes our dead, darkened and displaced souls, we may forget that it was a meal in a garden in Genesis 3 that set us on our course of death and depravity. ... It was the serpent sharing the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil with Eve and Adam. If they would eat, their “eyes would be opened” (Gen. 3:5). And of course, they did, and thus began our long, dark exile from the presence of God and eternal death.

When the resurrected Lord opened the eyes of Cleopas and his friend in the breaking of the bread (Luke 24:13–35), Jesus signaled that the long exile was over. The new creation has dawned.

Let us celebrate that in Jesus’ incarnation, His miraculous deeds, His body broken for sinners, and most gloriously in His resurrection, God has provided the healing nourishment all creation longs for.

Bobby Kelly
Professor of religion
Oklahoma Baptist University

We must stop allowing ourselves to be divided into generational and research categories. Instead, we must take the opportunity to learn about the uniqueness of each and cause it to inspire us to unity around the Great Commission. We are the church of Jesus Christ which is made of all generations! From children to students to young adults to married adults to senior adults, we

need and want all generations. It will take all generations to reach the people across the globe.

Ronnie Floyd
President and CEO
SBC Executive Committee

It’s natural for us to divide our financial loyalties between what we owe in taxes and what we can keep for ourselves. But for a Christian, the Bible makes it clear everything we have is from God anyway. Our money included. The charge to us is to seek how we can do the most good with what we have been given in this world and in the world to come.

Jim Denison
Pastor, author and co-founder
of Denison Forum

From the *Twitterverse*

@scottdawson

If we ever get over the resurrection we will get over our salvation. Live in the Hope of the resurrection; Love in the light of the resurrection; Learn in the fact of the resurrection Easter is everyday!

@phillipholmes

Apostasy can reveal itself in more ways than just the scandalous sins. Unrepentant gossip, slander and half-truths can expose those who claim to know Jesus but truly don’t. Watch your LIFE and doctrine.

@timkellernyc

Justice is to give all human beings their due as creations of God.

@SpurgeonBooks

“We owe our conversion neither to the reasoning of logic, nor to the eloquence of the preacher,

neither to our natural betterness, nor to our personal efforts; we are the children of God’s power according to the promise.”

—Charles Spurgeon

@jt_english

What does it look like to be a great commission and a great commandment church? To get as many people in the kingdom as possible. And to get the kingdom in as many people as possible.

@RebeccaMcLaugh

In many churches, the pastor in the pulpit is the most theologically educated member and the granny/older auntie in the pew is the most spiritually formed. Let’s be sure we’re learning from both.

@griffingulledge

“Every New Testament doctrine has an Old Testament picture.”
—@DrRobertSmithJr

Such a simple rule for Bible reading and teaching, but so profound at the same time.

@trillianewbell

Been thinking about this...Our problem is we have “Jesus is my everything” in our profile and “I hate everyone” on our timelines. But we have a choice. Today. Every day. We can be light in this dark world. Let’s not forget what we proclaimed yesterday (Easter).

@brocraig

God heals. God restores. God redeems.

@SamAllberry

Looking at Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners: Jesus did not have to affirm people to be with them. He didn’t have to exclude people to disagree with them.

The importance of gathering

I haven’t been to church in over a year. I watch every week, and sometimes I’ll watch two or three services.

But apart from one or two times of going to church when I went to see my parents, I stopped going to church when the pandemic started, and I haven’t started going again.

At first, it was mandatory. Churches weren’t meeting in person. I was watching online and doing what everyone else was doing.

Then, as churches were starting to meet again, I assumed the older generation would be the ones showing up. And I didn’t want to put them in danger.

While I was cautious, I was still out and about and interacting with others in general. I told myself these outings could put others around me at risk, but the reality was I was more comfortable watching church on TV (or Facebook Live).

And then it just started to be more convenient. I could watch church on any day. It freed up my Sunday morning.

Recently, I went to Knoxville to visit my brother along with my parents.

We went to my brother’s church that Sunday morning and afterwards my dad stressed how important he believes going to church in person really is. And he’s right.

The Bible stresses the importance of gathering with other believers, and where better to do that than at church, worshipping together each week.

While I do think there are a lot of benefits to online church services, I think it caused a hindrance to me when it came to worshipping with others. I felt a disconnect. So I’m ready to get back to going to church with the body of Christ.

Hannah Muñoz
theropetab.com

EDITOR’S NOTE — Read more posts by and for young adults at theropetab.com.

Cooperative Program Receipts

FOR CHURCHES

New pastor leads Montgomery church to reach state baptism milestone

Derek Murry said one Sunday while his church was holding a drive-in service, a grandfather who was headed to pick up McDonald's breakfast for his grandkids pulled into their parking lot.

"He said, 'Let me see what that church has going on,' and he ended up not being able to leave," said Murry, pastor of St. James Holt Crossing Baptist Church, Montgomery. "He started coming every Sunday after that, and he joined about a month ago."

Murry said they've seen that happen over and over since they started holding outdoor services once the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

Honestly, it's almost all he's ever known as a pastor — he was new to the ministry and had only recently been called to St. James when the virus forced them to come up with a new plan.

Many in the congregation were uncomfortable attending in person and also uncomfortable attending online, so the drive-in services made sense, Murry said. The next thing they knew, people from the community were listening from their porches and backyards, walking up with their dogs or pulling in to check it out.

To download the full giving report of Alabama Baptist churches, visit tabonline.org/2020ACP.

Numbers in this report were provided by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. To contact them, call 800-264-1225.



2020 CHURCH RECEIPTS

Cooperative Program	\$37,558,354.85
Lottie Moon Christmas Offering	\$11,730,840.25
International Mission Board	\$ 264,045.55
International Mission Board Designated	\$10,000.00
World Hunger	\$475,751.33
Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.....	\$5,040,541.62
North American Mission Board	\$46,936.59
Associational Missions	\$1,758,468.78
Children's Homes & Family Ministries	\$2,491,226.97
ALCAP	\$141,059.37
American Bible Society	\$820.61
State Causes	\$140,175.06
State Missions.....	\$55,787.37
Myers-Mallory State Missions.....	\$1,206,116.35
SBC Causes	\$15,338.12
Disaster Relief	\$243,670.94
All Other Designated	\$1,647,297.75

Total Receipts for 2020.....\$62,826,431.51

And not too long after that, Murry was asking Neal Hughes, director of missions for Montgomery Baptist Association, if he knew where they could get a portable baptismal pool.

"God has just greatly used them in this COVID-19 season," Hughes said. "They were the first in our area to jump out and do a drive-in service. They just sang and preached where everyone could hear. It's been an absolutely awesome season for them."

'Act of cooperation'

That is reflected in the fact that St. James ended up at the top of Alabama's list for baptism ratio on this year's Annual Church Profile report — they baptized one person

Members of St. James Holt Crossing Baptist Church, Montgomery, hand out food bags to community members in their church parking lot. The church moved all of its ministry outside during COVID-19.

for every 1.2 church members in 2020.

Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said these kinds of metrics are "a valuable ministry tool"

for churches in evaluation and celebration.

"We encourage all churches to participate," he said. "It is an act of cooperation with other Alabama Baptist churches and the larger SBC family."

The ACP helps gauge trends in Alabama Baptist churches when it comes to baptisms, Cooperative Program giving and designated giving.

Eternal difference

"We praise the Lord for the generosity of Alabama Baptists during this pandemic," Lance said. "Their faithfulness has made an eternal difference in a world of chaos and confusion. Every Alabama Baptist church needs to experience the joy of giving through the missional mutual fund called the Cooperative Program."

This issue of TAB includes some highlights of the state's total data for 2020, and the reports of every church's giving and baptisms are now available online at tabonline.org/2020ACP.

Churches that did not complete an ACP will see blanks in their baptism listing. (Grace Thornton)



St. James Holt Crossing Baptist Church Facebook photo

CHURCH REPORT FOR 2020

TOP CHURCHES IN GIFTS

2020 MYERS-MALLORY GIFTS

1. Montgomery First, Montgomery \$36,595.13
2. Prattville First, Autauga \$28,269.35
3. Mount Zion, Madison \$22,336.00
4. Selma First, Selma \$20,165.00
5. Eastern Hills, Montgomery \$19,285.84
6. Golden Springs, Calhoun \$18,904.67
7. Athens First, Limestone \$15,324.00
8. Shiloh, Cherokee \$13,600.00
9. Greenville First, Butler \$12,437.86
10. Moulton, Muscle Shoals \$12,204.06
11. Guntersville First, Marshall \$11,785.00
12. Liberty, Shelby \$11,533.68
13. Arley First, Winston \$10,842.75
14. Hillcrest, Coffee \$10,560.29
15. Glynwood, Autauga \$10,147.00
16. Shades Mountain, Birmingham \$10,000.00
17. Greensboro, Hale \$9,900.00
18. Lakeside, Birmingham \$9,620.00
19. Clanton First, Chilton \$9,330.00
20. Huntsville First, Madison \$8,907.00
21. Pleasant View, Blount \$8,680.00
22. Bethlehem West, West Cullman \$7,537.00
23. Sardis Springs, Limestone \$7,184.00
24. Headland First, Judson \$7,160.00
25. Oxford First, Calhoun \$6,642.00

2020 ANNIE ARMSTRONG GIFTS

1. Shades Mountain, Birmingham \$160,000.00
2. Hunter Street, Birmingham \$157,632.94
3. Trussville First, Birmingham \$122,369.28
4. Opelika First, Tuskegee Lee \$117,636.42
5. Montgomery First, Montgomery \$98,644.89
6. CrossPoint, St. Clair \$83,974.19
7. Lakeview, Tuskegee Lee \$72,347.59
8. Whitesburg, Madison \$60,827.74
9. Prattville First, Autauga \$59,561.55
10. Calvary Dothan, Southeast Alabama \$52,044.00
11. Valleydale, Birmingham \$48,346.25
12. Northport, Tuscaloosa \$45,356.15
13. Golden Springs, Calhoun \$42,257.46
14. Pell City First, St. Clair \$36,858.55
15. North Shelby, Shelby \$35,790.00
16. Lakeside, Birmingham \$35,295.00
17. NorthPark, Birmingham \$34,905.84
18. Headland First, Judson \$34,790.00
19. Enterprise First, Coffee \$31,571.00
20. Boaz First, Marshall \$31,364.00
21. Redemption Church, Mobile \$30,000.00
22. Huntsville First, Madison \$27,506.00
23. Highland, Colbert-Lauderdale \$25,611.00
24. Northbrook, East Cullman \$25,392.25
25. Andalusia First, Covington \$22,608.52

2020 LOTTIE MOON GIFTS

1. Shades Mountain, Birmingham \$356,366.00
2. Whitesburg, Madison \$307,995.85
3. Hunter Street, Birmingham \$229,698.68
4. Lakeview, Tuskegee Lee \$228,226.35
5. Trussville First, Birmingham \$221,008.00
6. Opelika First, Tuskegee Lee \$208,856.31
7. Calvary Dothan, Southeast Alabama \$205,919.45
8. Mount Zion, Madison \$202,037.49
9. Prattville First, Autauga \$180,325.78
10. CrossPoint, St. Clair \$167,948.36
11. Montgomery First, Montgomery \$167,752.15
12. Tuscaloosa First, Tuscaloosa \$148,744.57
13. Willowbrook, Madison \$145,824.26
14. Headland First, Judson \$144,238.82
15. Pell City First, St. Clair \$134,473.19
16. Dawson, Birmingham \$112,108.05
17. Central, Morgan \$106,202.12
18. Golden Springs, Calhoun \$105,865.08
19. NorthPark, Birmingham \$102,506.46
20. Athens First, Limestone \$90,000.00
21. Northport, Tuscaloosa \$83,050.19
22. Valleydale, Birmingham \$82,646.25
23. Decatur First, Morgan \$77,207.98
24. Taylor Road, Montgomery \$74,131.17
25. Huntsville First, Madison \$71,591.21

Students at Bessemer's Greenwood Elementary School take a picture with books donated to their class by Patsy Gamble (far right), a member of Canaan Baptist Church, Bessemer.

God opened the doors

Prayer opens doors for Canaan Baptist partnership with Bessemer school

By Lanell Downs Smith

TAB Media

Chuck Dunning joined the staff at Canaan Baptist Church, Bessemer, in 2013 as a children's minister with a heart for local schools. So when folks said he wouldn't get a foot in the door at Bessemer's Greenwood Elementary School, Dunning began to pray for a solution.

Canaan member Deborah Hatchett was also praying. As a Greenwood teacher, she had witnessed how quickly school funding for improvements could run out. And while Dunning prayed for an open door, Hatchett prayed for a church partner to come alongside the school and offer support.

"Teachers spend a lot of their own money," Hatchett said. "We stay after school to try and help bridge the gap for our students. A partnership

where church members can come in and volunteer is a big help."

That kind of partnership seemed like a natural fit for Canaan Baptist. "Our church has a journey — loving God, sharing life, serving others and showing Jesus to the world," Dunning said. "Part of our showing Jesus to the world is to reach out to our community."

'God had the plan'

With that idea in mind, Dunning soon approached then-principal Deborah Billups and asked how the church could serve and pray for her and the school. "I had to hear [Billups'] heart," he said.

During their conversation, Dunning discovered that Billups also had been praying God would open the door for someone to come and encourage the school's faculty.

From there, "God just opened up the doors. ... God had the plan



Photo courtesy of Chuck Dunning

from day one," Dunning said.

After that initial meeting, Billups opened the school to volunteers from Canaan Baptist, who served by prayer walking the campus and hosting back-to-school lunches, prayer times and Bible studies with teachers and other staff members.

Canaan volunteers have served in even more ways as the partnership has grown over the past four years.

Today, Greenwood has a different principal, Angela Bedgood, who welcomes Canaan Baptist's help and support as well.

"The community partnership allows us to do those things that we can't do otherwise with the government funds we receive, like celebrating our teachers," said Bedgood.

Canaan Baptist partners also provided encouragement and prayers for the school during an especially challenging time for Greenwood, when the school was in danger of closing due, in part, to declining enrollment. Canaan members even attended community meetings and advocated to keep school open.

That ongoing support, Bedgood said, has helped Greenwood teachers and families realize their value within the community.

"When students know that the community members are aware of

the needs of the local school, that helps them to see into this thing we call community," Bedgood said.

"When we are dealing with families that are going through difficult times, that partnership lets us refer those families to the church for prayer or other support."

To foster the partnership, Dunning works at Greenwood as a substitute teacher, a service which creates opportunities to high-five students and talk to teachers. As teachers realized they could talk to him, many started seeking him out for prayer, he said.

Prior to COVID-19, church volunteers served alongside parents at workdays: cleaning, painting and helping with yardwork.

Canaan members

led games on field day, manned book fairs and spoke at Veterans Day programs at the school. The church often donated appreciation gifts for teachers and supplied classroom volunteers.

Continued help

The school's on-campus visitors have been limited by pandemic-related restrictions, and Greenwood has only recently resumed regular in-person classes. Dunning said Canaan Baptist members continue to pray for the school and to help wherever possible.



Photo courtesy of Chuck Dunning

Joe Oglesby, a volunteer from Canaan Baptist, sands down railing on Greenwood's campus in preparation for a coat of paint.

How to start a church-school partnership in your community

Looking for ways to support your local school? Consider these tips for starting a church-school partnership:

▶ **Pray before you plan.** Ask God to reveal the needs and how your group can offer support.

▶ **Let administrators know you are available to serve.** Don't begin with an agenda or expectations. Ask how you can help them personally and be available to meet needs on their terms.

▶ **Develop relationships with faculty and staff.** Build on existing relationships with church members who work at the school.

▶ **Show God's love with actions, not just words.** Consider becoming a substitute teacher. Offer treats, appreciation gifts, supplies and workers for school events. Volunteer to sit with students so teachers can participate in appreciation activities. (Lanell Downs Smith)

“[The partnership] is a blanket of support.”

Angela Bedgood, principal, Greenwood Elementary School

And the little things the church provides — like appreciation gifts and birthday cupcakes — make all the difference, Bedgood said.

“Things can get so stressful and overwhelming that we feel like we are on an island by ourselves and that no one understands. Having a community partner gives us that shoulder, if you would, to lean on for those small things we’re not able to do,” she added.

Canaan young adults, senior adults and even the homebound participate in the partnership as volunteers and prayer warriors and through financial gifts.

“We just try to be the hands and feet of Jesus to our school,” Dunning said.

Another example of that: Many parents of Greenwood students have experienced hardships because of the pandemic, Bedgood said. When students returned after COVID-19 closures, she wanted to help families by providing school supplies. Before she even made the request, Bedgood said Canaan members had

already asked how they could help.

“[The partnership] is a blanket of support,” Bedgood said. “It tells us that there are people in the community who really do care, and they are really interested in what’s going on in the school.”

What has that “blanket of support” meant to Bedgood personally? Greenwood is her first experience as a principal. She attributes her success there to the welcome and support she received from Dunning, his wife, Jame’, and other Canaan members. “They are my light,” Bedgood said. “[Dunning] is a shoulder I can lean on whether there’s a need for the school or a personal need. The open arms and support just mean so much. The genuine partnership is very assuring.”

For Hatchett, who prayed faithfully for a church partner, it was worth the wait.

“It was just in God’s timing and because of Brother Chuck’s personality,” Hatchett said. “And it’s been a great partnership.”



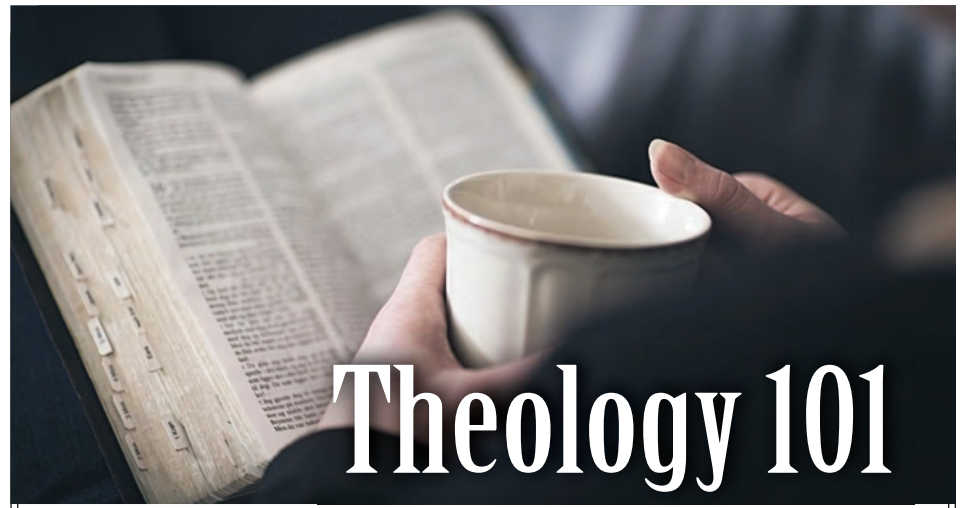
Photo courtesy of Chuck Dunning

Jame’ Dunning, a volunteer from Canaan Baptist Church, Bessemer, reads to students at Bessemer’s Greenwood Elementary School as part of Read Across America Day 2019.



Photo courtesy of Chuck Dunning

Dressed as Santa, Kenny Oglesby, a volunteer from Canaan Baptist, joins Greenwood students for a Christmas celebration in 2019.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Easter Reflections

Missionary Mandate

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
TAB Media

Two of Christ’s disciples, Peter and John, were among the first on record to view the empty tomb after Mary Magdalene informed them of how she had found it. However, it was Mary who is on record as the first to encounter the risen Christ (John 20:1–10).

She met Him in the very garden in which His borrowed tomb was located. Upon recognizing that she had encountered Jesus Himself and not a gardener attending the burial grounds, Mary began clinging to Jesus out of the sheer joy of recognizing Him. His reaction was to instruct her to go and tell the others; specifically, He directed her to take the resurrection message to the disciples (John 20:11–18).

The Easter message is urgently needed today, just as it was in those days immediately following the Resurrection, when an angelic visitor commanded the group of women who came to the empty tomb, “Go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead” (Matt. 28:7). This news was too good to not be quickly spread!

Message of hope

This message of hope is urgently needed by every generation. Those who have heard and believed, who have experienced the saving reality provided by the resurrected Savior, are under the same mandate to get the word to others. “Go quickly and tell” expresses this for all God’s people in every generation.

The mandate is an individual one for each Christian, as well as a collective one for every congregation of believers.

Churches may engage in many needful and practical ministries, but none carry the eternal possibilities embedded in the saving message of the risen Christ.

Furthermore, churches cooperating with other churches can take the message faster and further than a single church can.

We term this ideal as “cooperative missions.” Pooled resources and collective prayers make the response to the mandate more effective and widespread.

The Great Commission

The best known and oft-quoted version of the missionary mandate issued by the risen Savior is the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19–20). The mandate is “make disciples,” not simply multiply converts. That imperative is surrounded by participles that emphasize it involves going, baptizing and teaching.

This is the Easter mandate heard by Christ’s earliest followers, which must be heard and obeyed by His followers in every generation.

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

STRONGER TOGETHER

WHY I BELIEVE IN THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

I believe in the Cooperative Program because of its effectiveness in carrying out the Great Commission given by Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20.

First Baptist Church Asheville, where I serve as pastor, joyfully participates in the Cooperative Program because we know that the money we give goes to further the Gospel in ways we could never do alone, such as funding theological education, church planting throughout North America,



FBC Asheville Disaster Relief volunteers participate in a missions luncheon at the church.

retirement homes for seniors, campus ministries at colleges and universities, and the list goes on.

One specific way our Cooperative Program dollars are put to great use is through the Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief teams that our State Board of Missions leads.

The Alabama DR ministry is an amazing way we are able to help our neighbors in their times of need, especially in places we would never be able to help directly. Not only do those teams go out during times of physical crisis, but they are able to share

By Jay Stewart



the Gospel. Through their efforts and every year, many people are saved through their witness.

God has uniquely blessed Alabama Baptists with a heart for missions, and the Cooperative Program is a powerful tool in advancing

God's Kingdom.

Jay Stewart is pastor of First Baptist Church Asheville (St. Clair Association). He serves as a trustee of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and on its Executive Committee.



COOPERATIVE PROGRAM DAY IS SUNDAY, APRIL 25

The Cooperative Program is the lifeline of missions work in Alabama and around the world. In order to raise awareness of the Cooperative Program in your congregation, please consider implementing some of the following suggestions for Cooperative Program Day, April 25:

- Show a video clip in your service that highlights the Cooperative Program.
- Arrange to have a state missionary come to your church to speak about the Cooperative Program.
- Provide a bulletin insert or other CP information to your congregation.
- Have a special time of prayer for the ministries and missionaries supported by CP gifts.



You can learn more about the Cooperative Program at alabamaCP.org. Also, you'll find free Cooperative Program resources, including bulletin inserts, informational brochures, video clips, posters, bookmarks, DVDs, children's resources, missionary moments and other promotional materials, at cooperativeprogramresources.org.

For more information, contact Jim Swedenburg, jswedenburg@alsbom.org, (334) 613-2283.



Reaching ‘the least of these’ with audio Bibles

By **Shawn Hendricks**
TAB Media

Susan Bates has seen the life-changing impact of Scripture and how God’s word can bring healing and comfort to those she refers to as “the least of these.”

This includes the homeless man, the impoverished villager in a third-world country, imprisoned and illiterate juveniles, disabled adults, the trafficked girl who can’t sleep at night, and many others. These are the ones to whom Bates seeks to bring hope through her nonprofit ministry, Your Working Copy (YWC), based in Birmingham.

Bates, founder of and narrator for YWC, announced a new campaign in December to put the King James Bible in the hands of “the forgotten” with the help of MegaVoice audio players. Following years of challenges, and 2020 turned upside-down by COVID-19, her mission is more clear than ever, Bates noted in a recent interview.

“That’s what we see as our charge, to put these audio Bibles in places everywhere they’re needed among the

least of these,” said Bates, a member of New Bethlehem Baptist Church, Bessemer, and an adjunct math instructor at a local community college.

Focus on recording

It all began in 2009 when she and her board of directors set out to record the entire Bible on CD. The original plan included completing a library of CDs featuring all the books of the Bible. And for Bates, who had used her smooth vocal skills much of her life in radio and debate, and other ways, the assignment seemed

simple — at least at first.

“I thought it would be a snap,” she recalls on her ministry’s

website. “As the years wore on, I confessed to the Father that I had no idea what I had signed up for.”

Getting through all of the Old Testament books would be daunting enough, then changes in technology led her ministry in 2016 to officially stop producing and distributing CDs. Bates was left second-guessing YWC’s direction and what she believed God had called her to do. On top of that, her board

had dropped from nine to three members.

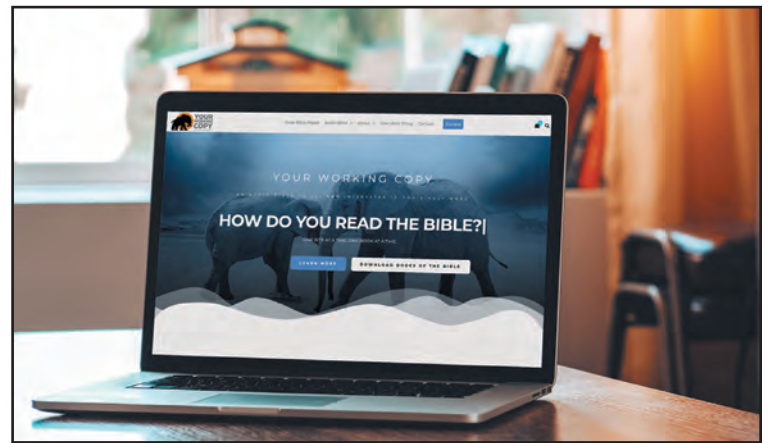
But that year, she and the remaining members agreed she needed to do a better job of prioritizing efforts to record all the books of the Bible. This meant other parts of the ministry — Scripture-reading events and other recording projects — had to be put on hold. “Up until 2016 we had recorded maybe a third of the Bible, the majority of the New Testament, but not many of those hard-hitters, those big Old Testament books,” she told The Alabama Baptist.

Finding direction

And in the process, Bates confirmed the direction in which she had felt the Lord leading her for years — to record the entire Bible and distribute it to “the least of these.”

“While the Lord had been nudging me all along to get the Bible finished,” she recalled, “there were so many different applications that I had devoted myself to, that I lost sight of the main thing.”

So from 2017 to 2019, what Bates referred to as “the silent” years, she poured more energy into finishing recording the remaining books of the Bible while



Unsplash.com photo edited by TAB

juggling teaching and other responsibilities.

“We just set our pace and slowly whittled away at it,” said Bates, who noted that most of 2020 was spent with her small team on post-production, uploading all the recordings to the website and working with MegaVoice to feature them on solar-powered audio players. She also dealt with the unexpected death of one of her friends and production team members to COVID-19.

Through it all, YWC distributed 24 of the audio players last Christmas to The WellHouse, a faith-based ministry in St. Clair County that provides shelter, healing and restoration to women escaping from human trafficking. This was made possible following a generous donation that helped cover the \$60 audio players.

According to MegaVoice, Bates said, her recording of the Bible was the only version they carry in a woman’s voice.

The voice matters

“With the emergence of human trafficking, there has been a need and a cry for a

Bible in a woman’s voice,” said Bates, pointing out that some abuse survivors have no interest in listening to Scripture read by a man.

Marlie Hyde, program officer at The Wellhouse, said the women at the shelter have expressed how Bates’ recording is more comforting for them.

“We’re on 65 acres of land and so the women walk around the lake, and you can see them sitting there, listening to [the Scriptures],” Hyde said. “They’ve said the voice was so soothing to them ... especially those who have experienced intense trauma.”

YWC also is working with ministry partners who plan to distribute audio Bibles this spring to Guatemala.

“They can take those small gadgets and use them to spread the gospel to a group of 1,000 people by connecting it to speakers,” Bates said.

In August, YWC plans to hold its first fundraising dinner. “We’re really optimistic about where this ministry will take us,” she said, “and how it will make a difference in the world.”

For more information, visit yourworkingcopy.org.

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Missionary with Alabama roots 'marries into' life of ship ministry

(continued from page 1)
it has served more than 150 countries and distributed hundreds of tons of books and aid supplies. Doulos alone welcomed more than 22 million people on board at more than 600 stops in 108 countries.

The original ship, Logos, stopped sailing in 1988. Logos II started sailing that year and stopped in 2008. After its 32-year run, Doulos stopped sailing in 2010. Logos Hope, a converted ferry, started serving in 2009 and still represents OM Ships today.

George Verwer, who founded OM, said people thought he had "lost his marbles" when he first floated the idea of a ship-based ministry. Now, 50 years later, he's celebrating what God has done.

"We rejoice over all God has done through our four vessels," Verwer said. "At least 100 million people worldwide have come into contact with the gospel in some way. We know thousands have professed faith, but only heaven will tell the full story."

Alice — who along with



Photo courtesy of Alice, an OM Ships missionary
Alice, Dave and their four children sit at their muster station during a safety practice run aboard Doulos. The family lived aboard the ship for two stints totaling six years.

her husband now works for OM's U.S. headquarters in Tyrone, Georgia — served on Doulos in two stints totaling six years. The first was when she and her husband were newlyweds. The second was in the early 2000s with four children.

She said she has so many stories and individuals in her mind and heart from her years on the ship. But one in particular stands out — a woman she got to meet in Senegal. They crossed paths in an unexpected way when Alice was out exploring in the community, and she



Photo courtesy of OM Ships International
A local man looks through a book in the ship's bookstore during one of its stops.

was able to share the gospel with her and invite her back to the ship for a meal.

"Then she had the opportunity to meet people from around the world and hear them talk about Jesus too, not just me talking about Him," Alice said. "She stood up at the end of our meal and said, 'Never have I ever felt whatever it is that you all seem to have. I didn't know that He could be like that.'"

For a video about OM Ships' 50th anniversary, www.om.org/ships/50years. To read more about Doulos, visit om.org/ships/doulos.

EDITOR'S NOTE —
Alice and Dave's last name omitted for security reasons.✝



Photo courtesy of OM Ships International
A Doulos crewmember shares her faith with a young woman with leukemia in a hospital in Lae, Papua New Guinea, in 2008.

For a video about OM Ships' 50th anniversary, visit om.org/ships/50years. To read more about Doulos, visit om.org/ships/doulos.

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CHURCH POSITIONS

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Purpose Baptist Church of Opelika is prayerfully seeking God's choice for our next full-time pastor. Please send resumé to: purposebaptist@gmail.com. Visit our website: www.purposebaptist.churchspring.org.

PASTOR

Talladega Creek Baptist Church, Talladega, Ala., is prayerfully seeking a full-time pastor. Upon the Lord's guidance, please submit resumé to: stocke@crba.org.

PASTOR

First Baptist Church, Flomaton, Ala., is seeking a full-time pastor. Please email resumé to: Flomatonfbc@gmail.com or mail to: P.O. Box 765, Flomaton, AL 36441.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

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

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Paden Baptist Church is seeking resumé for bivocational pastor. Please send resumé to: Paden Baptist Church, 900 Padenreich Avenue, Gadsden, AL 35903. padenbaptistchurch@yahoo.com.

WORSHIP LEADER

Grace Church, Bessemer, is looking for a worship leader for their Sunday AM service. Send resumé and video demo link to: churchoffice@gracechurchbessemer.com.

PART-TIME WORSHIP LEADER

First Baptist Church of Guin, Ala. Receiving resumé and videos at church@fbcguin.com.

YOUTH PASTOR

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

YOUTH PASTOR

The First Baptist Church in Pinson, Ala., is seeking a full-

time youth pastor with experience in leading and developing young people. This ministry will include middle school and high school students. Please send your resumé to: sandysuttles@fbcpinson.org.

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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 tabonline.org/stories.

FREE RESOURCES FOR YOUR CHURCH!

May is Foster Care Awareness Month.

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- RESIDENTIAL THERAPY
- CLINICAL SERVICES
- MENTAL HEALTH
- EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

HOW THAT LOOKED IN 2020

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- 35 & 130 ADOPTIONS
- 15 PROFESSIONALS IN OUR CARE
- 93 FOSTER & CHANGING HOME CAREGIVERS
- 3,758 MONTHS SERVED

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Alabama Baptist
CHILDREN'S HOMES
& Family Ministries



3 stories you should know



Photo by John D. Simmons/The Charlotte Observer via AP

Dr. Robert Lesslie, seen in this photo from 2009, was one of five people killed April 7 at Lesslie's home in Rock Hill, South Carolina. His wife Barbara and two grandchildren, Adah and Noah, were also killed, along with James Lewis, an air conditioning technician who was doing work at the home. Lewis' colleague, Robert Shook, was flown to a Charlotte hospital. Authorities say the gunman was former NFL player Phillip Adams, who killed himself April 8. (AP)

Views on life's purpose, meaning changing

More than 80% of Americans believe each person's life has an ultimate purpose, according to a recent survey from Lifeway Research. "During COVID-19 many experiences, pleasures and metrics of success became irrelevant overnight," said Scott McConnell, Lifeway Research executive director. "It is not surprising that more people thought about their purpose and what matters in life." The study also indicated that 57% ask themselves how to find more meaning and purpose in their life at least monthly. The study showed that 46% of Christians who attend worship four times a month or more never wonder about their eternal destination, and 85% of U.S. adults believe there is more to life than the physical world. Close to 60% believe they found higher meaning. (TAB)

Revived school yoga bill heads to Senate

Members of the Alabama Senate Judiciary Committee approved a yoga bill on April 7. The bill received a 5-2 vote a week after a deadlock over the measure proposed by Rep. Jeremy Gray, D-Opelika, who practices and teaches yoga. A Montgomery Advertiser report said several senators who had voted against the bill the previous week were not present, but entered the committee room after the vote. The Alabama State Board of Education banned yoga, hypnotic states, guided imagery and meditation from K-12 public schools in 1993. House Bill 246 would enable public schools to offer yoga as an elective. The Alabama House approved the bill 73-25 in March. Sen. Tom Whatley, R-Auburn, moved to reconsider the vote after the deadlock. The bill will now move to the Senate. (TAB)

Headline news from around the Southeast

Arkansas

Since its launch in October 2014, Crosspointe Church, Bryant, Arkansas, has learned, grown and adapted. Today, the church, located between the third-largest high school in the state and a business/residential district, plans to develop a community park complete with food trucks, green space, an amphitheater and a playground, Arkansas Baptist News reported. Ryan Ingold, teaching pastor and elder, said God has "given us a unique calling for where we are."

Florida

Ensley First Baptist Church, Pensacola, Florida, has been ministering to the homeless for more than a decade: distributing food, providing a women and children's cold weather shelter, offering a Sunday afternoon worship service and meal and even conducting funerals. Now the church is taking its ministry a step further by

offering an addiction recovery and transitional housing program for homeless women. The ministry is possible through support from other churches and the community.

Louisiana

Young Jeremiah Williams had to use a make-shift goal to train for Upward basketball games at First Baptist Church, Pineville, Louisiana. Seeing the youngster shoot a basketball into a trash can inspired Devin Hinkston, a member of New Scott Olly Baptist Church, Alexandria, Louisiana, to buy Williams a basketball goal. The experience led Hinkston to start Jeremiah's Dream, a non-profit organization to fund a recreational center in the community, the Baptist Message reported.

North Carolina

After a local resident placed incendiary devices near First Baptist Church, Brevard, North Caro-

lina, and a county building in the downtown area, the church found an opportunity to pray for the suspect and build community ties. No one was injured in the incident. Pastor Jeff Maynard led the church in thinking through how it could lean toward God's purpose and see Him do something good with the incident, the Biblical Recorder reported.

Tennessee

It was not the typical request for help, but Tennessee Disaster Relief volunteers have responded to a request to assist with COVID-19 vaccinations in Memphis. "It is one of our most unusual responses," said Wes Jones, disaster relief specialist for the Tennessee Baptist Mission Board. Volunteers are helping with data entry, filing paperwork and keeping traffic flowing in the drive-up vaccination sites, the Baptist and Reflector reported.

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

► **Elsie “Irena” O’Neal** — wife of Ernest O’Neal, pastor emeritus of Memphis Baptist Church, Dothan — died March 30. She was 83.

A Mississippi native, O’Neal ministered alongside her husband as he served as pastor of several churches in Alabama and Ohio before landing in 1977 at Memphis Baptist, where he served 33 years.



O’NEAL

“Mrs. Irena was a gifted teacher and served in various leadership positions through the years,” said Jim Tate, pastor of Memphis Baptist. “As a pastor’s wife, her contributions to Kingdom work often went unnoticed by others but were certainly recognized by God.”

O’Neal is survived by her husband of 65 years; daughters, Phyllis and Rena; sons, Anthony and K.O.; six grandchildren; and several great-grandchildren.

► **Billie Jean Young**, artist-in-residence and associate professor of fine and performing arts at Judson College, died March 30. She was 73.

Young was among the first African American students admitted to Judson and graduated in 1974. She had served on the Judson faculty since 2006.

A native of Choctaw County, Alabama, Young also earned a law degree from Samford University’s Cumberland School of Law.

Her creative work focused on the American civil rights movement, rural women and Alabama Black Belt life, which her plays, “JimmyLee” and “Fannie Lou Hamer: This Little Light,” documented. Young authored four books and won many awards, including a 1984 MacArthur Fellows Award. Young was named as the Judson College Alumnae Association’s Outstanding Alumna in 2002 and was inducted into the Alabama Black Belt Hall of Fame in 2014.



YOUNG

► Longtime Alabama Baptist pastor **Clinton Wood** died April 3. He was 93.



WOOD

After serving in the U.S. Navy, Wood graduated from Howard College (now Samford University) and went to Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

He began his pastoral ministry at 66th Street Baptist Church, Birmingham. They planted South Roebuck Baptist

Church, Birmingham, in 1954, and Wood became its founding pastor. He later served as pastor of First Baptist Church, Albertville; North-

port Baptist Church; South Avondale Baptist Church, Birmingham; and First Baptist Church, Sandusky, in Birmingham. He retired in 1993.

Wood also served on several Alabama Baptist State Convention entity boards.

He is survived by his wife of 70 years, Dot; son, Clinton Wayne; daughters, Cathy, Beth and Lynn; six grandchildren; and one great-grandson.

ALABAMA-CRENSHAW ASSOCIATION

► **David Grier** is the new pastor of **Bethel Baptist Church, Goshen**. He also served as pastor of Liberty Baptist Church, Pansey, and Post Oak Baptist Church, Ozark. He and his wife, Daphne, have two daughters.

CAHABA ASSOCIATION

► **Hopewell Baptist Church, Marion**, will celebrate its 199th anniversary at their homecoming April 18. Guest preacher will be Mark Tew, president of Judson College. Special music begins at 10 a.m. followed by a time of fellowship. Then the worship service begins at 10:30 a.m. Everyone is invited to a homecoming meal in the Family Life Center. George Washburn is pastor.



TEW

FRANKLIN ASSOCIATION

► When **Lynn Suddith** first filled in as secretary at **First Baptist Church, Russellville**, she thought it was only going to be a three-or-four-week job. That was in 1991.

Thirty years later, she’s retiring from the position.

“Being a church secretary isn’t usually on a young person’s list of life’s goals, but I am thankful for the life’s calling God had planned for me,” Suddith said. “Thank you to my precious church family who has endured and supported my efforts.”

Chase Dowdy, pastor of First, Russellville, said Suddith has served the church and the staff well and faithfully loved and served the Lord and her neighbors.

“It has truly been an honor to see the hands and feet of Christ on display in Lynn, and she has taught me more about ministry and ministering to others than she will ever know,” he said.



SUDDITH

SHELBY ASSOCIATION

► **Westwood Baptist Church, Alabaster**, will celebrate “40 years of Impact” June 6. This event will be a time of “looking back where God has been faithful to the church and forward to what He has in store for Westwood.” Service times are 9:15 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. Refreshments will be served. For more information, visit gowestwood.org/celebrate or call the church office at 205-664-0122. Kenneth Bruce is pastor.

SULPHUR SPRINGS ASSOCIATION

► **Billy Phillips** is the new associate pastor of **Aiken Grove Baptist Church, Jasper**. He previously served as pastor of First Baptist Church, Oakman, for 33 years, as well as two Walker Baptist Association churches — Cedar Hill Baptist and White Baptist, which no longer exist. He and his wife, Sylvia, and have two children and four grandchildren.

Persecuted church

Mother expelled from village after asking pastor to pray for harvest

CHHATTISGARH, India — Villagers kept a tribal Adivasi mother from reaping her fields because she asked a Christian pastor to pray for the harvest.

When Kanni Barse asked police for help, she was instead told that India’s constitution does not allow the Adivasi to convert to Christianity.

Barse, 35, had raised the crop during the COVID-19 lockdown to feed her family.

Relatives have expelled Barse, a Christian and mother of four children, from Pala-

madugu village and vowed to kill her if she returns. Villagers say she defiled Adivasi land by having a Christian pastor pray.

She further was told she would be chopped into pieces if she returned to the child care center where she has worked 20 years.

Her husband has seizures and cannot work consistently.

Since Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power in 2014 in India, Hindu extremists have been emboldened in their targeting of Christians.

India is No. 10 on Open Doors’ 2021 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian. (MS)



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First Baptist Church
Birmingham



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Charles Carter



WORSHIP LEADER:

Karen Peck
and New River

For more information, please visit
evangelizeAL.org/revive

Tuesday, May 4

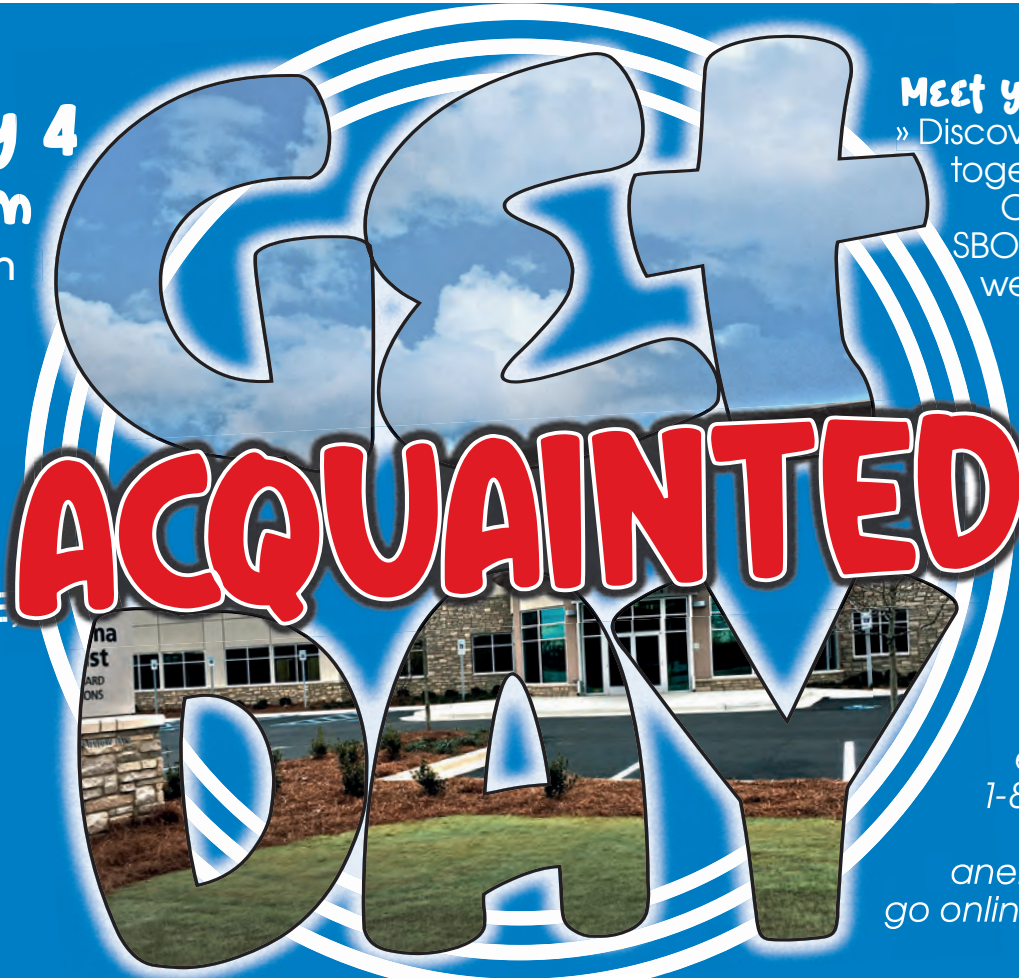
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9:30-10 • Check-in
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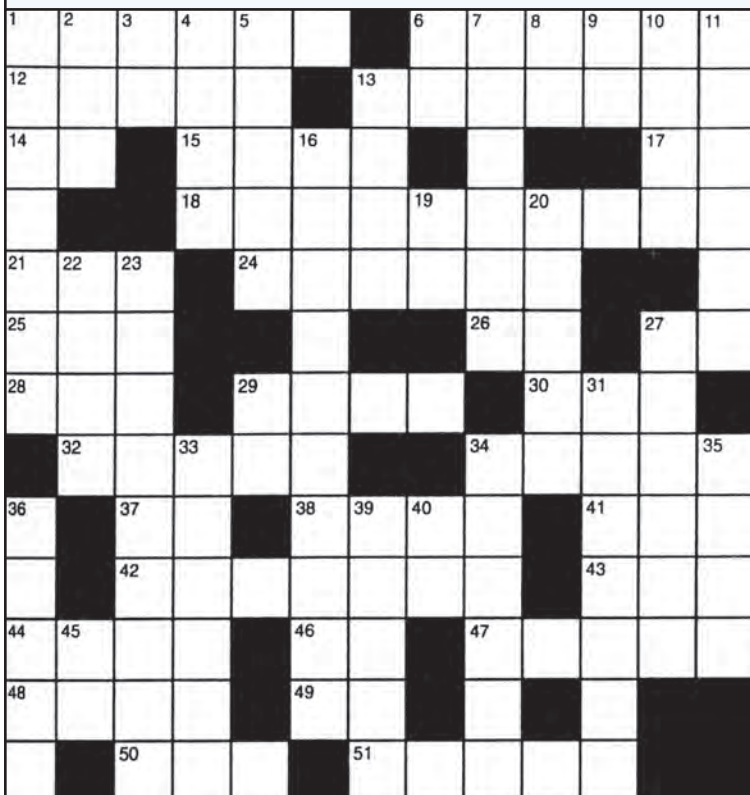
Spot the Differences



Differences: Stickers on luggage, details on shoes, smile on worker, hair color of worker, hairstyle of worker, outline of "AIRLINES"

Christian Crossword

By Debra Michaels Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- Wood the ark was made of. (Gen. 6:14)
- A god in form of a dog-headed man. (2 Kings 17:31)
- Town of northern Palestine. (Josh. 19:37)
- A Benjaminite. (Num. 1:11)
- Northeast. (abbr.)
- One of David's guards. (2 Sam. 23:36)
- Symbol for chemical element thulium.
- A disease causing pain and swelling in muscles and joints.
- Short for sister.
- African fly.
- Anger, wrath.
- Hour. (abbr.)
- New Hampshire. (abbr.)
- Bread dipped in soup, milk and other liquids.

- (Ruth 2:14)
- Expressing disgust, impatience, relief.
- Mother of King Hezekiah. (2 Kings 18:2)
- Position of importance and honor among Hebrews. (Gen. 24:59)
- The musical sound of bells.
- French word meaning "the."
- Mexican food served on a tortilla shell.
- To attempt.
- North American reindeer.
- A tool for breaking ground.
- Where Samson slew the Philistines. (Judg. 15:9)
- Symbol for chemical element chromium.
- Frames of bars.
- Through faith she received strength to

- conceive a child. (Heb. 11:11)
- South America. (abbr.)
- Benjamin's son. (Gen. 46:21)
- Wise men presented to Jesus gifts of gold, frankincense and _____. (Matt. 2:11)

Down

- First book of the Bible.
- Greek word meaning "a song."
- Public relations. (abbr.)
- A person legally entitled to succeed to property or rank.
- One more than seven.
- Nickel. (abbr.)
- A Judahite. (1 Chron. 4:3)
- ____ ye holy; for I am the Lord your God. (Lev. 20:7)
- A word called out to get attention.
- Small insects. (Prov. 30:25)
- A Levite and the father of Joah. (2 Chron. 29:12)
- An adhesive.
- Principles determining beauty.
- Mountain. (abbr.)
- Father of Abraham. (Gen. 11:27)
- City of Naphtali. (Josh. 19:38)
- Tomb. (Matt. 27:60)
- Son of Cush. (1 Chron. 1:10)
- Postscript. (abbr.)
- Daughter of Pharaoh. (1 Chron. 4:18)
- A Judahite. (1 Chron. 4:2)
- The puma, or American panther.
- I will lift up mine ____ unto the hills. (Ps. 121:1)
- Extremely light wood.
- Son of Terah. (Gen. 11:26)
- County. (abbr.)
- Each. (abbr.)

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For April 18

Explore the Bible

By Benjamin Stubblefield, Ph.D.

Visiting Assistant Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



CORNERSTONE Luke 20:9–19

I was about 13 when the “Left Behind” series of books came out, and I can still remember the explosion of interest in end-times theology in our area churches. It was also around that time that I first heard Larry Norman’s tenor-soft voice lullabying about the apocalypse: “There’s no time to change your mind. The Son has come and you’ve been left behind. I wish we’d all been ready.” I didn’t know much at 13. But I heard Larry loud and clear, and I didn’t want to get left behind.

Whatever you might think about how the last days will come about, one thing is certain: They will come about. Jesus warns in our passage this week that the day of the final assize is sure, and that the Lord will judge all people on the basis of how they respond to Him.

The Servants (9–12)

The imagery in this parable is particularly relevant to Israel. Vineyard, tenantry and fruit-bearing have unique correspondences to Old Testament language often used to explain Israel’s relationship to God. In other words, when Jesus tells this story with these very Jewish metaphors in Jerusalem to His Jewish kinsmen, everybody knows who and what He’s talking about. God (the Man) starts a plan to bless the world (a vineyard), and He designates Israel to be special custodians of it (the tenants).

But when harvest time comes, the tenants give none and mistreat the man’s servants. Most likely, this is an allusion to the manner with which Israel had historically persecuted God’s prophets (Matt. 5:12; Acts 7:52). This is a detail that’s easy to rush past, but we should slow down and hear the lesson Jesus is giving, lest we make Israel’s same mistakes.

God’s truth is not always palatable, even to God’s people. Sometimes, God’s prophetic voice so deeply cuts our conscience that we are tempted toward anger and hatred toward the one speaking it. Remember, it was a religious people that presided over Stephen’s death, stoning him

while covering their ears, for they wished to hear him no more (Acts 7:57–58).

God’s people must be quick to listen to God’s word, whether it is in season or out (2 Tim. 4:2), a pat on the back or a step on the toes.

The Son (13–16a)

The man decides to send his son, which elicits a bizarre reaction from the tenants. They “reason” with each other, cast him out and kill him, all the while thinking that the land should then transfer to their ownership (v.14). Perhaps they presumed the father wouldn’t suspect them. But whatever they “reasoned,” it was stupid. Because sin always makes you stupid. This was the height of obvious treachery that must obviously earn the height of punishment.

Sin is bad chemistry. As it is in the tenants, it corrodes our logic, character and integrity. It worked among our first parents to eat from the Tree and God’s people to hang Him on one.

The Stone (16b–19)

The crowd and religious leaders understood that Jesus indicted them for how they had in their recalcitrance mistreated God’s prophets, and it’s beginning to get clearer to them that Jesus is speaking about how they would mistreat Him (v.16b). The connection between the son in the parable and Jesus gets tightened in the Psalm 118 quote (v. 17). That psalm often encouraged Israel, because that’s what the stone in that psalm typically represented. God would build His kingdom upon Israel even though the nations rejected it. But here, Jesus indicates that He is the cornerstone which so much of Israel is rejecting — the true stone upon which all who reject Him will shatter (Dan. 2:44).

So much of Christian theology celebrates the love, grace and mercy of God, and rightly so. But we ought to be careful to avoid the mistake of forgetting that the same Christ who saves in mercy also judges with wrath. Jesus calls us to prepare now, so we don’t have to worry about wishing “we’d all been ready.”

Bible Studies for Life

By Rony Kozman, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies, Samford University



THE RETURN OF JESUS Matthew 24:3–8, 29–32, 42–44

After Jesus died, He was raised from the dead and He ascended to the Father. And Jesus’ disciples eagerly awaited Jesus’ return when God’s kingdom would be fully realized on earth. We also look forward to Jesus’ return. We look forward to the day when evil and suffering are vanquished. We await the day when heaven and earth are united. No more sorrow. No more pain. We await Jesus’ return.

Signs point to the return of Christ. (3–8)

In Matthew 24, the disciples ask Jesus when He will return, and they want a sign: “What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” (v. 3; NIV). They want to be able to discern the timing of Jesus’ return. Why do they want a sign? Perhaps to alleviate their anxieties about the coming tumultuous time (vv. 1–2). But Jesus does not give them the signs they seek.

Like a weather forecaster who observes satellite images to forecast the coming tornadoes and hurricanes, so also do many believers read Scripture hoping to glimpse the signs of Jesus’ return and of the end times. Jesus says such inquiries are mistaken and lead to deception (v. 4). Many people will claim to be the Messiah who has returned (v. 5, 24). Many false prophets will “perform great signs and wonders to deceive” (v. 24). Jesus warns that quests for signs of the end times are bound to lead them astray. They should be prepared to suffer and to endure (vv. 9, 13) until the gospel is proclaimed in all the earth (v. 14). This mission must happen be-

fore the end, and this should consume our attention — not the signs of the end times.

Jesus will visibly return to earth. (29–32)

It is futile to search for a sign of Jesus’ return because Jesus’ return cannot be anticipated. It will come as a flash of lightning (v. 27). The time of Jesus’ return cannot be forecasted. He will come suddenly. In a flash. There is one sure sign that Jesus gives His disciples — His appearing.

And that sign (i.e., Jesus Himself) will come as fast as lightning. Jesus says, “immediately after the distress of those days ... then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven” (v. 30). By making His return itself the sign, Jesus removes any gap in time between the sign and Himself. His return cannot be anticipated. He is the sign.

We should be prepared and ready for Christ’s return. (42–44)

Since Jesus’ return cannot be anticipated or discerned by looking for signs, we must be ready at all times. Jesus’ return will be sudden and unexpected. We must “keep watch” and be ready since we do not know the day of Jesus’ return (v. 42). How can we be ready? By being faithful servants of our Lord Jesus (vv. 45–46) hard at work in His kingdom. May we be faithful servants and stewards of the gifts God has given us. May we eagerly do works of charity and love, so that when Jesus returns we hear Him say “well done, good and faithful servant” (25:21, 23).

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MEDIA REVIEWS

By Tracy Riggs
TAB Media

Pat Barrett uses songwriting as a journal, a way of processing emotions

Act Justly, Love Mercy, Walk Humbly” is not just a paraphrase of Micah 6:8b, in which the question, “What does the Lord require of you?” is answered. It’s also the name of Pat Barrett’s newest album.

Barrett, probably best known for writing “Good Good Father,” is a Dove Award winner, singer/songwriter, worship leader, husband and father of three. Just as “Good Good Father,” most of this latest work is a product of his life experiences and consists of “not just Sunday morning songs, but Monday morning songs,” Barrett said.

What he remembers most about “Good Good Father” is not the fact that it won a Dove Award but that it was written in the front room of his home.

‘So humbling’

“As a songwriter, you just never know if anyone will hear a song outside of just you when you are writing it,” Barrett said. “I can’t recall any other feelings [when I found out about the Dove Award win] than shock and surprise in the best way. Who would have thought that some words that you write on a piece of paper during a writing session in your living room will ever leave that space? It’s just so humbling.”

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.



PAT BARRETT

Photo by Mary Claire

“Act Justly, Love Mercy, Walk Humbly” took more than two years to come to fruition, with part written and recorded before the pandemic and some during. Several songs were inspired by 2020 events, like “Lightning,” written after George Floyd’s death.

“For me, some of the most memorable moments [while creating this album] were not pleasant,” Barrett admitted. “But they’re the ones that stick. It was the world shutting down and all of your professional plans for the year being scrapped; then it was the racial tension explosion as well. As a songwriter, I have always been very ‘in the moment.’ I use songwriting as a journal, a way of processing emotions. A lot of these songs came out of that time.”

Many of Barrett’s songs are well-known, with “Build My Life” named Faithlife’s No. 2 worship song in 2020. But though he has toured nationally and led worship in church, his public persona doesn’t shape his life as much as being a

Christian man, husband and dad.

“The vast majority of my life doesn’t take place on a stage with a microphone in front of my face, so I really love songs that speak to the things in my practical, ordinary life. In regards to songs about faith, if a song doesn’t speak to those ‘everyday’ things, I’m not that interested,” Barrett said.

His songs are encouragement for both those in the congregation on Sunday and those on stage.

However, as an active worship leader, he has some advice for others in that position.

An honest place

“Lead from a place of honesty [because] no one’s life is perfect. Hype is overrated and pretending is exhausting.

“I’ve tended to see that the more I am comfortable in leading worship from an honest place in my own life, the more it encourages people to worship from an honest place in theirs,” Barrett explained.

The songs on “Act Justly, Love Mercy, Walk Humbly” came from learning that God cares about every part of life, not just offerings and sacrifices.

Jesus cares

“Does He care about the way we act? Absolutely! Does He care about walking with us through life and growing with two steps forward, one step back as we are trusting? Yes, absolutely He cares about how we act, love and walk,” Barrett declared.

“This album is representative for me of two years of growing and learning to trust God more fully ... Trust is such a simple word, but it is a deep word. You know the feeling when you are being led and trusting that leading, and you know that feeling when you’re ahead of the leader and making your own decisions.

“You realize that there’s so much in the world you can’t control,” Barrett continued. “There are so many things outside of my life that I have no say about. However, there are things I do have a say in, like my wife and I can have a say in what we teach our kids in our household. We can model and show them forgiveness and kindness and generosity and honesty. There’s power in that.

“Just because the world takes a turn, it doesn’t mean that you still can’t make the decision to trust in your own life, the one that God put in your hands. You don’t know what tomorrow looks like, but you do know that this is the day that the Lord has made. You can either be anxious and worry about it or you can rejoice and be glad in it. This is me making that choice in my own life — to trust.”

Look for Barrett on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube or www.patbarrettmusic.com.

Drawn to God

Language tutor in Northern Africa hears God call her name, follows Christ

December in Northern Africa greeted Ray and Sarah, a young couple who were new Christian workers to the region in 2006.

Having left everything they knew and settling inside the task God had set before them, Ray and Sarah embraced the culture and began looking for a local tutor for them and their four children.

Aziya, a young woman with a bubbly magnetism and stylish appearance, immediately won the affections of the family. She had majored in translating and teaching English and began to tutor the children three times a week.

Exposed to the gospel

Ray and Sarah used a different tutor at first, but soon switched to Aziya as well. Eventually, Aziya offered language training and translation to several other families.

But these were no ordinary families. These families, like Ray and Sarah, believed, hoped and relied upon the one true God. Those eight adults enjoyed Aziya's positive spirit and tireless guidance, and so they began pouring back into her life — both tangibly and spiritually.

She was given translation projects, often involving Scripture, and was encouraged to study the Bible. Several years later, Aziya stepped into a new phase of life and married a local Muslim man.

If becoming a wife in the middle of the Arab Spring revolution was

not difficult enough, Aziya also wrestled with questions of faith.

She knew deep inside that her students-turned-friends had an unwavering, living faith that she desired.

The emptiness she had felt, despite practicing cultural-religious traditions, kept thoughts of God's mercy and salvation constantly on her mind.

It was after Aziya's first year of marriage and a difficult pregnancy that she grew increasingly restless about her faith. Sarah and her friends hosted a baby shower and continued to reach out with help and encouragement.

Before long however, Ray and Sarah moved to a town three hours away and lost touch with Aziya, who had divorced and begun working for a local school.

Ray and Sarah continued to pray constantly for Aziya, even though they rarely saw her. They believed God had plans to prosper and not to harm, plans to give Aziya hope and a future.

Sarah never forgot Aziya, nor did she stop praying. Every Tuesday since 2010, Sarah has prayed for the petite, young woman with a flair for Western fashion. Sarah's prayer journal marks the days and many prayers.

Years of praying went by before Sarah heard the rest of Aziya's story. One afternoon they reunited in a restaurant. Sharing tears and holding hands across the table,



IMB photo

IMB missionaries like Ray and Sarah embrace the culture and language of the people they serve in order to open doors to gospel conversations.

Aziya told Sarah about her life since they had been together. Aziya showed no doubt as she told Sarah how her life had changed when she heard God call her name.

Aziya sat beside her daughter and Sarah, sharing what had happened since 2018.

That November, Aziya had felt a deep discontent that drew her to God. "I heard Him call my name, and the other problems never seemed the same again. God is God, and there is no other," she told Sarah. Her answer to God was, "Yes, Lord. Here I am."

A few months after her commitment to follow Jesus, Aziya was in an automobile accident. The other driver assaulted Aziya at the scene. He punched her in the face, breaking bones in her ear, then left her to live or die.

Aziya survived but endured three months of partial deafness and blindness during her recovery. Daily, she faced the likelihood of losing her hearing altogether in one

ear. She expressed how her slow, painful recovery was only possible to endure because Christ was with her in the darkness. Eventually, her hearing was fully restored though headaches lingered.

'God can hear us'

Over the past year, Sarah and Aziya have kept in close communication, even as the coronavirus became a global pandemic. Aziya and her school-age daughter were diagnosed with COVID-19, resulting in Aziya losing half her lung.

During her illness she clung to the words her daughter often repeated at her bedside: "Mama, we can pray. God can hear us."

Today, Sarah and Ray continually pray for Aziya and her family — for her daughter and older sister who are growing in faith, and for her other siblings who are far from believing. (IMB)

EDITOR'S NOTE — Names have been changed for security reasons.

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