



# The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

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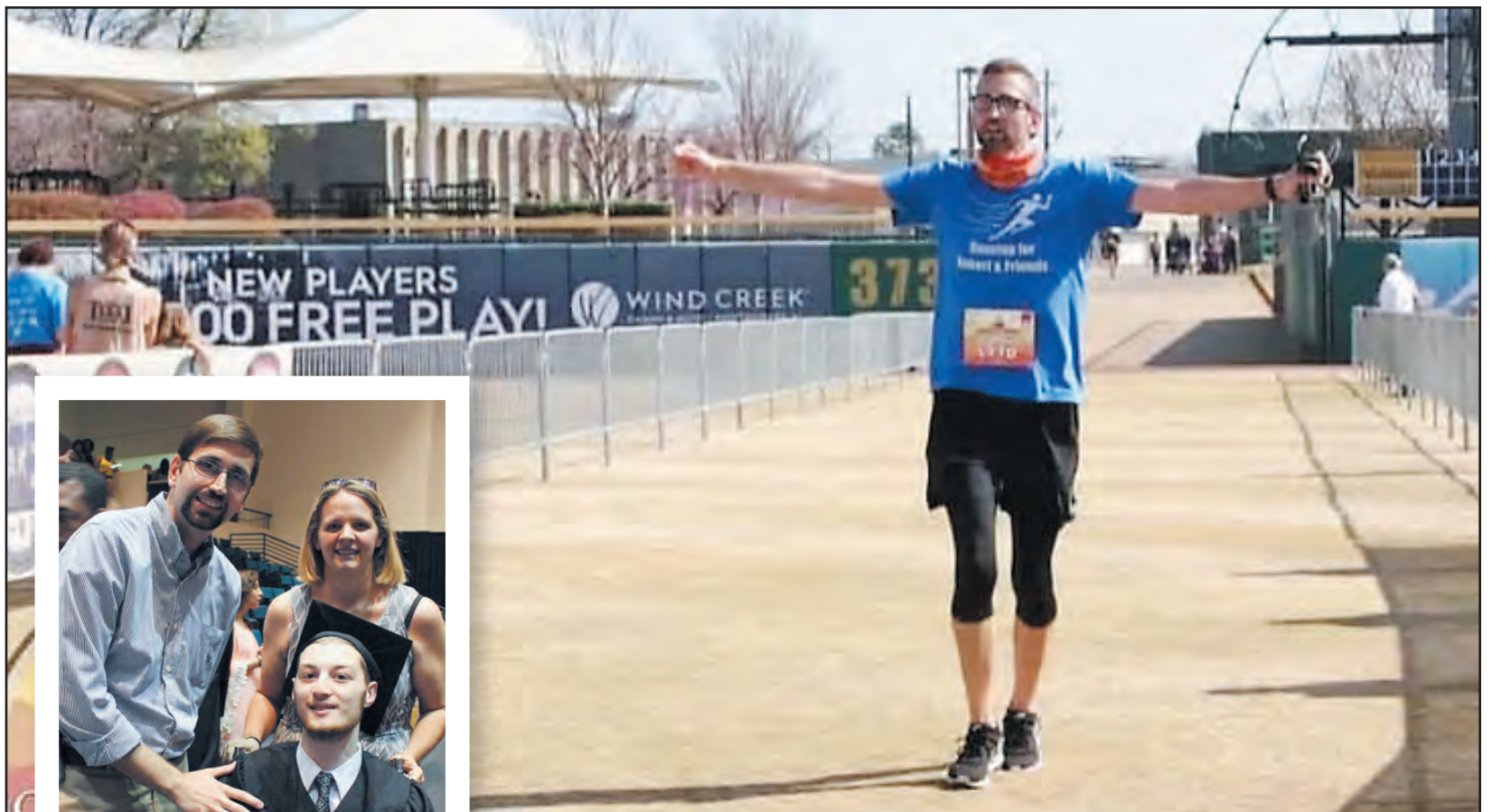
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Photos courtesy of Chris Woodall

Chris and Stacy Woodall (left) adopted their son, Robert, when he was 10 and they were 25 years old. Chris (above) recently ran a half-marathon to raise money for Robert's school, the Vivian B. Adams School in Ozark, which serves students with special needs.

## 'Piece of my heart'

### Pastor, father runs to help his son, others attend special program

By Grace Thornton  
TAB Media

Chris Woodall said he and his wife, Stacy, both knew Robert well.

As college students, they had both seen the young boy every day as they worked at Vivian B. Adams School in Ozark, a school that serves both children and adults with

special needs. "We were both teacher aides. She worked in the class Robert was in, and he rode the school bus I drove," Woodall said.

"When we met him at 7 or 8 years old, he was in foster care. He was physically healthy and fine; he just had a lot of behavioral issues because of the abuse he had experienced."

Robert also was being abused in the foster home where he had lived for the past several years, though the Woodalls didn't know that — until the day Robert was removed from the home in 2006 and social services was look-

ing for a place for him to live.

"One day, Stacy came home and said, 'This may be a crazy idea, but I'm interested in adopting Robert,'" Woodall said.

#### 'Pursue adoption'

By then, Woodall had moved on to a job as assistant director at a Boys and Girls Club in Ozark, but his wife still saw Robert every day at VBAS.

"Our goal for our family was always to pursue adoption at some point. We wanted our family to be a picture of the gospel," Woodall said. "But my first thought was, 'This

is the Robert we both know, right? There's no way.' By that time, he was 9 or 10, and we were 25 years old."

But as the young couple talked about it and prayed about it, God opened up the opportunity, and they adopted Robert.

Over the years that followed, though it wasn't always easy, they saw him improve steadily. Woodall also became a pastor, first at a church in the Atlanta area, then at Emmanuel Baptist Church, Elamville, and later Pinckard Baptist Church, where he currently serves.

(See 'Program,' page 17)



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# Dianna Cagle joins TAB Media team as production manager

Alabama and TAB Media are both home for Dianna Cagle — it's just been a while since she's been here.

But TAB Media is excited to welcome her back as the new production manager for The Alabama Baptist.

"I'm so excited to be back home among Alabama Baptists," she said.

"While I have been gone a while, God's timing is perfect. I pray He uses me, along with my fellow teammates, to spread His good news far and wide."

Cagle previously served the Biblical Recorder, North Carolina's Baptist news journal, for more than 14 years in a variety of roles, most recently as assistant editor.

Originally from Birmingham, she earned her bachelor's degree in journalism and history from the University of Alabama and holds a master of divinity degree in biblical counseling from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina.

## Newspaper background

In addition to her work at the Biblical Recorder, Cagle has served as a page designer and copy editor for several newspapers — The Union-Recorder in Milled-

geville, Georgia; The Decatur Daily and the Birmingham Post-Herald. She has worked in every department at some point: features, sports, editorial and news.

## Missions journey

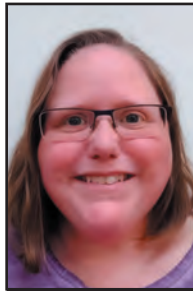
Along the way, she also served in a part-time capacity at TAB Media and as a US/C-2 missionary with the North American Mission Board in church and community ministries.

She reopened The Christian Ministry Center, helping with food, clothing and financial assistance to 11 zip codes in and around Batesburg-Leesville, South Carolina. She also helped Lexington Baptist Association with events, public relations and general office work and spoke in churches and associations about missions work.

Editor Jennifer Davis Rash says Cagle brings "the precise skillset" the organization needs to continue expanding its efforts.

"What a benefit she brings our team and Alabama Baptists as a whole with her knowledge and experience in state Baptist paper life," Rash said.

"In addition, she is an Alabama native and was called into ministry through Alabama Baptist churches and ministries." (TAB Media)



CAGLE

## 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 15.

## Thank you for your continued donations to Love Packages

Wow! Alabama Baptists really are incredible. Since our first load of donations for Love Packages — approximately 4,000 pounds — we've taken four more trips totaling more than 3,000 additional pounds of literature donated.

Still have items you want to donate? Bring them to us at 3310 Independence Drive in Homewood or deliver directly to Love Packages

at 60 South Mountain Drive in Decatur.

The primary needs are Bibles, Bible study materials and Christian literature. For a full list of accepted items, visit [love-packages.org](http://love-packages.org).

The ministry is also in need of volunteers to help sort and pack materials. If you are interested in volunteering, call 256-355-3004. (TAB Media)



Photo by Amy Hacker

# RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

**By Jennifer Davis Rash**

President and Editor-in-Chief



[jrash@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:jrash@thealabamabaptist.org)  
@RashionalThts

## Harrison reflects on her decade of service at TAB Media

*EDITOR'S NOTE — Every once in a while a fellow team member comes along who fits uniquely into your life with a variety of roles. Linda Harrison is one of those. She became my cheerleader from day one, and while her area of responsibility required the utmost of integrity and attention, she also found time to know each of us personally. We all knew if we needed a friend, or even motherly figure, to go to battle with us, she would be there. You'll read below the special bond she and I share, and it truly boosts my confidence to know she is in my corner and proud of the work our team is doing. Linda also has modeled an incredible love for her eight grandchildren. She is one amazing Winna. —Jennifer Davis Rash*

**By Linda Harrison**  
Director of Human Resources

In my 10 ½ years with The Alabama Baptist, I've been blessed to be a part of many wonderful aspects of the media ministry. Along with helping manage the business and human resources side of the work, I also participated in several special projects and ministry efforts. Some of my most special memories are attached to the 175th anniversary celebration of TAB Media and assisting with publishing the book of TAB Media's history.

The TAB Media team has covered countless important stories, but the coverage associated with the April 27, 2011, tornadoes that devastated our state, along with the April 2012 (one-year later) and April 2021 (10 years later) special editions, will always be at the top for me.

The coverage in each of those issues of The Alabama Baptist showcased so beautifully how Alabama Baptists came together as God designed.

Still, the thing that warms my heart the most is the coming expansion of TAB Media.

When other state papers started a digital-only format or stopped publishing altogether, I felt God saying to me that TAB Media could fill the void and stand in the gap.

It was so clear to me how our team could provide Baptists in other states with the news they needed, the news their state papers could no longer provide. Then, I discovered that I was not the only one He had shared this dream with. God had also given it to then managing editor Jennifer Rash. So it quickly became our shared dream.

If you know Jennifer, then you know that her determination and tenacity are boundless. Everything she does is done with excellence, and so I can retire as we are launching The Baptist Paper and know it is in good hands.

I am so proud of her and of TAB Media for launching this new, God-inspired, publication, while also continuing the 178-year tradition of publishing The

Alabama Baptist each week. My dream — our dream — is now a reality. I hope you will check it out. You will be just as proud as I am.

Blessed to have been a part of the formulation of the dream, I leave the execution to Jennifer and the rest of my very capable co-workers (now, my family) at TAB Media.

As of this week, I am officially a retired member of the TAB Media team, but I will continue to promote how vital this ministry is to Southern Baptist life.

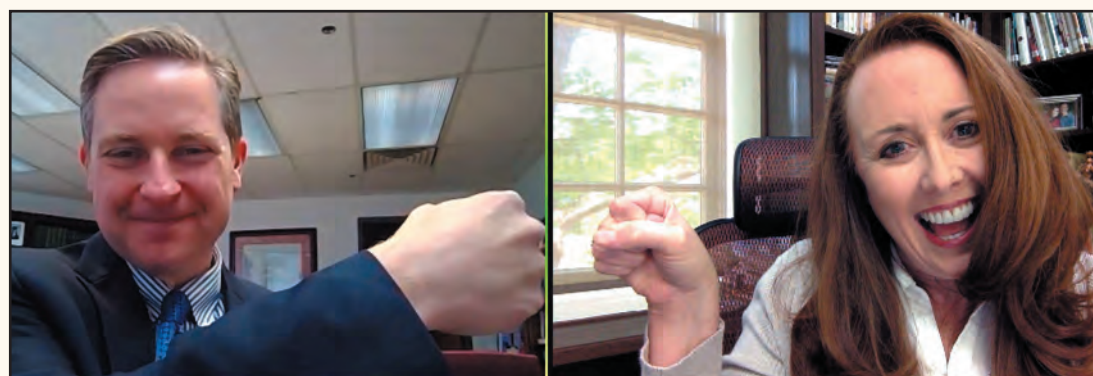
It has been my privilege to serve you as our readers and Alabama Baptists as a whole.

I will miss you all and will look forward to reading about all the great things taking place for years to come — and I know I can find those stories in The Alabama Baptist and The Baptist Paper. 🌈



HARRISON

## Rash wraps up year as ASBP president



Screenshot

Jennifer Davis Rash (right) wraps up her year as president of the Association of State Baptist Publications at the conclusion of the 2021 annual meeting, held April 19. Brian Hobbs, editor of Oklahoma's Baptist Messenger, is the incoming president.

# Your Voice



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

## Every believer plays a role in God's plan of redemption

By **Leo Waldrop**

Retired missionary

**M**y wife, Margaret, and I were missionaries to the island of Curacao, Netherlands Antilles, for 15 years.

One of the ministries we had was to young professionals on the island. There was a young man by the name of Matthew from India. Why was his name not Vishnu or Rajah? Because he had been reared in a Christian family in India.

When he joined our group he gave his testimony. His church had historical ties to what is known in missionary history as "Thomason" churches, those that had been established by the disciple Thomas, who

had been with Jesus. In a southern city in India, there is a stone monument to Thomas, who took the commissioning of Jesus seriously!

Is the country of Guyana in South America included in that plan God has to draw all men unto Himself? Around 1880 a group of Chinese laborers boarded a ship in southeast China bound for British Guiana (now known as Guyana).

Run your historical clock ahead to 1962. Otis and Martha Brady were Southern Baptist missionaries in the Bahama Islands. They were asked by the International Mission Board to begin ministry in Guyana, South America.

The Bradys applied to the im-

migration office for work visas and were told that Guyana was not accepting any more new religious organizations into their country.

The Bradys had prayed so fervently to stay and felt strongly that God would have them stay there. They were told to leave, but before they actually left, they engaged a lawyer to study the historical records of the immigration department. He found a fantastic piece of information.

Chinese laborers who came to Guyana to work in the plantations had answered the question on their visa application, "What is your religion?" with the term "Southern Baptists." Apparently, they had been saved under the ministry of Lottie

Moon or some of her colleagues in China.

Upon that answer to one question the Bradys were allowed to stay. Today there are more than 70 churches plus a number of preaching points throughout Guyana. Did God plan to include Guyana in His total plan of redemption?

Does God include Shelby County, Alabama, in His plan of redemption? Perhaps you help with the local Christmas program, food pantry or thrift store. ... Money derived from the sale of items in the Shelby Baptist Association's Earthly Treasures Thrift Store is used in a variety of ministries such as sending clothes, shoes and books to Africa.

A lady from one of our churches was on a missions trip to Africa when a bundle of clothing was opened. She said one bundle provided clothes for 90 families in one village. God can use people and resources in Shelby County to aid in God's plan to redeem the world unto Himself.

God would like to use you to redeem the world to Himself. He asks you first to make a commitment to be on His missionary team. Then He wants you to be "on call" when He is ready for you to serve.

Will you respond to God's plea today?

*EDITOR'S NOTE — Leo Waldrop served six years with the North American Mission Board and 28 years with the International Mission Board. He is a retired adjunct missions professor and lives in Shelby County. He is co-author of "His Way Mine: Missionary Memoirs."*

## Letter to the Editor

**W**e talk and sing that we are the hands, feet and voice for Jesus. If this is true, and it is, the church needs to be heard and not remain in silence as the biblical truths on which we stand are challenged (Matt. 10:32-33).

▶ We believe marriage is between a man and a woman.

In Genesis, God created man and woman (2:21-24). God ordained the marriage between man and woman.

▶ We believe life begins at the first sign of a heartbeat.

The blessings of God start at that point, and that fetus develops

into a beautiful baby boy or girl.

The Scripture says, "Thou shall not kill." When we allow abortion, that is killing/murder. Is there any other honest way to look at it?

▶ We believe God created male and female to populate the earth.

God creates children, and before each child is born, that child is either female or male. God decided that.

When we try to change God's creation, we are saying we believe that God didn't know what He was doing.

God is the creator of this world

and all that we are. Therefore, what gives us the right to play God and to say God didn't know what He was doing?

This is a total rejection of God and His creation.

When we live by the word of God, it is not that we hate people, rather it is the sin that we stand against.

God says, if you love Me, keep My commandments.

We, as believers of the Lord Jesus Christ, are to live our lives in obedience to Him.

**Pastor Ray Cobb and members of Haleburg Baptist Church Shorterville, Ala.**

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# “All is fine, thank God.”

NABIL HABASHI SALAMA

*Coptic Christian in Egypt, in his final words to his son prior to being executed April 18 by the ISIS affiliate in north Sinai (see page 12)*

There are a thousand ways to be broken and only one way to be made whole.

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

Motivated by greed, countless people have ruined their lives pursuing get rich quick schemes.

Like carnival games at a fair, the system is stacked against the fool hoping Lady Luck will reward his gambling at lotteries and casinos. These places can only survive by consistently removing money from your pocket and placing it in their own.

This is the recipe for poverty, broken homes and neglected children. Payday loan outfits, pyramid

scheme marketing plans and the stock tip your friend says is a sure thing are just as risky. The few so-called winners have been known to squander it all before returning to that poisoned well in the hope of a repeat windfall that never comes.

God offers us a better method. Work hard. Spend less than you earn. Gather it little by little over time. Get rich slowly. “Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it” (Prov. 13:11).

**Pastor Rick Patrick**  
**First Baptist Church**  
**Sylacauga, Ala.**

Joseph was born into a complicated family, but that didn’t keep God from setting him apart for a

great purpose. How has God set you apart to follow Him despite your past or heritage?

**Kelly Minter**  
**“Finding God Faithful”**

The heaviest obligation lying upon the Christian Church today is to purify and elevate her concept of God until it is once more worthy of Him — and of her.

**A.W. Tozer**  
**“Knowledge of the Holy”**

Are you going to choose comfort, or are you going to choose the cross? What comforts is God calling you to forsake in order to embrace the cross?

**David Platt**  
**“Something Needs to Change”**

## God’s actions and our expectations

Sometimes, people struggle to acknowledge God’s power. They have difficulty reconciling His actions with their expectations.

A person can acknowledge God’s power without accepting Him as God or submitting to His authority. In doing so, they belittle Him, again based on their own expectations.

People struggling to reconcile God’s actions and their own expectations may ask, “If God is so \_\_\_\_, why does He \_\_\_\_?” The question can take different forms.

The opposite of submitting to God can be trying to shape His actions to fit one’s own expectations and desires. Submission requires embracing God’s will and His desires.

People who reject submission say things like, “If I were God and had His power, I would \_\_\_\_.” They act like they are wiser than God and know better than God what needs to be done.

People who reject submission believe God should follow people’s desires. Basically, they see themselves as God.

God is totally trustworthy. Human expectations are untrustworthy.

### **Application:**

► What happens when God’s activities do not match my expectations? How do I react?

► Do I sometimes think that my decision would be a better choice than God’s decision?

► What parts of God’s activity do I have difficulty accepting?

► How can I practice submission and avoid pretending to be God?

### **Takeaway:**

God chooses His actions without human consultation.

**Kevin Parker**  
**Editor**  
**Baptist New Mexican**  
**and GoBNM.com**

## From the *Twitterverse*

### **@larrydrobertson**

Have you failed God and thus feel like a failure? Sinned beyond what you believe to be redemption? As Judas betrayed Jesus, He called Judas, “Friend” (Matt. 26:50). That doesn’t make what Judas did good or right. But it does show Jesus’ heart toward the sinner. Think on that ...

### **@tmansinho**

#truthbomb ... “Your life as a Christian should make nonbelievers question their disbelief in God.” —Dietrich Bonhoeffer

### **@MarcHodges3**

Hallelujah! Thine the glory. Hallelujah! Amen. Hallelujah! Thine the glory. Revive us again

### **@jbwester**

Sometimes God gives us the most amazing gifts just because He can. He delights in his children.

### **@Blackwell\_Kevin**

We can only live one day at a time, but that one day ought to be lived with eternity in mind.

### **@MichaelCatt**

Between now & the #SBC in Nashville, may I make a suggestion? We need an unprecedented humility, a repentance of doing so much that has nothing to do with the Great Commission, total surrender to Lordship & a oneness that only comes in dying to self.

### **@jasonkeithallen**

I love our convention because I love our churches, and the Bible-believing, Jesus-loving, gospel-sharing people who comprise them.

### **@drbobterry**

Here it is my duty to be as Christ in this world, to do what He would do, to live as He would live, to walk

in love and meekness. Then would I have peace in death. —Christ Alone

### **@SpurgeonBooks**

“Jesus is the Leader, not of misers, nor of those who oppress the poor, but of the kind and tender-hearted.” —Charles Spurgeon

### **@JohnCMaxwell**

If you want to be successful tomorrow, then you must be teachable today. What got you to where you are won’t keep you there. And it certainly won’t take you where you want to go.

### **@jt\_english**

Extending grace to those who you think deserve grace is, by definition, not grace.

### **@pastorclint**

“While Jesus is representing me in Heaven, may I reflect Him on earth.” —Valley of Vision.

## DENOMINATIONAL DISCUSSIONS

— SBC Executive Committee leader Ronnie Floyd's Vision 2025 proposal —

# ACTION 1 — INCREASE IMB MISSIONARIES BY 500

*EDITOR'S NOTE — Bottom line from the interviews for how SBC/IMB leaders suggest achieving Step 1 of Vision 2025? Individuals and churches increase praying and giving to IMB, and churches enhance discipleship efforts of members, especially those sensing a call to the missions field.*

By Margaret Colson  
TAB Media

In its 175-year history, the International Mission Board has sent more than 25,000 missionaries overseas, according to David Brady's report

in "One Sacred Effort." The current missions force stands at 3,558, as of Feb. 28, reported IMB officials, who also noted a desire to increase the number on the field.

Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee president and CEO Ronnie Floyd is working to get the word out through his Vision 2025 proposal (see story, this page).

Adding 500 fully funded missionaries came to IMB leadership directly as a request from the field and was announced by IMB President Paul Chitwood in January 2020.

"For Southern Baptists to commit to 500 additional international missionaries may seem like a random number, but it's not," he said.

"In March 2019, when senior field leadership teams met together, I asked each leader, 'What's the minimum number of missionaries you need to make the maximum impact in your affinity?'"

"When we added up the numbers from all of the affinity leaders, the total was a collective increase of 500 — so that's our target," Chitwood explained.

"We are asking God to call out and Southern Baptists to send out an increase of 500 missionaries to serve alongside Southern Baptist personnel and their Great Commission colleagues around the world."

The number of IMB missionaries has fluctuated some in recent years (see chart, page 7), with significant decreases in the international missionary forces in 2015 and 2016 when IMB experienced financial hurdles.

In 2014, IMB reported a total of 4,707 missionaries; two years later, that number was down by more than 1,100 with a total of 3,596.

Reaching the new goal of nearly 4,100 international missionaries by 2025 would recover roughly half of the missionary decreases in 2015 and 2016, but attrition rates must also be taken into account.

The IMB reports the attrition average over the past seven years is 230, not including the "voluntary retirement incentive" in 2015 and

the second volunteer "hand-raising opportunity" to retire or resign in 2016.

To rebuild the career missionary force needs a unified effort among Southern Baptists, officials noted.

"To get 500 more full-time missionaries on the field will require 75% of all Southern Baptist churches prayerfully and financially supporting the IMB; a consistent 6% annual increase in gifts through the

Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for the next five years; and God-called people who are willing to follow His call to go," said Julie McGowan, IMB associate vice president for communications/public relations.

In January 2020, Chitwood reported to IMB trustees that less than half of

Southern Baptist churches annually give to the LMCO, offering ample opportunity to expand the number of churches giving to the offering.

"With less than half of Southern Baptist churches reporting on the Annual Church Profile that they gave to the Lottie offering last year, we have lots of opportunity to grow the support needed by our missionaries," Chitwood said.

National Woman's Missionary Union is bolstering this effort as they announced a plan in November 2020 to send handwritten appeals to 20,000 Southern Baptist churches to encourage every church to give to the annual LMCO.

Sandy Wisdom-Martin, executive director-treasurer for National WMU, committed to personally

## Southern Baptists to vote on Vision 2025 plan

Messengers to the 2021 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting, scheduled for June 15–16 in Nashville, will be asked to vote on Vision 2025, a plan for Southern Baptists to renew their commitment to the Great Commission.

Vision 2025, originally launched by SBC Executive Committee President Ronnie Floyd in February 2020, weeks before the pandemic, was relaunched in February 2021 and approved unanimously by EC members.

The vision outlines five strategic action steps:

**1. Increase** full-time, fully funded missionaries by a net gain of 500, giving us 4,100 full-time, fully funded missionaries through the International Mission Board.

**2. Add** 5,000 new SBC congregations to our Southern Bap-

tist family, giving us more than 50,000 SBC congregations.

**3. Increase** total number of workers in the field through a new emphasis on "calling out the called" and then preparing those who are called out by the Lord.

**4. Turn** around our ongoing decline in reaching, baptizing and discipling 12- to 17-year-olds.

**5. Increase** our annual giving in successive years and establish a new path of growth that will lead us to reach and surpass \$500 million through the Cooperative Program to achieve these Great Commission goals.

To help Southern Baptists gain a fuller understanding of Vision 2025, The Alabama Baptist plans to run a series of articles offering an in-depth look at one strategic action step per article (see story, this page). (TAB Media)

**STRATEGIC ACTION STEP 1:**  
*Increase full-time, fully funded missionaries by a net gain of 500, giving us nearly 4,100 full-time, fully funded missionaries through the International Mission Board.*

### Lottie Moon Christmas Offering Totals (2010–2020)



writing 175 letters asking pastors to lead their churches to give.

The 6% increase equates to approximately \$10 million per year over the next four years.

“While that seems like a lot of money, it will only require that every one of the 16 million Southern Baptists increase their Lottie offering by \$0.63 per year,” Chitwood said. “Every church needs to give an additional \$200 per year. No matter how you do that math, the point is, it can be done.”

The highest LMCO ever received was \$165.8 million in 2015 (see chart, this page). The second highest was \$159.5 million in 2019, even amid the pandemic.

The offering runs from Oct. 1 of one year to Sept. 30 of the following year, so the 2019 offering continued during the pandemic in 2020.

The 2020 LMCO goal, which runs Oct. 1, 2020, through Sept. 30, 2021, is \$175 million.

While the LMCO wasn’t officially established until 1918, giving to international missions first began in 1888 with the inception of WMU. WMU raised more money that first year to send two women to China to help missionary Lottie Moon. Calculating all giving since then, that total recently surpassed \$5 billion.

IMB reports the average cost of supporting one full-time missionary is \$164 per day or \$60,000 per year.

Those figures include all forms of ministry and personnel support, such as salary, medical expenses, children’s education, housing, visas, travel and retirement benefits.

For a missionary couple, the amounts are double.

Still, even with the funding in hand, getting new IMB missionaries on the field takes time.

“The IMB is committed to sending missionaries who are healthy (theologically, spiritually, physically, emotionally) and sustainable in their work. As missionary candidates display needs for improvement in these areas of health or sustainability, the IMB works alongside them and their churches to strengthen those areas,” said McGowan.

Missionary candidates who are completely healthy can be affirmed in six to 12 months from their time of application, depending on their service pathway.

After affirmation, a missionary spends six weeks in orientation before going to the field for further training, she said.

#### Issues with candidates

“From a practical standpoint, the IMB consistently sees people delayed in going to the mission field due to seeking freedom from pornography and debt — both of which are deterrents to people being healthy, sustainable missionaries.

“As churches readily address these areas early in discipleship, Southern Baptists will be more prepared to take the gospel to the nations,” McGowan explained.

Also, a major impediment to getting missionaries to the international field is that “people do not think they can go. They do not see themselves as being a part of the gospel harvest force. They think, ‘I can’t go because ... I am too old,’ or ‘... I am too young,’ or ‘... I have too many kids,’ or ‘... I am single,’ or ... ‘I am not a pastor. ...’ Yet this is not the case — God has a place for Southern Baptists on the mission field,” she said.

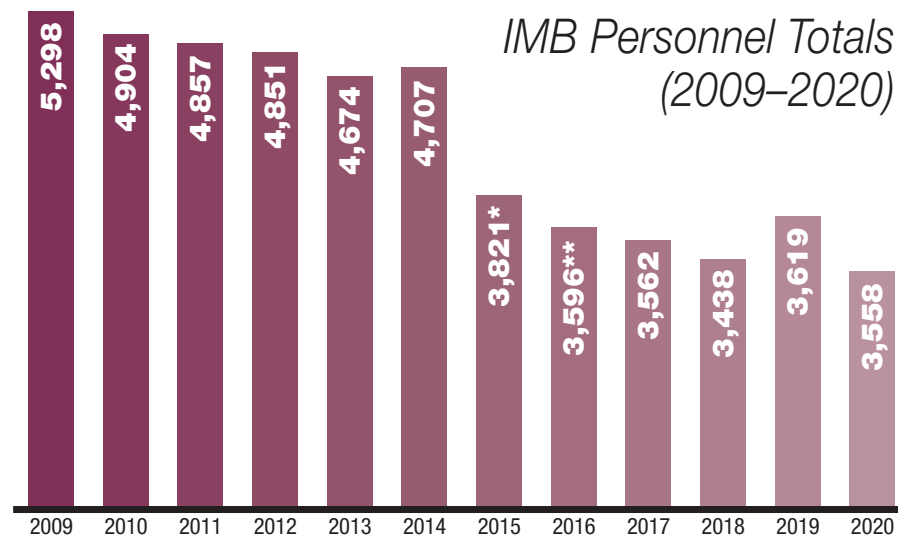
With the current global restrictions, sending missionaries is more challenging, but IMB personnel “are responding to this challenge with perseverance.”

“Right now, ‘sending’ may look different than it has looked in the past — and likely doesn’t look now like it will look in the future — but the task is too urgent for churches to stand by, so we continue to prepare and send when and where the Lord presents us the opportunities to go,” McGowan said.

Chitwood added, “Our focus as an organization is the ‘core missionary task’: We evangelize and disciple in order to see new churches started and national leaders raised.

“Missionaries have a multiplicative effect. The more [sent] to the nations, the more people hear the gospel and are disciplined, and the more churches are started and leaders raised. This means not only are the 500 additional missionaries doing the core missionary task, but all those they see come to Christ and disciplined are doing the same.”

### IMB Personnel Totals (2009–2020)



\*Reflects the voluntary retirement incentive

\*\*Reflects the second round of field personnel volunteering to retire or resign

## State convention executive directors express support for Vision 2025

Southern Baptist state convention executive directors, meeting for their annual meeting in early February, unanimously affirmed their support for Vision 2025.

In spite of recent well-documented tensions between some state executive directors and the North American Mission Board and the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, Leo Endel, 2020–21 president of the state executive directors fellowship, said, “I did not sense any concern about affirming Dr. (Ronnie) Floyd’s Vision 2025. In fact, it was enthusiastically received.”

#### ‘Cause and motivation’

Endel, executive director of the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention, added, “We need a unified vision focused on the gospel. The gospel is the cause and motivation for our cooperation. Increasingly, we are consumed with second and third level issues that divide us.

“Reclarifying the vision helps keep the tertiary issues tertiary and helps us pull together around Jesus’ mandate of the Great Commission,” he said.

In a written “unified statement,” state executive directors stated, “We pledge ourselves to promote, advance and pursue Vision 2025 within the context of our churches, associations, states and entities for the glory of God.” (TAB Media)

“We need a  
unified vision focused  
on the gospel.”

Leo Endel  
immediate past president  
of the state executive  
directors fellowship

# Surveillance in China poses threat to religious groups

By Dianna L. Cagle  
TAB Media

Government surveillance is one of the concerning trends revealed in Open Doors' 2021 World Watch List of countries where Christians experience the highest levels of persecution.

David Curry, CEO of Open Doors, called surveillance technology the "greatest threat to human rights today," and nowhere is that truer than in China. China has reentered the list's top 20 (No. 17 this year) after ranking No. 23 in 2020 and No. 27 in 2019.

Chris Meserole, director of research and policy at the Brookings Institution, also expressed concern over the spread of this surveillance technology to foreign governments beyond China.

"It's not a problem that's going to stay in China," Meserole warned. The technology "enables a regime to ban private forms of religion. So there's certain countries, you can't wear a cross or you can't wear a yarmulke or you can't wear a hijab."

## Geolocation and cameras

China has access to geolocation technologies and cameras that track people in real time, Meserole continued. America should be "raising the alarm bell" because this technology will "have material impact on the ability of people to believe and worship what they would like to."

"The Chinese state has a very extensive capability to monitor all the WeChat messages that you might send, for example, and there are well-documented examples of religious minorities in China being arrested and even detained by virtue of the religious ... images that they send," Meserole cautioned.

Once a person is arrested, the Chinese government uses their contact list to detain more people "regardless of whether they really have any other evidence that they may do something," Meserole said.

In April 2014, Pastor Jonathan Liu said Shanghai police visited his home and harassed him, telling him not to spread photos of crosses.

They visited four more times, and some Christians now have to register their identification and phone number.

"So the government will suppress these Christians, especially in some little cities," Liu said.

## Spying software

Facial recognition software, iris scanning, QR codes, scanning codes on homes — all are used to monitor the comings and goings of Muslims, said Rushan Abbas, founder and executive director of Campaign for Uyghurs.

Abbas stressed that China's export of technology means what is happening to the Uyghurs today will happen to other people groups tomorrow.

Across China, government officials have normalized facial recognition software.

Those arriving in Beijing get their faces scanned. Even some vending machines scan faces, and there are cameras in state-sponsored churches and mosques.

Meserole mentioned SenseTime, a company whose "mandate is to monitor 100,000 video feeds in real time, across an entire city so that even as you're going from mosque to mosque they can track you in real time."

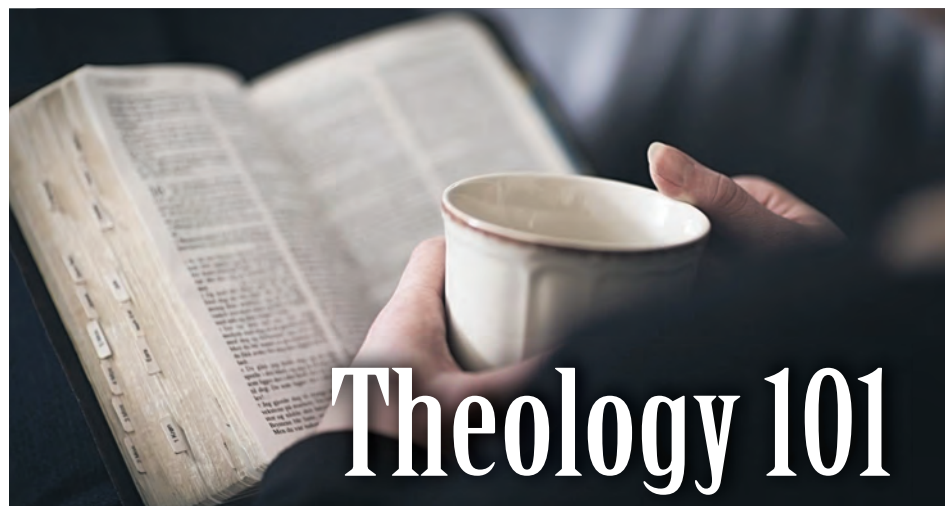
Open Doors reported the country has at least 415 million facial recognition cameras in use.

"There's really no other country that can match the sheer scale of surveillance technologies that China has developed and deployed," Meserole said. "They're far and away the leading developer of those technologies and implementers of those technologies today."

To receive prayer requests from persecuted believers, download Open Doors' prayer app at [OpenDoorsUSA.org/PrayerApp](https://OpenDoorsUSA.org/PrayerApp).



OpenDoors photo  
China placed facial recognition cameras in its churches and uses social media apps to track its citizens.



# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## Easter Reflections

# Aftermath of Easter

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.  
TAB Media

In the days, weeks and months following the Resurrection, the committed followers of Jesus became heralds of the good news of His saving death and resurrection. The result was new believers who experienced a transformation of their lives.

Those who heard and believed became those who heralded the good news of the gospel.

That message was shared locally at first and eventually would spread to the uttermost parts of the Earth. In short, the aftermath of the Resurrection was obedience to the Great Commission Jesus gave.

On the personal level, fearful disciples became fearless heralds of God's good news. Timid apostles became bold proclaimers.

Converts were made and local churches established. Church members began caring for and sharing with the poor. Evangelizing and disciple making became the order of the day.

## Chain reaction

The chain reaction began in a remarkable way on the Day of Pentecost when Peter's preaching and the Holy Spirit's conviction resulted in 3,000 receiving the gospel and being baptized. Later, a single conversion would have worldwide impact — the encounter with Christ that Paul had on the road to Damascus. His conversion and call to gospel proclamation resulted in three missionary journeys that saw churches come into existence.

In God's timing and with the Spirit's direction, Paul and his associates initiated the spread of the good news into Europe when they responded to a famous Macedonian call that came in a dream (Acts 16:6–10).

## Saving message

Part of the aftermath of establishing churches in various cities was the writing of inspired letters — some of which became part of the New Testament.

These letters have continued to be read worldwide as vehicles of God's inspired truth and saving message. Before the close of the first Christian century, the exiled Apostle John received visions from the risen, ascended Christ about things to come.

Our minds can then leap across the intervening centuries to recall our own saving encounter with Christ and the gospel message that "Jesus saves" because of the unique influence, example and words that came to us through people God brought into our lives.

The aftermath of Easter is an unfinished story. Who might yet be reached through our personal witness and faithful stewardship?

*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.*



# 'Long walk' of disciple making requires 'all we do'

## Discipleship should be 'lifestyle of every believer on the planet,' Kindig says

By Grace Thornton  
TAB Media

Alabama Baptists gathered for their first-ever disciple-making conference April 19–20 at Fultondale First Baptist Church, and according to Scott Kindig, the conference was a call for an “all skate.”

Kindig — lead navigator for Future Church Company and one of several featured speakers at the conference — referred back to his teenage years at the roller-skating rink when an “all skate” meant everyone should get out there and participate, regardless of age or ability level.

“How are we going to mobilize everybody? How do we get to where discipleship is the lifestyle of our people, not the responsibility of a staff? Ministry is not limited to people who have ‘Rev.’ in front of their names,” Kindig said.

“This isn’t just for trained, ordained experts — this is the lifestyle of every believer on the planet.”

### Small and interactive

That was the core idea of the Alabama Discipleship Conference — to equip and encourage pastors to lead churches where every member is a disciple maker, not just a churchgoer.

The conference — originally planned for April 2020 but postponed because of COVID-19 — was designed to be small and interactive and send pastors away with steps they could put to use right away, according to Mark Gainey, pastor of Fultondale First and part

of the lead team for Disciple-Making Ministries of Alabama.

In-person attendance was limited to 100, with others joining online.

The schedule also featured panel discussions and roundtable gatherings where the speakers shared practical tips.

### State Board partner

The conference, sponsored by Disciple-Making Ministries of Alabama in partnership with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, is expected to be an annual event with next year’s location to be announced closer to time.

Gainey said they chose Fultondale First as the location this year because it’s not a big, flashy venue — and he hoped that communicated any church can be a disciple-making church.

“It’s not about having the best, it’s about making disciples,” he told those present at

the event. “You can do it.”

During one of the panel discussions, Kindig said shifting the culture of a church to a disciple-making church doesn’t happen overnight, it’s a “long walk in the same direction.”

“Don’t try to quick-fix a solution for making disciples; just start somewhere,” he said.

Ken Adams — lead pastor of Crossroads Church in Newnan, Georgia, and founder and director of Impact Disciples — encouraged pastors to change the culture of their churches by seeing disciple making not as an add-on but as “all we do.”



Photo by Mark Gainey

(From left) Andy Frazier, pastor of Grace Baptist Church, Sumiton, moderates a panel discussion with Ken Adams, Joël Malm and Scott Kindig during the Alabama Discipleship Conference on April 19 at Fultondale FBC.

“Your job is supposed to point everybody in the right direction but also lead by living it,” he said.

Gainey seconded that sentiment during a panel discussion with Andy Frazier, Robert Mullins and other members of the Disciple-Making Ministries of Alabama team.

“Disciple making is not another program or ministry add-on, it’s life,” Gainey said.

“It has to be a rhythm of your life.”

During the conference, panelists and speakers talked candidly about the struggles and joys of personal disciple making and leading churches to be disciple-making churches.

### One-on-one relationships

Joël Malm — author of “Vision Map,” “Fully You” and “Love Slows Down” and founder and director of Summit Ministries — encouraged pastors to press on

even when they’re discouraged.

“Sometimes we have these expectations ... and think this is how it’s supposed to work, and when things don’t look the way we thought they were supposed to, we get disappointed, frustrated and angry,” he said.

“Stay in faith that God is working.”

The goal is to make disciples the

way Jesus did — in one-on-one relationships — then multiply those relationships, Adams said. Seeing a harvest of disciple-making disciples is only going to happen when pastors are intentional to “lead the church the way Jesus wants it led,” he said.

Robert Coleman, author of “Master Plan of Evangelism,” also spoke during the conference, and Daniel Im, author of “No Silver Bullets” and senior associate pastor at Beulah Alliance Church, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, led an early bird session.✝



Photo by Mark Gainey

Jay Gordon, adult and small groups minister at The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, leads a roundtable discussion.

For more information, visit [aldiscipleshipconference.com](http://aldiscipleshipconference.com).

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# Living life on mission

## Auburn native, former BCM student follows God's call to urban missions in NYC

By Grace Thornton  
TAB Media

Savannah Hutto remembers vividly the day she stood at 15 years old on the Brooklyn Bridge and cried because she didn't want to leave.

"At the time, only 3% of New York City knew Christ, and as I stood on the bridge and thought about the millions of people that the city's skyline represented, it gripped me how many were going to die and go to hell," she said. "I prayed God would use me somehow in New York City."

That was Hutto's first missions trip, but she had been preparing for it for years.

"I grew up in Auburn going to Lakeview Baptist Church. It's a very missions-minded church, and my earliest memories from there

involve hearing from missionaries and the importance of living your life on mission," she said.

### Totally invested

And after that trip to New York City, she couldn't shake the feeling that she might be meant to invest her life there. She stayed in

touch with the family her team had worked with, and the following summer, they asked her to spend a month with them and get to know more about church planting.

"I did, and I loved it so much I went back the following summer too," Hutto said.

Then she went to Auburn University and continued to have opportunities to serve.

One summer, she went to Mozambique, lived in a mud hut and "solidified a passion for church planting and to

make the gospel known."

The following summer, she led a team of college students to New York City for the North American Mission Board.

"Our college minister was constantly telling us to use our summers on mission," she said.

That college minister was Michael Hill, and although Hutto didn't know it, God was working in his heart and his wife Shannon's about the possibility of serving in New York City too.

They hadn't said it out loud yet, and Hutto hadn't fully given in to that call yet either — even though she knew she was meant to live on mission, she didn't want to assume God wanted her in New York City.

### Prompted by God

But around the time she felt certain about it, the Hills told her they were moving too.

Over time, it became clear to Michael Hill that God was prompting him to plant a church in Queens called Bridge Community Church.

"We started investing in this community, meeting people, having conversations with people and figuring out what the spiritual climate was like," Hutto said.

"We found that many people there had been hurt by experiences with church before, and we wanted to re-



Photo courtesy of Savannah Hutto

Auburn native Savannah Hutto reads a story to children at Bridge Community Church in New York City, where she serves in administration and as director of missions and outreach.

define for them what church is."

They launched Bridge Community Church on Easter in 2019 and were "trucking right along," adding people to their number — until the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

"We were starting new programs and there were

new people being baptized, and all that was put on pause," said Hutto, who serves in administration and as director of missions and outreach for the church.

New York City was hit hard by the virus, and things are just beginning to open back up there. In the time since things shut down,

many of the city's residents moved away — one in five apartments are vacant right now, Hutto said.

Some church planters in the city have been among those who left.

"Around 60% of our congregation have moved out of the city since COVID

started," she said. "We're going to have to rebuild. It makes a unique challenge."

But during the pandemic, God has strengthened Hutto and others at Bridge Community Church.

"We have a Tuesday night prayer gathering, and that is at the heart of what we're doing," she said.

"We have a small number, but God is working."

Hutto asked for prayer for church leadership to have wisdom in how to best serve the community at this time.

"Pray for our leadership and our staff to know how we can rebuild and move forward," she said. "In a lot of ways, we're still in a holding period." ✝



Photo courtesy of Savannah Hutto  
Savannah Hutto was 15 when God first began working in her heart to move to New York City.



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# 3 stories

## you should know



Twitter photo

Nabil Habashi Salama, a 62-year-old Egyptian Coptic Christian, has been executed by Islamic terrorists in north Sinai. Salama was kidnapped five months ago in front of his home, Christianity Today reported. A video was released on April 18 showing Salama's execution, which comes as Egypt moves to legalize hundreds of churches. Egypt is No. 16 on Open Doors' 2021 World Watch List of countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian. (TAB Media)

### *Baptists help St. Vincent as situation worsens*

Southern Baptists are responding to appeals for help in the Caribbean nation of St. Vincent and the Grenadines following the ongoing eruption of La Soufrière volcano on the island of St. Vincent.

A Southern Baptist representative in the region said the situation has gone from "bad to worse" on the island as the volcano continues to spew ash and dust over the northern region's landscape. In some areas, ash is as much as 1 meter deep.

The country's prime minister called the situation "dire" and appealed for international help.

Kingstown Baptist Church, led by Pastor Cecil Richards has been feeding those fleeing from the eruption.

The International Mission Board and Send Relief are working with Richards to help increase that effort. (TAB Media)

### *Digital discipleship grows during pandemic*

A study by Lifeway Research found that while small group participation declined during the pandemic, digital and individual discipleship activities were more common than in the past.

Around three in five U.S. churchgoers say they participated in a church small group in January 2020 as either a participant or a leader.

Young adults aged 18 to 29 were more likely to say they were involved in small group ministry than were churchgoers 65 and older.

A year later, less than two in five (37%) said they were part of a small group, many because their church didn't offer one during the pandemic. But respondents said they participated more in online worship at their own church, TV worship services and online Bible study in 2020 than in 2019. (TAB Media)

## Headline news

### from around the Southeast

#### **Arkansas**

Providing transportation, cooking international foods and moving furniture and appliances are just a few ways Jon Blaylock, a member at Park Hill Baptist Church, North Little Rock, Arkansas, is serving God. Blaylock volunteers with International Friendship Outreach, a ministry to welcome international students to America. He has learned providing for the students' basic needs leads to gospel conversations that help satisfy spiritual needs, Arkansas Baptist News reported.

#### **Florida**

Since 2019, Arthur Gonçalves has ministered to individuals in an impoverished community in Central Florida. "It is messy coming alongside people — but that is our ministry," said Gonçalves, who soon saw the need not only for mercy ministry but also for preaching and gospel ministry. Gonçalves is now planning to launch Restora-

tion Church in January 2022 in the heart of the impoverished downtown area, the Florida Baptist Witness reported.

#### **Kentucky**

Pastor Mike Beavers is galloping on horseback in rural Kentucky to help take the gospel to every home. Beavers, pastor of Broken Chains Cowboy Church, Williamstown, Kentucky, loaded the saddle bags with gospel material and jumped on his horse Cinnamon to deliver about 15 gospel packets before his first horseback missions ride was interrupted by rain. Still, he and Cinnamon will be back on the gospel trail soon, Kentucky Today reported.

#### **Tennessee**

For three years, a Kids on Mission program at New Middleton Baptist Church, Gordonsville, Tennessee, has inspired children to be personally

involved in missions, the Baptist and Reflector reported. This year, the children collected more than \$1,000 to purchase farm animals to help fund practical solutions to poverty while sharing the hope of Jesus.

#### **Virginia**

The COVID-19 pandemic opened many unexpected ministry opportunities for Hillcrest Baptist Church in Ridgeway, Virginia. Those opportunities have included making face masks for medical professionals, starting a feeding ministry, helping high-risk church members with grocery or pharmacy purchases, developing partnerships with local schools, purchasing Christmas wish lists for 23 foster children and providing Thanksgiving meals for families in need, the Proclaimer reported. "When circumstances are forcing us apart, these ministries are bringing us together," Pastor Randy Aldridge said.

# Alabama news

## BETHEL ASSOCIATION

► The Vanity Fair mill was closing 24 years ago when **Pam Gibbs** applied for the opening at **Bethel Baptist Association**.

“It was a godsend job,” she said.

Over the years, it’s been a great place to be, said Gibbs, who is retiring April 30. She’s collected duties until she had three jobs — secretary, clerk and treasurer. She has served three directors of missions — Gene Walley, Bobby Hopper and now Mike Snow.

And she’s had ongoing relationships with the 34 churches in the association.

“I just love all my people. It’s bittersweet to leave this job,” she said.

Bethel Association honored her with a retirement celebration at Providence Baptist Church, Gallion, April 18. The Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented her with a letter of commendation for her years of service.

“I’ve been very blessed,” Gibbs said.



GIBBS



NICHOLS

## BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

► **Josh Nichols** is the new youth and young adult pastor of **North Highlands Baptist Church, Hueytown**. He grew up in Hueytown and graduated from the University of Alabama. He is married to Brittany. Michael Wallace is pastor.

► **Mitch Grissett** is the new pastor of **Canaan Baptist Church, Bessemer**. He previously served as pastor of First Baptist Church, Baldwin, Mississippi, and Liberty Baptist Church, Duncanville. He also served as youth minister of Arbor Springs Baptist Church, Samantha, and Holt Baptist Church and as a teacher and football coach at several schools. He has a bachelor’s degree in secondary education social science from the University of Alabama and a master of divinity and a master of arts in ministry from Luther Rice Seminary in Lithonia, Georgia. He and his wife, Jessica, have two children.



GRISSETT

## COVINGTON ASSOCIATION

► The recent 100th anniversary celebration at **Judson Baptist Church, Andalusia**, was “a great, awesome day from beginning to end,” according to Pastor Donnie Uptain. The special service held



Photo by Lonette Berg

March 28 featured special music, testimonies and historical presentations. The church’s youth served in various capacities, and former pastors James Pickron and Hank Roberts spoke.

Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, also presented the church with a plaque to commemorate the occasion.

## FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION

► **Ernie Carroll**’s life has been marked by Baptist associational work. He’s been in it for 40 years — the past 24 of which were spent at Friendship Baptist Association.

“One of the beauties of it is just being able to visit and work with churches and pastors and people,” said Carroll, who is retiring as Friendship’s director of missions May 1. “Things change so much, you have to almost reinvent the association every year. It’s a challenge at times, but it’s been a joy.”

He started in late 1980 at Shelby Baptist Association, then left in 1985 to serve as director of missions for Carey, Clay and Randolph Baptist associations, all at the same time. From there, he went to Pickens Baptist Association, and in 1997, he moved to Friendship.

Along the way, he saw churches planted, evangelism efforts expanded and people come to know Jesus. Carroll also served as a chaplain in various capacities, including spending a year with troops in Iraq. He hopes to do more chaplaincy work after his retirement. To see photos from the April 15 event honoring Carroll, visit [tabonline.org/ernie-carroll](http://tabonline.org/ernie-carroll).



CARROLL



Photo by Dianna L. Cagle

Phillip Inman (left), Bill Russell (second from left), Kevin Blackwell (center), Gary Fenton (second from right) and Larry Gipson (right).

## MTI scholarship set up in Blackwell’s name

The new Kevin Blackwell Annual and Endowed Scholarship for the Ministry Training Institute (MTI) at Samford University in Birmingham was announced April 8 in a gathering on campus.

Phillip Inman, a member of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham; Bill Russell, director of missions for Bibb Baptist Association, Centreville; Gary Fenton, senior advancement officer for Samford’s Beeson Divinity School; and Larry Gipson, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Oneonta, helped honor Blackwell, executive director for MTI, with the announcement.

The scholarship will help students participate in MTI classes offered for church leaders.

“It’s not a job, it’s a passion,” Blackwell said. These ministers are on the “front line equipping and training.”

Visit [samford.edu/programs/ministry-training-institute](http://samford.edu/programs/ministry-training-institute). (TAB Media)

## Persecuted church

### Russian education department closes 4 Protestant seminaries

MOSCOW, Russia — Four Protestant theological institutions in Russia have either had their higher education licenses revoked or annulled or admissions suspended by the country’s education service.

They include Eurasian Theological Seminary (Pentecostal Union) and Moscow Theological Seminary (Baptist Union), both in Moscow; Theological Institute (Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Ingria) and Theological Seminary (Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Russia), both near St. Petersburg.

Two schools subsequently obtained lower-

tiered licenses. Without a license, it is illegal in Russia to conduct educational activities that lead to formal qualifications.

Russia’s Federal Service for Supervision in Education and Science claims religious institutions must follow federal standards of instruction. Legal experts assert the country’s laws exempt religious entities.

On April 5, citing a need to prevent importing extremist ideas, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed amendments requiring some foreign-educated clergy, as well as non-ordained religious teachers and missionaries, to have “additional professional education” before practicing in the country. (Forum 18)



Facebook photo



Photo courtesy of the Eubanks family

Anna Adcox, 97, displays a dress she sewed for use in international missions outreach.

## 97-year-old dedicated to sewing ministry

When Glenda Eubanks took a dress pattern to Anna Adcox and her sister, Frances Trimble, she thought, “They’ll probably make a few and get tired of it.”

About 17,000 dresses later, Adcox is still at it.

“I’ve called them the sewing angels,” Eubanks said of the sisters.

Adcox, 97, a member of Lake Pointe Baptist Church, Dadeville, makes the dresses for children all over the

world. Her son-in-law, Leroy Sellers, said she hasn’t made less than 50 a week since she started seven years ago.

For years, Trimble, who died in November 2020, did the cutting while Adcox did the sewing. But even though she’s lost her helper, Adcox hasn’t slowed down.

Sellers said some people might think they’re too old for ministry, but Adcox is proof that’s not true, he said. “She’s taken it on as a challenge.” (Grace Thornton)

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#### SENIOR PASTOR

We are prayerfully seeking God’s man to be the under shepherd and spiritual leader of His church here at Farmstead Baptist Church in Jasper. We are seeking a man who loves the Lord unconditionally, is led by the Holy Spirit and has a heart for the people. [Farmsteadpastorsearch@gmail.com](mailto:Farmsteadpastorsearch@gmail.com). 265 Curry Hwy, Jasper, AL 35503. <https://farmsteadbaptist.church>.

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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](mailto:purposebaptist@gmail.com). Visit our website: [www.purposebaptist.churchspring.org](http://www.purposebaptist.churchspring.org).

#### BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Tates Chapel Baptist Church is seeking a bivocational pastor with possible full-time pastorate position. Send resumé to: Tates Chapel Baptist Church, P.O. Box 38, Centre, AL 35960. Email: [tateschapelchurch@tds.net](mailto:tateschapelchurch@tds.net).

#### 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](mailto:churchoffice@gracechurchbessemer.com).

#### BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC/WORSHIP & PIANIST

Bon Air Baptist Church is accepting resúmes/applications for a bivocational minister of music/worship and a pianist. Please send your resumé to: BABC, 600 Lower Bon Air Road, Sylacauga, AL 35150. If you have questions, call Pastor Jeff Thomas, 256-391-7344. BABC is located right outside Childersburg, Ala., near Central Alabama Community College.

#### BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC DIRECTOR

East Highland Baptist Church, Hartselle, Ala., is prayerfully seeking God’s choice for a bivocational music director who will lead the comprehensive church music program. Applicants should subscribe to the doctrinal statement of the Baptist Faith &

Message. Please send resumé to: [search@easthighlandbaptist.com](mailto:search@easthighlandbaptist.com) or by mail to: East Highland Baptist Church, P.O. Box 888, Hartselle, AL 35640, ATTN: Music Director Search Committee.

#### YOUTH PASTOR

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

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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](mailto:sandysuttles@fbcpinson.org).

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First Baptist Church in Greenville, Ala., is seeking a part-time children’s minister. Please send resúmes to: 212 Fort Dale Rd., Greenville, AL or email to: [kelly@myfbcgreenville.com](mailto:kelly@myfbcgreenville.com).

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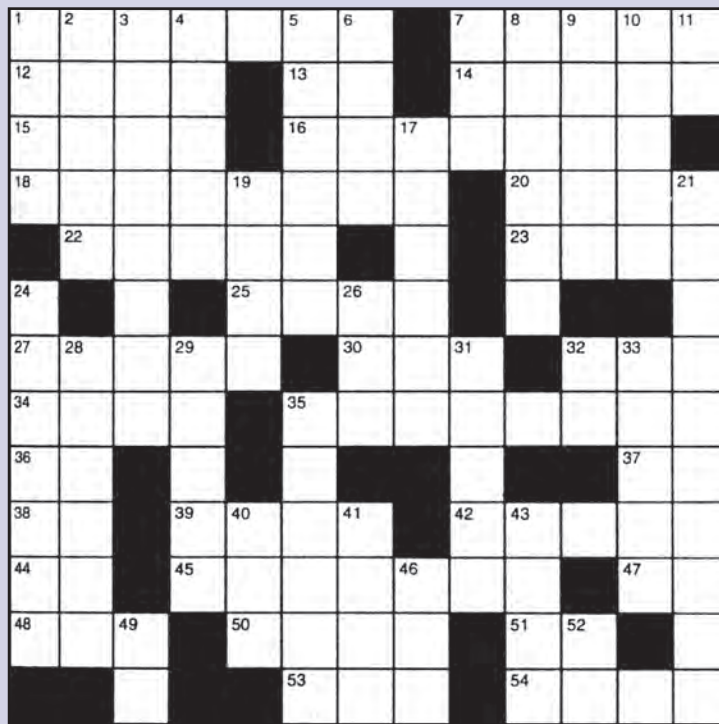
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# CHRISTIAN crossword

## ACROSS

1. First book of New Testament.
7. In like manner also, that women \_\_\_ themselves in modest apparel. (1 Tim. 2:9)
12. Solomon's son was Rehoboam, \_\_\_ his son. (1 Chron. 3:10)
13. Alcoholics Anonymous. (abbr.)
14. Train station.
15. Ice skating arena.
16. Unto \_\_\_, my own son in the faith. (1 Tim. 1:2)
18. Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh the \_\_\_. (Num. 32:12)
20. And Zanoah, and Engannim, Tappuah, and \_\_\_.
22. He left the \_\_\_ cloth, and fled from them naked. (Mark 14:52)
23. Grain storage place.
25. That the \_\_\_ men be sober. (Titus 2:2)
27. Artist's stand.
30. Upon the great \_\_\_ of his right foot. (Lev. 8:23)
32. Anger.
34. Facts.
35. For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our \_\_\_. (Isa. 33:22)
36. Doctor. (abbr.)
37. Iowa. (abbr.)
38. Executive order. (abbr.)
39. A \_\_\_ without blemish. (1 Pet. 1:19)
42. Sow the fields, and \_\_\_ vineyards. (Ps. 107:37)
44. Tin symbol.
45. Imitate.
47. Yes. (Spanish)
48. Teaspoon. (abbr.)
50. Hammer.
51. Direction.
53. Latter-day Saints. (abbr.)
54. Whereby the world that \_\_\_ was perished. (2 Pet. 3:6)



By Jody Ellis Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

## DOWN

1. Follows 1 across.
2. \_\_\_ the Arbathite. (1 Chron. 11:32)
3. Tasting the most of tin.
4. When Joseph had \_\_\_ the body. (Matt. 27:59)
5. For John the Baptist came neither \_\_\_ bread nor drinking wine. (Luke 7:33)
6. Or ministry, let us \_\_\_ on our ministering. (Rom. 12:7)
7. Why make ye this \_\_\_, and weep? (Mark 5:39)
8. But thou shalt utterly \_\_\_ it. (Deut. 7:26)
9. And Chepharhaammonai, and \_\_\_ and Gaba; 12 cities with their villages. (Josh. 18:24)
10. If ye fulfill the \_\_\_ law according to the Scripture. (James 2:8)
11. New Testament. (abbr.)
17. Even out of the \_\_\_s of Gibeah. (Judg. 20:33)
19. Concerning \_\_\_, persecuting the church. (Phil. 3:6)
21. Let your \_\_\_ be known unto all men. (Phil. 4:5)
24. Thou \_\_\_ thy people like a flock. (Ps. 77:20)
26. Estimated Time of Arrival. (abbr.)
28. Eleazar \_\_\_ son. (Ex. 6:25)
29. Though thou exalt thyself as the \_\_\_. (Obad. 4)
31. Princes shall come out of \_\_\_. (Ps. 68:31)
32. Four. (Roman numeral)
33. He hath caused the arrows of his quiver to enter into my \_\_\_. (Lam. 3:13)
35. It is not for kings, O \_\_\_. (Prov. 31:4)
40. Ampere. (abbr.)
41. Emitted blood.
43. Therefore also I have \_\_\_ him to the Lord. (1 Sam. 1:28)
46. Opposite of question (abbr.)
49. Ma and \_\_\_.
52. Inquiry. (slang)

# WORD search

- |                   |                   |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| ALMOND            | LETTUCE           |
| ANISE             | LILY OF THE FIELD |
| BOXWOOD           | LUPIN             |
| CAROB             | MELONS            |
| CEDARS OF LEBANON | MINT              |
| CROCUS            | MUSTARD           |
| CUCUMBER          | MYRTLE            |
| CYCLAMEN          | NARCISSUS         |
| DATE PALM         | NETTLE            |
| ENDIVE            | OATS              |
| FLAX              | OLEANDER          |
| GARLIC            | OLIVE             |
| GARLIC            | ONIONS            |
| GRAPE VINE        | PALM              |
| HOLLY OAK         | PEA               |
| HYACINTH          | PEPPERMINT        |
| JONQUIL           | POPPY             |
| JUNIPER           | ROSE LAUREL       |
| LAUREL            | WORMWOOD          |
| LEMON             |                   |



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# Program for adults with special needs fills gap

(continued from page 1)

Along the way, the family adopted another son, Adrian, who now serves in the Navy, and they had two biological children, Judy Beth and Carter. All that change was positive. Then one day they got thrown a curve ball.

During his senior year of high school in 2014, Robert developed an infection that traveled to his brain and caused seizures.

“We spent 10 days in the CCU department at Southeast Alabama Medical Center and another 30 days at Children’s Hospital in Birmingham,” Woodall said. “During this period, we discovered that Robert had an underlying, nonspecific autoimmune disorder that resulted in this episode.”

It left Robert disabled. “Life was a lot different

for everyone after that,” Woodall said. “Since Robert was no longer independent, we relied on sitter services, and I adjusted my work schedule to be close to home to provide care for him.

“Due to his condition, Robert was limited to social gatherings at church or with family. We began to search for services that would benefit Robert and give him a peer group and a sense of independence.”

That’s when VBAS came into Robert’s life again. “We got him connected right back to Adams — they have an adult program,” Woodall said.

## Long wait

He put Robert on the waiting list for the Alabama Medicaid Waiver, which would help cover his costs.

But the wait was going to take a while because there

**“Our goal for our family was always to pursue adoption at some point.”**

**Chris Woodall  
pastor, Pinckard  
Baptist Church**

were 3,000 on the list with him, Woodall said.

When he discovered Robert was eligible to attend VBAS through the school’s scholarship program, Woodall decided to do something to help make that same opportunity available for others — he started running and raising funds to go toward scholarships.

## Raising support

“Each year, VBAS hosts the Claybank 5K and Fun Run at the Dale County Lake in Ozark specifically to help fund the school scholarship program,” he said.

“In 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the race was canceled, and the vital funds were missed.”

So he ran the Montgomery Half Marathon in March and raised about \$4,500 from supporters, enough to help 10 adult students get connected with VBAS.

“VBAS holds a piece of my heart,” he said. “This has been an immense blessing for him and for our family.”

Susan Owens, resource



Photo courtesy of Chris Woodall

Chris and Stacy Woodall have two adopted children and two biological children. Their oldest, Robert (center front), was adopted when he was 10 years old. He’s now 25. His younger siblings are Adrian (back right), Judy Beth and Carter.

coordinator at VBAS, said Woodall has put a lot of effort into making sure Robert and others like him have a place to go and be with their peers.

“In Alabama, if you are an adult on the waiver waiting list, you could be on there up to 10 years,” Owens said.

“That’s a long time to be at home, and it’s difficult on these families because these adults often need care and can’t stay by themselves.”

The scholarships help these families fill that gap, said Owens, who also has a child with special needs.

## ‘So important’

“It really tugged at my heart as a parent to see Chris working so hard to help Robert have a place to go and be with his peer group,” she said.

“We were excited to be able to offer him a scholarship.”

“All you have to do is look at Robert to see why the scholarships are so important.”

**To learn more about VBAS, visit [vivanbadams.net](http://vivanbadams.net) or call 334-774-5132.**

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# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For May 2

## Explore the Bible

By Benjamin Stubblefield, Ph.D.

Visiting Assistant Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



### WILLING Luke 22:41–53

Like a lot of young children, my kids love the Narnia book series by C.S. Lewis. Aslan, Reepicheep, Peter, Susan, Edmond and Lucy are household names.

But there's one scene in "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe" that they're always conflicted about: when the noble Aslan arranges the exchange of his life for his friend to the murderous, wicked White Witch. It's heroic, yet awful. Wonderful, yet horrible to see someone who is so good willingly go into the hands of fiends so insidious.

It's the same kind of beauty and terror on display at the Mount of Olives in Luke 22. Jesus faces the dread, imminent before Him, with a lion's heart — willing to live through the devil's hour if that's what's necessary to work his Father's redemption plan.

### In Prayer (41–46)

Knowing His time is near, Jesus removes Himself from His disciples to pray. I probably would have run, hid or called for that legion of angels (Matt. 26:53), but my Jesus, kneeling, gets into the agonizing work of real prayer.

And He asks, "God-willing, might there be another way?" Jesus our Lord is also Jesus the man, and here demonstrates His very real yearning to avoid the ruin ahead.

Yet He also reveals His overriding ambition to accomplish His Father's designs. The Father responds by sending one angel to strengthen Jesus, not for war, but for the cross.

So Jesus has His answer, and He rises resolved now to face His betrayal.

In pastoral ministry, I have noticed that sometimes people walk away from Christian religion when their lives get bad.

I think that's because people often imagine God as some sovereign, cosmic chess player and we are His pawns. He has to win His will, so He moves us in and out of harm's way as He wishes — without regard for the agony of human suffering.

The feeling is: "He took me into

this pain, and He doesn't understand what it's like."

But at Gethsemane, the Savior sweats blood. The Father prepares His only begotten for the cruelest day in history.

In trial, therefore, we ought to hurry to the Lord, not away from Him, because He knows perfectly well "all about our trouble." He has had the full cup of His own.

### In Betrayal (47–50)

The tide now turns. His friend betrays Him with a friend's gesture; His other disciples, roused from sleep, risk an armed escalation of violence. Jesus, however, remains confident in His task ahead.

Reminding the crowd that He is the Son of Man, He has no interest in war or escape. He is determined, even in betrayal, to do His Father's will.

The wheels come off sometimes, don't they? Circumstances can quickly go from bad to worse.

But the Christian, like Jesus, goes through them with the same confidence that He had — that what God has for us is better, that the garden is better than the tree of knowledge, the right side of the boat is better than the left, the raven's bread is better than Ahab's feast and the Roman cross is better than the kingdoms of this world.

### In Action (51–53)

As things get violent, Jesus turns a physical altercation into another occasion to show mercy and rest in His Father's will.

I think I would have left the dude's ear on the ground. Maybe even high-fived the guy who sliced it off. I mean, it seems like a small thing: They take my life; I'll take his ear.

So it is unimaginably compassionate, in this rejection, betrayal, hypocrisy, to witness Jesus caring for a man's cartilage.

What Luke is showing is that this Jesus is not just another man; "He is abounding in lovingkindness," who'll heal His enemies, and soon pray, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."✠

## Bible Studies for Life

By Rony Kozman, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies, Samford University



### START WITH PRAYER 1 Timothy 2:1–8

In these times of deep political polarization, as followers of Jesus we need to remember that our ultimate and unwavering allegiance is not to any political party, but to God's kingdom and the gospel of Jesus, the risen King.

If we are first and foremost devoted to the gospel and to the salvation of many, then we will pray for our rulers, that they may establish the ideal conditions for the spread of the gospel of God's kingdom.

In 1 Timothy, Paul addresses and charges Timothy for his pastoral office. Paul gives instructions to Timothy (1:18) and he charges Timothy to "guard what has been entrusted to you" (6:20). What is the very first thing about which Paul instructs Timothy? Prayer (2:1).

### We are to pray for all people. (1–2)

Paul tells Timothy to pray for all people, but he focuses on people in government office. We are to pray "for kings and all who are in high positions."

We are to pray for government officers. We are to ask God to give them discernment as they govern — to make wise laws and to execute justice. Wise governance is needed so believers may live in peace and with dignity. We pray God gives wisdom to our local, state and federal officials. We pray for their wisdom so the Church may live in peace. The result of wise governance is the stability of the nation. And the stability of the nation means peace for the Church. This is the ideal condition for many to be saved and to know the truth.

### We are to align our prayers with God's desire for all people to be saved. (3–6)

Paul prays for government offi-

cials so that there would be peace for the Church. And Paul desires peace for the Church so that all would be saved and know the truth of the gospel.

Paul wants as many people as possible to know that "there is one God" and that Jesus Christ is the One who rescued humanity.

### We are to pray for ourselves and others in sharing the gospel. (7–8)

Paul desires the gospel to spread throughout the world. Paul himself was appointed by God to spread the gospel to the Gentiles.

Paul was appointed as a "teacher of the Gentiles." He preached the gospel to the nations. The gospel he preached is that Christ died to rescue humanity and to restore us to God (vv. 5–6).

Because Paul was most concerned about the spread of the gospel, about the success of his mission, he prayed that kings would rule wisely to secure peace — he prayed for the conditions most favorable for the spread of the gospel among the nations.

As those who trust in Jesus the Messiah, our unwavering allegiance is to the risen King and God's kingdom. As we spread the gospel and announce the good news of Jesus' victorious reign, as we seek to make Christ known among the nations and to see many enter God's kingdom, let us remember to pray.

Let us eschew the unnecessary political divisions that can divide the body of Christ along the line of political parties, and may all Christians pray together for the wisdom of all governors and rulers for the sake of the peace of the Church and for the prosperity and advance of the gospel of Jesus, the resurrected King of Israel to whom all nations and rulers will bow.✠



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# MEDIA REVIEWS

By Michael Foust

TAB Media

## Netflix's 'Mitchells vs. the Machines' mostly family friendly, with caution

**H**ave you ever wanted to recommend a movie to others — but knew you couldn't wholeheartedly?

Such is the case with Netflix's new animated children's film "The Mitchells vs. the Machines" (PG), which launches on the platform April 30. The film follows a quirky family of four as they take a cross-country road trip to drop their teenage daughter off for her freshman year of college.

Unfortunately for them, an army of man-made robots tries taking over Earth at this exact same time, and the foursome — dad, mom, teen daughter and middle school son — must work together to defeat these apocalyptic invaders.

Call it a cross between "The Incredibles" and "Home."

It's an offbeat plot, yes, but it's also filled with great lessons for viewers, especially for families with kids. That's because the father and daughter have drifted apart since her childhood and rarely see eye to eye.

The daughter, a social-media crazed girl named Abby, had secured airplane tickets for her trip to college, but the father — regretting the past and wanting to repair their relationship — cancels her flight and opts for a road trip as a last hurrah.

### 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.*



"The Mitchells vs. the Machines"

Photo courtesy of Netflix

Thankfully, the road trip works. Abby and her father rekindle their relationship. She and her brother also learn to love each other's quirks. When Abby is dropped off at college, hugging and smiling, Dad cries, and so did I.

It's a plot that aims for the heart.

### True to life

Most parents have a few regrets. Many teens go through a rebellious stage. And time does (seemingly) fly when you have children. One day they're learning to walk. The next day, they're learning algebra and then moving out.

The film's message is to live life with grace and mercy, to forgive quickly and to treat each day with your children as a gift. For those who have regrets, the movie screams: It's never too late to repair and restore a relationship.

The film doesn't have any coarse language or sexuality, and the violence remains kid-friendly. Your kids are bound to hear rave reviews for the film. But it does have one impor-

tant caveat that Christian families should consider.

During the movie's final 90 seconds, we learn Abby is dating another girl. ("Are you and Jade official and will you be bringing her home for Thanksgiving?" her mom asks during a video chat. Abby replies, "Easy, mom. It's only been a few weeks.")

It happened so quickly and was so subtle my youngest children didn't catch it. But it's a part of the plot that parents need to know is coming.

Different Christian families will have different responses to the film. (Should you watch it and then discuss it? Watch it until the final 90 seconds? Don't watch at all?)

Time-wise, the film is 99% family-friendly. It's that 1% that will divide viewers. 🙏

### MEET THE REVIEWER

*Michael Foust covers the intersection of faith and entertainment as a media reviewer for The Alabama Baptist.*

### Study: Netflix has the best parental controls

**N**etflix, the world's most popular streaming service, also is the world's leader in parental control.

That's according to a new study of eight streaming services by the Parents Television and Media Council, which found that Netflix has the most robust parental controls, followed by Disney+ and Apple TV. Hulu, according to the study, has the worst.

Netflix stands above the rest by not only allowing separate children's profiles — a feature found in other streaming services — but also by allowing parents to block specific programs and to limit profiles to certain maturity ratings, the study said.

The report criticized Hulu for not protecting parental profiles with a password, which means children "can view all content by simply switching profiles." Hulu also does not allow parents to set age-range preferences within a children's profile (which means PG-13 and TV-14 content is not separated from TV-PG or Y content.)

"We are encouraged that Netflix has made significant improvements to its parental controls ... since our last report on streaming TV," said Melissa Henson, program director for the PTC.

Read the full report at [tabonline.org/parents-guide](http://tabonline.org/parents-guide). 🙏

# 'Draw near to God'

## Samford wide receiver Sam Rogers seeks to reflect Christ's love on campus

By Bill Sorrell  
TAB Media

It was a place Samford University wide receiver Sam Rogers never expected to be.

On Oct. 18, he was in a room at DCH Regional Medical Center in Tuscaloosa and saw one of his best friends, Schuyler Bradley, 19, take his last breath.

Bradley, on the football team with Rogers at Carmel (Indiana) High School, was walking with friends when he was shot, allegedly after an argument.

Rogers, away from home in his first year at Samford University in Birmingham, said he relied on his faith in Christ through the tragic death of his friend.

"James 4:8 [says] 'Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.' That is something I take to heart. When I draw near to Him, I feel love and comfort," Rogers said.

The redshirt freshman seeks to reflect the love of Christ on campus, and said he plans to always treat

others "as I would treat myself." His teammates see that quality in him.

"On and off the field, Sam spreads his love and heart to people no matter who they are," sophomore wide receiver Jason Houston said.

As a teen, Rogers' faith grew as he served on missions teams to Nicaragua with his student group from North Park Community Church, Carmel. The groups helped distribute food, install a water tower and play with local children.



ROGERS

Those trips, Rogers said, "propelled" his faith.

"To see another part of the world, to see people in poverty love Jesus unconditionally, even when they are under the circumstances no one wants to be in, made me realize how fortunate I am," Rogers said. "No matter what, I am going to love the Lord. That was significant in my walk."

His freshman year of college hasn't been easy. The pandemic caused Samford to shift its football season from fall to spring. Then the



Photo courtesy of Samford University

A teammate of Sam Rogers (No. 16) said he is "one of the hardest working guys on the team" at Samford University. "He's the guy you look for to always be consistent," said J.D. Beall, a Bible study leader for the team.

death of his friend, combined with being away from home, tested his faith, he said. But God has reassured him that he is in the right place.

"I have this feeling in my spirit that He has called me here for a reason," Rogers explained.

As Samford took the field in this unusual spring football season, his work ethic coupled with his outspoken faith inspires those around him.

"I truly love being around Sam, and I am very appreciative of the impact he makes on me daily," said Mitch Stewart, Samford's wide receiver coach.

### Team player

Rogers' biggest contribution to Samford football is his willingness to play different positions as needed, Stewart said.

"This year with everything that has gone on with COVID and constantly having guys out for quarantine ... his willingness and ability to be moved around proved very valuable," Stewart explained. "His work ethic and attitude ... never change."

Teammate J.D. Beall, Rogers' roommate and a Bible study leader for the team, describes him as "one of the hardest working guys on the team."

"He's the guy you look for to always be consistent," Beall said. "He makes all the routine catches but also the perfect catches that are simply elegant. He is a fun player to watch."

Samford sophomore running back Jay Stanton echoed Beall's praise.

### Hard worker

"Sam is an amazing, hard worker, and does the job on the field and then some," he said. "That's all you can ask from your teammate."

Rogers said regardless of what happens on the field, his faith will always be first. "I want to live life to the fullest. I want to love people. I want to continue to lead others to Christ and continue to strengthen my relationship with Christ."

Stewart added, "I believe that when you get in tough situations the light in you has to burn brighter than the light on you. Having the ability to share that with our players and having the ability to ask guys like Sam to share that with players is a huge advantage we have here at Samford."

Samford finished the 2021 spring football season with four wins and seven losses. 🏈

## Voice of the Bulldogs



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

Kevin Blackwell (left), executive director of Samford University's Ministry Training Institute, spends his Saturdays during the Bulldogs' home football games serving as the play-by-play announcer. He also hosts The Chris Hatcher Show, featuring the team's head coach.