

The Alabama Baptist

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SBC

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IMB photo

LOOK PAST THE CRISIS

Ben Martin, a worker in Israel, hopes believers can take a spiritual posture that is consistent with the gospel — love for all people. He says if Christians don't guard themselves, "we can begin to hate, and hate is not of God."

'We don't have to choose sides,' say Baptist workers of Middle East conflict

By Leslie Peacock Caldwell
International Mission Board

In the silence since the May 20 ceasefire between Israel and Gaza ended 11 days of violence, Baptist workers among Israelis and Palestinians urge churches to look past the politics and see people in need of Jesus.

"We don't have to choose sides," says Ben Martin, a worker in Israel. "This is

really about people who need Jesus. When people are killed, unless Jesus has changed their hearts, they die and will spend eternity apart from Him."

Feeling the effects

While Baptist workers in the region are safe, many have felt the effects and fear that resulted from the 11 days of targeted attacks — another chapter in a long history of conflict between the nations — and they grieve with their friends and neighbors.

This is a complex and complicated situation, explains Martin, with "rightness and wrongness on both sides."

Martin says he hopes

churches can take a spiritual posture consistent with the gospel — love for all people. He says if Christians don't guard themselves, "we can begin to hate, and hate is not of God."

The need for believers to align their hearts with that of God is true for people on both sides of the Gaza strip, echoes Andrew Weir, who serves among Palestinians.

Weir explains that it's hard to not show bias toward the people groups God has called them to serve among.

As Baptist workers focused on reaching a specific people group, they develop a deep love and concern for their countries of service.

But he says they work to keep the mind of Christ and focus on all people in need of the gospel. "This is a struggle that those who work in the Middle East must constantly face," Weir says. "It's a fight against our own hearts to not bow to politics but let the heart of Jesus transform our minds so we can see the world around us as He does."

Left to wonder

Weir, who is not currently in Gaza, says he has not been able to make contact with his friends in country due to the destruction of communication lines. He is left to wonder and pray, especially for the Gazan Church —

(See 'Prayer,' page 8)



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The crossword puzzle
can be found on page 15.



Screenshot

During a live segment of NBC's Today Show on May 28, (from right) hosts Jenna Bush Hager, Hoda Kotb and Donna Farizan tell Vivian Cunningham that Samford University has established a scholarship in her name.

Cunningham scholarship
announced on national TV

When Vivian Cunningham graduated from Samford University in early May, her story — the story of a 78-year-old grandmother who didn't give up on her dream of an education — spread across the U.S.

And May 28, she got three special gifts while appearing on NBC's Today Show during a live segment with Hoda Kotb and Jenna Bush Hager.

First, Cunningham unwrapped a laptop given by Best Buy — her first laptop, she said. The show's hosts told her she was going to need it because of the second gift — Samford had announced they would pay all of her tuition and fees when she decided to pursue her graduate degree.

And finally, Kotb and Hager announced that Samford had established a new scholarship in her name — the Vivian Cunningham Leadership Scholarship.

The scholarship will help other students who exhibit characteristics of leadership, determination and perseverance to pursue their dreams of a college education.

When Cunningham was younger, she tried to go to school on and off, but she was a single mother with

two small children. Over the years, she slowly worked on an associate's degree at Virginia College with help from a reimbursement program provided by her employer, Alabama Power.

But Cunningham wanted "more knowledge," she said. So she enrolled in night classes at Samford.

"I had gone so long and went through certain struggles, I just wanted that bachelor's," she said. "I was just glad that the Lord let me be strong."

Her children supported her, as did her 95-year-old mother, who attended the graduation

service and said she was so happy she lived to see that moment. So many people from across Cunningham's life were celebrating.

Bryan Gill, director of university assessment and professional studies and Cunningham's adviser, said for faculty members and advisers, "when you think about all the years you've helped that student, the amount of pride — it's a wonderful feeling."

Cunningham offered this advice to anyone with a dream — "Go for it. If you have a dream, pursue your dream. Don't let anyone stop you." (Grace Thornton)

To watch the video,
visit tabonline.org/cunningham-scholarship.

The Alabama Baptist

"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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"Go for it. If you have a dream, pursue your dream."

Vivian Cunningham, 78-year-old Samford graduate

RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

By Jennifer Davis Rash

President and Editor-in-Chief



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Guest editorial: Media reviews provide clarity in vast landscape

When my daughter, Stella, was in fifth grade, a popular book among the girls in her class was “The Fault in our Stars.”

Stella was next on the list to check it out of the teacher’s personal library when she mentioned the book to us.

I wasn’t familiar with the title, but my husband, a media specialist at an elementary school, had some questions. After a little research, we realized the book, a young adult novel recommended for ages 14 and older, dealt with some mature themes — dying and sexuality specifically. We thought she wasn’t quite ready.

That led to a family talk about why it would be better to wait a little while before reading the book.

A few years later, a TV show, “13 Reasons Why,” which depicts a teen girl killing herself, debuted on Netflix. Once again, the kids at school were talking about the show, and once again Stella was interested. Only this time, she didn’t mention it to us, and my husband and I were clueless.

She was three episodes into the series when she realized the dark content of the show was affecting her emotional health. Coping with the depressing thoughts sparked by just three episodes was a long painful process for Stella, and she was not the only viewer who experienced those feelings.

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Content Editor

An analysis of suicide data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention showed a significant jump in youth suicides following the release of the show — a 19-year high in suicides, researchers found. At least one Alabama teen modeled her own suicide after the depiction in the show.

Reporting on that precious girl’s death, on those statistics, I couldn’t help but wonder: If TAB had reviewed the show before it came out, before our kids had the chance to watch it, could we have made a difference? Could lives have been saved if more parents knew what their kids were watching and had an opportunity to talk about it before they watched?

On a monthly basis, TAB reviews movies and TV shows. Sometimes these are faith-based productions, but not always.

We often hear from readers who feel like we should only review faith-based productions, and we understand that position.

As one reader recently put it, “children certainly don’t need to have seeds planted in their young minds which may be hard, if not impossible, to uproot.”

But that statement gets to the heart of why we DO need to review such films — to help parents know what to watch for, to help them blow those seeds away, at least for a little while longer.

Children and teens are prolific consumers of video. The next time you’re in a crowd of families, look around. See how many toddlers are watching a phone.

Most of us have YouTube on our phones and at least one subscription to a streaming video service in our homes. Parental controls vary from service to service, and even

those are no guarantee young viewers won’t run into questionable content. Our recent review of Netflix’s new animated children’s film “The Mitchells vs. the Machines,” reveals how quickly — and how subtly — a seed can be planted.

And it is with that in mind that we review films and TV shows that kids and their friends will be talking about. Forewarned is forearmed, the old saying goes, and our goal is to equip parents, grandparents and other caregivers, to help them “examine everything [and] hold firmly to that which is good [and] abstain from every form of evil” (1 Thess. 5:22–23).

As the villain Ursula in Disney’s “The Little Mermaid,” says: “Life’s full of tough choices, isn’t it?” How right she is.

And because there are so many choices in today’s media landscape, we hope in some small way TAB is helping provide clarity, one media review at a time.

“We review films and TV shows that kids and their friends will be talking about. Forewarned is forearmed, the old saying goes, and our goal is to equip parents, grandparents and other caregivers, to help them ‘examine everything [and] hold firmly to that which is good [and] abstain from every form of evil.’”

Your Voice



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

Judson College memories: Former professor reflects on tenure

By Jerry Henry

Former chair of the religion department, Judson College

Memories stir our emotions. Good memories stay with us and arouse feelings that make the past situation a delight to remember. On the other hand, bad memories are like a jack-in-the-box that keeps reminding us of painful regrets.

My memories of being chairman of the religion department at Judson College are such wonderful memories. The likelihood of the college being closed is such a painful one.

I was blessed with a grandmother who was strong in her faith. She was a Judson graduate with a major in chemistry and physics. She met my

granddaddy at the train station in Marion. He was a railroad engineer with an eighth grade education, and he saw in that Judson girl someone to share life together. Whenever I pass that old station, I remember.

My position at Judson began in President John McCrummen's office. As a man of deep faith, he offered me an opportunity to teach young women God's word. When I said yes, we knelt in his office, and he prayed a prayer over me that only a devout soldier of Christ could pray. It was a heaven-come-down-and-glory-fill-the-soul moment.

My prayer was that I could inspire students to grasp the academic side of the Bible and personally follow

the spiritual pull of discipleship. The opportunity was beyond my resources, but God answered both prayers in surprising ways that still bring joy to my heart.

Student interactions

One summer session, I was teaching the missionary journeys of Paul. After lunch was a difficult time to keep the girls' attention. I could tell that my lecture notes were receiving blank stares. (Every professor has experienced those moments).

To lighten the atmosphere, I asked a question: "In some cultures, men have several wives, and women have several husbands. Could you handle several husbands?" One student's answer was classic: "The question is, could they handle me?" That moment brings a smile to my heart.

The classroom was a place of instruction and my office was a place of Christian counseling. One afternoon, there was a knock on my door. Philia, a Nigerian exchange student, was there. She was overwhelmed with the demands of her studies as well as missing her family in a far away land. In fact, she was on the verge of giving up and going home.

My office became a prayer meeting as we put gender, race and class differences aside and prayed for God's strength to endure. Her graduation was a special moment for me as she headed back to her homeland to teach children the knowledge she had gained at Judson.

It was also in my office that I met with a young lady who had brought

her boyfriend. His name was Andre, and he had come from France to attend Marion Military Institute.

He shared how he had seen Christ in her life and wanted Christ in his. A young man was born into the kingdom of God because of the witness of a Judson student. What a special memory!

So many memories with such a short space. These include filled classrooms, the searching questions asked about God's word and the graduates as young women going out to influence a culture. Some became professionals in their field of giftedness, some became wives and mothers and some were both. I was given the opportunity to make God's word an exciting part of their lives.

Those initial prayers in President McCrummen's office were answered. What great memories!

Finding new hope

It is sad that Judson's influence upon the coming generation of young women seems to be coming to an end. An environment that has impacted so many Judson graduates will be unavailable to many who need a gender environment that Judson could provide.

Perhaps some will need to be inspired to contribute to a revival.

Jeremiah 29:11 was given to a nation that seemed to have lost hope of a future. However, in God's hands what was a bad memory developed into a good memory. He can do the same with Judson College.

EDITOR'S NOTE — View a gallery of photos from May 22's Judson College alumnae event at tabonline.org/judson-goodbye.

Pray for student missionaries

If prayer is the greater work, what a great work — a privilege even — we've been given. This is true in all areas of our lives, but I want to highlight that work in our role as partners to those serving Christ around the globe.

We are celebrating as students begin their journey and, because prayer is the greater work, we are beginning a prayer focus on our Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.

Follow along to see the faces of those serving. Pray for these students by name. Share and encourage others to join you on this prayer journey this summer.

What a work we have before us. What a privilege it is to do this work.

► Pray that God would bless their efforts.

► Pray that God would use their faithfulness.

► Pray that God would reveal Himself to and through these students.

Find more ways to pray at onemissionstudents.org/prayer-is-the-greater-work.

Chris Mills
Student missions mobilizer
Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“If you can trust God to save you for eternity, you can trust Him to lead you for a lifetime.”

DAVID PLATT

Pastor and author

While 80% of our churches are in decline or plateaued, every church could use improvement to become more effective in fulfilling the Great Commission. Casting vision often requires raising the bar of service and engagement. ...

One trait of effective leadership is properly elevating the sense of urgency. When the leader can lead the organization to a genuine understanding of the urgency on each person, results will begin to climb.

George Yates
Church health strategist
Alabama Baptist State Board
of Missions

God doesn't want heaven to just be our destination; He wants it to be our inspiration of how we live

on earth. God's blessings aren't simply blessings. They are meant to inspire us to look toward heaven.

Pastor Gregg Matte
Houston's First Baptist Church
Houston, Texas

We are called to act, not react. We should not be easily triggered. What does Jesus say to do? Love God, love others. When I react, I very seldom honor God.

Pastor Deron Spoo
First Baptist Church
Tulsa, Okla.

As you evaluate your motive, your worship and your habit of "meeting together," think on the words of Louie Giglio, "Follow the trail of your time, your affection,

your energy, your money and your allegiance. At the end of that trail you'll find a throne; and whatever, or whoever, is on that throne is what's of highest value to you. On that throne is what you worship."

Make sure Jesus is on that throne.

Pastor Jimmy Stewart
First Baptist Church
Gulfport, Miss.

Church planting is slowing, and the number of closures is growing. Yet the opportunity is still before us — people are searching spiritually, and the gospel is the answer.

Ed Stetzer
Executive director
Wheaton College Billy Graham
Center

'Until our time here is finished'

Recently, a few of our senior adults were recognized for their faithfulness of service in Pickens Baptist Association.

They have been and continue being "good and faithful servants" to our Lord. Their faithful service started me thinking about this topic of being a senior adult.

There are many phrases used to describe this age of life. Unfortunately, most feel derogatory: declining years, golden age, winter of life, elderly.

These descriptions creep into the life of the local church and even into our own minds. Senior adults may begin to feel useless or "past our prime." Seriously, who are the folks making those designations?

Honestly, as I look at these people who were honored, they have endured and been constant, persistent and stable in their Christian life. These are the proper words that we should use for those of us who are aging well.

God inspired King Solomon to write that "gray hair is a crown of splendor ... attained in the way of righteousness." He observed that older people who walked in the way of the Lord gained a crown through their faithfulness to Him.

The Bible teaches that seniors need to continue living out their lives to the full by training younger believers to learn from them.

It is not a time of retirement. It is not a time to slow down, to put up one's feet and rest. There is still much to be done in our churches and our communities.

In Pickens County, there are about 3,000 experienced folks who must NOT stop but must KEEP going forward. May we allow God to use us until our time here is finished!

Lyle Dease
Director of missions
Pickens Baptist Association

From the *Twitterverse*

@shane_pruitt78

The church isn't a building to be maintained, it's a people to be mobilized.

@pastorjgkell

"The podcast preacher isn't going to fly in and pray for you. God's Word teaches that you need a local church where people know their pastors and the pastors know the people." —Bill Deckert

@richardaross

On the student ministry webpage — that lists the major gatherings each week — what if the first one listed was corporate worship on Sunday morning? What if leaders presented that hour as the very heart of student ministry?

@andrewhebert86

I woke up this morning to a really encouraging text message

from a deacon, and his encouragement is still on my mind. I thank God for godly men and servants in the church who help hold up the arms of their pastor!

@lecrac

Expecting the worst outcome doesn't protect you from hurt ... it robs you of hope.

@WendyAlsup

How are you stewarding the land you've been given this week? What seeds are you planting? What tender shoots should you water? You may not harvest for a long time, but you can still fertilize and weed. Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. Ps. 37:3

@dailysurgeon

It is a very cheap sort of virtue, that — bullying other people's vices; the easiest thing in all the world is to be constantly denouncing popular

faults; but to wring the neck of one of my own bosom sins is a harder work by far, and a much better sign of conversion.

@BillyGraham

"In the darkest hour God can still revive His people, and by the Holy Spirit breathe new vigor and power into the body of Christ."

#BillyGraham

@trillianewbell

I'm fully aware of my sinfulness. I know I can be distracted. I am sure I have blind spots. But man I do love the Lord. The more I learn the more I realize how much I don't know. He's marvelous. His grace is uncalled for. He is a "marvelous mystery." I'm His and He is mine! Wow.

@Charleswsmithjr

One of the clearest signs of pride is the inability to celebrate the accomplishments of others.

DENOMINATIONAL DISCUSSIONS

DECISIONS

Changes proposed for SBC Executive Committee mission and ministries statement

In January 2020, SBC Executive Committee president Ronnie Floyd announced proposed revisions to the EC mission and ministries statement, including a new prayer ministry.

“Updating the language of the SBC Executive Committee’s ministry assignments and the explanation of them is important as we seek to better

serve Southern Baptist churches,” Floyd told Baptist Press. “Furthermore, the addition of a ministry assignment for prayer will enable the EC to provide strategic leadership for prayer in the SBC.” In the proposed revision, assisting “churches through elevating the ministry of prayer” would become the EC’s seventh ministry, providing “strategic leadership to lift up and promote coor-

dinated prayer for spiritual awakening, ministry effectiveness, and the completion of the Great Commission.”

The stated mission and all six current ministry assignments would be amended, with only the sixth assignment (assisting churches in stewardship education) remaining intact.

Here are the proposed and current statements:

PROPOSED

Mission

The Executive Committee exists to minister to the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention by acting for the Convention ad interim in all matters not otherwise provided for in a manner that encourages the cooperation and confidence of the churches, associations, and state conventions and facilitates maximum support for worldwide missions and ministries.

Ministries

1. Assist churches through conducting and administering the work of the Convention not otherwise assigned.

Manage according to the Southern Baptist Convention Bylaws, Bylaw 18, The Executive Committee; manage the operation of the Southern Baptist Convention Building according to guidelines adopted by building occupants.

2. Assist churches by providing a Convention news service.

Provide regular news releases about Southern Baptists; serve as the Convention’s press representative; coordinate news operations for annual meetings of the Southern Baptist Convention.

3. Assist churches by providing a Convention public relations service.

Interpret the Southern Baptist

Convention to internal and external publics.

4. Assist churches, Baptist general bodies and their entities, and other evangelical organizations and individuals through estate planning consultation and investment management primarily for funds providing support for Southern Baptist causes.

Encourage and consult with Baptist general bodies and their entities, and other evangelical organizations and individuals, regarding wills, gifts, trusts, or deeds which benefit Baptist or other evangelical causes; and provide investment management for a balanced portfolio of securities.

5. Assist churches through the promotion of cooperative giving.

Consult with state conventions and Southern Baptist Convention entities regarding cooperative giving advancement; interpret the Cooperative Program as the basic channel of support for the ministries of the state conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention.

6. Assist churches in stewardship education.

Produce, develop, publish, and distribute products that help Southern Baptists to grow in commitment to Jesus Christ by applying biblical principles of stewardship.

CURRENT

Mission

The Executive Committee seeks to empower churches to prioritize, elevate, and accelerate the vision of reaching every person for Jesus Christ in every town, every city, every state, and every nation through collaborative partnership, cooperation, and generosity.

Ministries

1. Assist churches through conducting and administering the work of the Convention not otherwise assigned.

The SBC Executive Committee serves as the fiduciary, the fiscal, and the executive entity of the Convention in all its affairs not specifically committed to some other board or entity. Furthermore, the Executive Committee is authorized, instructed, and commissioned to act for the Convention ad interim in all matters not otherwise provided for. It also serves as the managing agent of the Southern Baptist Convention Building.

2. Assist churches by providing a Convention news service.

Provide regular news releases about Southern Baptists; tell and celebrate stories of what God is doing through Southern Baptist churches and ministries; serve as the Convention’s press representative; coordinate news operations for annual meetings of the Southern Baptist Convention.

3. Assist churches by developing and strengthening cooperative relationships.

Interpret the Southern Baptist Convention to internal and external publics; strengthen relationships with state convention, associational, and other Southern Baptist affinity groups; pursue cooperative relation-

ships with theologically likeminded churches to fulfill our missional vision of reaching all people for Jesus Christ and making disciples of all the nations.

4. Assist churches, organizations, and individuals with investment management and generosity.

Encourage and partner with Southern Baptist and other evangelical churches, entities, organizations, and individuals to invest in Kingdom causes by providing comprehensive investment, fiduciary, and planning services for maximum impact for Southern Baptist or other evangelical causes.

5. Assist churches by promoting the Cooperative Program and celebrating other cooperative giving.

In consultation with cooperating state conventions and Southern Baptist Convention entities, prioritize, elevate, and accelerate giving through the Cooperative Program as the most effective means of mobilizing Southern Baptist churches and extending our collective efforts to reach every person with the gospel and make disciples of all nations; celebrate all cooperative giving to achieve these ends.

6. Assist churches in stewardship education.

Produce, develop, publish, and distribute products that help Southern Baptists to grow in commitment to Jesus Christ by applying biblical principles of stewardship.

7. Assist churches through elevating the ministry of prayer.

Provide strategic leadership to lift up and promote coordinated prayer for spiritual awakening, ministry effectiveness, and the completion of the Great Commission.

“The Executive Committee exists to minister to the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention.”

Lifeway, NAMB requesting ministry assignment changes

Lifeway Christian Resources and the North American Mission Board are asking messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting in Nashville to consider ministry assignment changes related to college and university students.

If approved, the assignment for reaching and mobilizing students in North America will transition from Lifeway to NAMB. Messengers will consider the Lifeway request first, which would allow Lifeway to amend its stated mission and all 10 current ministry assignments. Lifeway trustees unanimously voted for the changes in January and forwarded their request to the SBC Executive Committee, which approved it in February, and has it ready to for SBC messengers June 14–15.

NAMB's board of trustees unanimously passed a resolution in May asking for the college and university students ministry assignment.

The request will be considered by messengers if Lifeway's amendments are approved.

The proposed NAMB ministry assignment revision reflects extensive collaboration between the SBC Executive Committee staff, NAMB leadership and Baptist Collegiate state directors.

The final proposal approved by NAMB trustees adds the following language its ministry assignment: "Assisting churches in reaching and mobilizing college and university students in the United States and Canada. Promote the advancement of college and university ministry efforts in evangelism, discipleship, churchmanship, leadership development and missions mobilization through collaborative partnerships."

Shane Pruitt, NAMB's director of Next Gen evangelism, said college campuses, universities and collegiate ministries can be "strategic launching pads to send out missionaries all over the world to know Jesus and to make Jesus known."

"At NAMB, we are excited about locking arms with BCM directors, local church college pastors and collegiate church planters to see a gospel impact on college campuses."

Lifeway changes

The proposed revision to Lifeway's mission and ministry statement would add the phrase "designing trustworthy experiences that fuel ministry" to the statement.

"This phrase boils down Lifeway's purpose into six words," said Ben Mandrell, president and CEO of Lifeway. "We want to be known as a ministry that will go the extra mile to thoughtfully

design tools that help people meet God and grow closer to Him. Whether it's Bible study curriculum, short-term studies, ministry training, a new Bible, camps or events, a resource must be well-designed and provide a trustworthy experience for us to produce it."

If approved, the full Lifeway mission statement would read: "Lifeway Christian Resources exists to

assist churches and believers to evangelize the world to Christ, develop believers, and grow churches by designing trustworthy experiences that fuel ministry and by being the best provider of relevant high-quality, high-value Christian products and services."

Most of Lifeway's current ministry assignments were assigned to the organization in 1995. (TAB Media)

"We want to be known as a ministry that will go the extra mile to thoughtfully design tools that help people meet God and grow closer to Him."

**Ben Mandrell
president and CEO
Lifeway Christian Resources**

FINANCE

SBC messengers to consider CP increase, revised business plan for EC, entities

Messengers to the 2021 Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting in Nashville June 15–16 will be asked to consider an increased Cooperative Program allocation budget as well as make changes to the convention's business and financial plan. These recommendations will come from the Executive Committee.

The proposed budget increase of \$190 million is about a half step back toward the pre-pandemic 2019–20 budget of \$196.5 million.

During a special called meeting in September, the Executive Committee adopted a \$186.9 million CP budget for the 2020–2021 fiscal year after originally proposing a budget of \$197.7 million. CP giving dropped during the pandemic, and since the 2020 SBC Annual Meeting was canceled, the responsibility of adopting the budget fell to the EC.

Executive Committee leaders are confident the proposed budget increase is manageable. CP giving has already rebounded some as the U.S. economy has bounced back from the COVID-19 pandemic at a quicker pace than many experts expected.

As of May 31 gifts received by the Executive Committee for distribution through the CP allocation budget totaled nearly \$129 million for the 2020–21 fiscal year — 0.95% less than last year's giving at this point but 3.44% ahead of year-to-date budget projections.

Faithfulness of giving

"The faithfulness of those giving to us came back very quickly," Executive Committee chief financial officer Jeff Pearson said. "We want to build on that momentum. We believe that with the new budget that we're presenting, being above where our budget was last year, we are starting the trajectory going back up."

SBC Executive Committee president Ronnie Floyd agreed, noting Baptists have always been "faithful to step up its commitment through challenging times."

Messengers also will consider a revised business and financial plan for SBC entities and the Executive Committee. Pearson said the amended business and financial plan messengers will consider creating more clarity, transparency and accountability among SBC entities and the Executive Committee.

The updated plan now includes:

- ▶ A preface
- ▶ Updated language
- ▶ A focus on the role of entity boards
- ▶ Entity confirmation to be submitted annually.



PEARSON

Responding to messengers

"We focused on the roles of the entity boards," said Pearson, who assumed responsibility for overseeing the process in January 2021 after the retirement of his predecessor, Bill Townes. "We did that to honor the messengers of the Southern Baptist Convention because the messengers are the ones who place those board members, and they place those board members out of their peers."

The revised plan, which has received some push back from non SBC-level entity leaders, goes into further detail in four key areas of relationship among the Executive Committee, the convention and its entities:

- ▶ Cooperation
- ▶ Governance
- ▶ Stewardship development
- ▶ Financial integrity and accountability.

"We want messengers to feel confident that the funds that they are so graciously sending through the Cooperative Program and out to the entities are being managed in an accountable and transparent way." (TAB Media)

Fighting darkness

Prayer a huge part of ministry in West Bank

(continued from page 1)
believers who “yearn for freedom and autonomy but have little hope.” He says his heart breaks for the Church inside Gaza, but also for the vast destruction and loss of life.

“Christians across Israel, the West Bank and Gaza are fighting a war against darkness,” Weir explains, speaking to the spiritual oppression in the region. “Yes, there are rockets and fighter planes, soldiers, death, missiles and political rhetoric. But that noise is so loud it often drowns out the real fight against the darkness.”

Martin says when Israeli believers pray for themselves, “we do

not forget to pray for those in Gaza.” Weir says the Church in Gaza remembers this too, and it’s a message the Baptist workers want to emphasize. “We want to

represent the people groups involved as real people, created in the image of God, and not as the political puppets that the world uses to paint the picture of the

Palestine-Israel conflict. We want the Church in the U.S. to pray against the darkness and lostness. That is our hearts’ desire.”

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

Download a prayer guide for the Middle East at tabonline.org/imb-prayer.

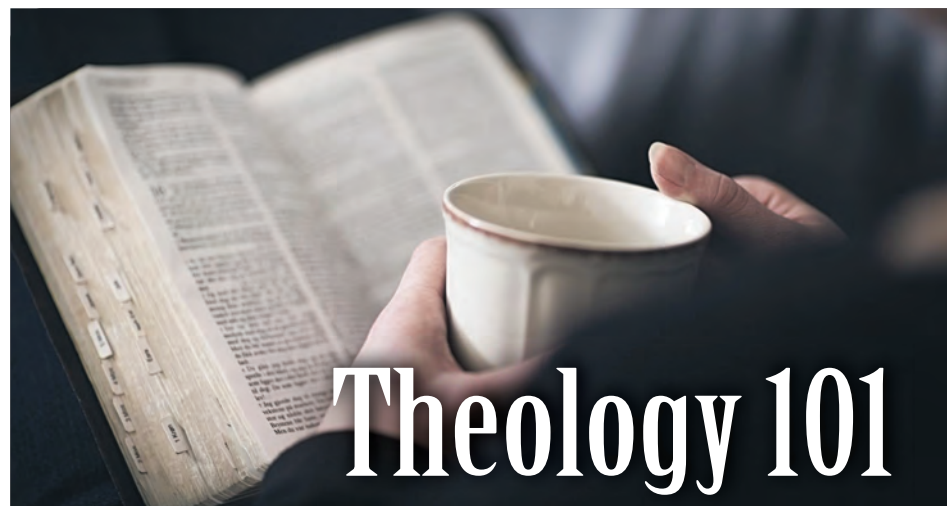
“Yes, there are rockets and fighter planes, soldiers, death, missiles and political rhetoric. But that noise is so loud it often drowns out the real fight against the darkness.”

Andrew Weir
Baptist worker



IMB photo

“It’s a fight against our own hearts to not bow to politics but let the heart of Jesus transform our minds,” said Andrew Weir, a worker in Palestine.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

God's Word

Effectual

By **Jerry Batson, Th.D.**
TAB Media

As noted last week regarding the inspiration of Holy Scripture, the breath of God is upon His word. This God-breathed Word has the truth of God within it. Furthermore, it has the purposes of God behind it. As a result, it is an effectual word from God.

Such was the message given by Paul to the Thessalonian believers: “For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe” (1 Thess. 2:13).

Spiritual birth

Being an effectual Word, the Bible shows the way to a spiritual birth for sinners who are spiritually “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). Being spiritually dead, sinners desperately need to experience a spiritual birth in order to come alive to the life God wants for them.

According to 1 Peter 1:23, this new birth is possible “through the word of God which lives and abides forever.”

Having embarked on this new life, forgiven sinners find that God’s word is effectual in reproving us when we come short of God’s standards for His children and then correcting us. To this end, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for

correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16). God’s word is effectual to purify those who hear it and respond to it in obedience, according to 1 Peter 1:22: “Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth.”

Unhurried meditation

God’s word is effectual in instructing, guiding and illuminating believers who choose to read it, meditate on it and obey it.

One of the greatest omissions a Christian can make is spending regular time with that Word. In our fast-paced lives, some find they do well to make time for quickly reading the Bible, let alone quietly meditating on what they read.

Unhurried meditation on God’s word often leads to memorizing portions of it. When that takes place, we can say with the psalmist when we pray, “Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You” (119:11).

By meditating on what we read in God’s word, we can experience the Apostle Paul’s encouragement to the Colossian believers: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Col. 3:16).

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.



Valleydale Church helps revitalize FBC Helena

By Grace Thornton

TAB Media

Josh Knierim says if someone lives in Helena, there's a good chance he or she passes The Church at Old Town — formerly known as the city's First Baptist Church — twice a day.

It's right on one of the main roads going into the Birmingham suburb of about 21,000, right in the heart of Helena's Old Town, a historic district that's being revitalized.

It's a great spot for a church.

"But most people have stopped seeing it," Knierim said. "And we want to turn that around."

First, Helena, has had a long history — it was organized in 1833 and has been active in the city for a long time. But over the past two decades, it's experienced what Jeff Champion called a "slow bleed" — two difficult seasons of leadership took a toll on the congregation.

"I came there as pastor about a year and a half ago," Champion said.

"I knew they were struggling, but I also knew they were in a great location and that we were going to have to embark on a time of revitalization."

Children's ministry

That's exactly what they did — the small, aging congregation started a new children's ministry to reach out to the growing community of Helena. It went well, Champion said — the first three weeks, they had 40 children.

Then the COVID-19 pandemic happened, and they had to shut down. Some of the older church members were not able to come back. Before the pandemic, the church had been able to make ends meet and even have a surplus, despite a \$9,300-per-month payment on their facilities. But during the pandemic, they started draining reserves to pay the bills.

So Champion — who had heard the story of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Birmingham, adopting McElwain Baptist Church —



Photo by Grace Thornton

Stephen McClain pressure washes the outside of The Church at Old Town, formerly known as FBC Helena. McClain, a new staff member of Valleydale Church, will help with the facilities at both campuses.

reached out to Josh Cook, church revitalization specialist for Birmingham Metro Baptist Association, to see what the possibilities were.

"He said he knew of a church looking to come alongside another church and help revitalize it," Champion said.

That church was Valleydale Church, and Pastor Mac Brunson said he "felt like it was a direction God was leading us."

"Valleydale has always been involved in international missions, national missions and local missions, but not in our immediate community," he said. "This is on the edge of our immediate community. I think all of Valleydale is tremendously excited to help a church become a thriving part of a community and a base of evangelistic operations for the days to come."

Moving forward

The two churches began talking about the possibilities, and in May they both voted to move forward with replanting. That meant Valleydale would provide a fresh vision for the church, a new pastor and staff, and a team of volunteers to help.

They also decided on a new name for the new church — The Church at Old Town.

The congregation — made up of the Valleydale team, members of the original First Baptist Church and guests invited from the community — held its first service June 6.

Knierim, formerly Valleydale's student pastor, is the new pastor. The effort is being supported by Plant Alabama and the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. Knierim is currently in a church planting training cohort led by Brian Harper, an associate in the SBOM office of associational missions and church planting. This will provide both coaching and resources, Knierim said.

He said for a while now, God has been stirring in his heart to be a pastor for the city — to go to the grocery store for the next 25 years and get stopped in the aisle by people he knows. Though it's a suburb of Birmingham, Helena has that small-town mindset, he said.

"I want to get to know the town and get invested in the community and share that vision with people here too," Knierim said. "I want our church to know that everything they do in the community — going to the

ballpark, going to the store — is a missions opportunity."

He's seeing that small-town personality in action already. Even though the church soft-opened June 6 and doesn't officially launch until August, word has already spread that something new is starting at the church, and people are excited.

Stewarding the church

So Knierim and volunteers from Valleydale have been working hard on renovations and signage to put their best foot forward from the very beginning, knowing that any Sunday that someone new walks through the door "is launch Sunday for them" even if it isn't for the church, Knierim said.

"It's cool to see how God is putting it all together," he said.

That includes preparing the hearts of the First, Helena, congregation to make this kind of monumental decision on how to steward their church, Brunson said.

Champion "deserves a tremendous amount of credit" for leading the church to this point, he said.

Brunson said he knows it's not an easy place for a pastor or a church to come to, but Champion's heart and the heart of the church is this — "they want to reach their community for Christ."

"I have a great deal of respect for them and a great deal of appreciation for those who will endure and stay with the church," he said.

Champion said he knew when he started this process "it would

probably mean I would lose my job" — because often in a replant situation, a new pastor helps move the new church into a new season.

But Champion said his goal was to see the church thrive. Valleydale "has been a great, great partner — unbelievable," he said.

And the congregation of First, Helena, is "excited about everything too," he said. "Most of our people are grandparents and great grandparents. They have been here through some really tough times, and they wanted to see the church be healthy. Valleydale was the perfect fit."

For more information about how your church can be involved in a revitalization process — either as an adopting church or as a replant — contact Rick Barnhart at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions at 800-264-1225, ext. 2220, or visit plantalabama.org.

"I want our church to know that everything they do in the community is a missions opportunity."

**Pastor Josh Knierim
The Church at Old Town**

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Questions about either of these events? Contact Karen Gosselin, kgosselin@alsbom.org, (334) 613-2318.

Picture words

Retired Alabama missionary to Japan creates vase to share Trinity story

By Grace Thornton
TAB Media

When Pratt Dean watched men walk on the moon for the first time in 1969, he'd already taken a big step of his own — he had up and moved to serve God as a missionary to Japan, a whole world away from where he grew up in the U.S.

And when he got there, he found God had a lot of good things waiting for him — a wife, a 32-year missions tenure and a new passion that would become a big part of his ministry.

Dean met his wife, Rita, who was serving as a missionary to Taiwan, and the two wrote letters and married not too long after. She moved to Japan to serve alongside him.

And along the way, someone put a book in Dean's hands that would become a new fascination — a book about Chinese characters, which are also used in the Japanese language.

"I knew that many of them uncannily lend themselves to illustrating Bible truth," he said.

Plain messages

The book explained how dozens of Chinese characters seem to have been invented to tell the story of Genesis 1–11, Dean said.

As he continued his research, he learned three Chinese characters specifically seemed to represent the Trinity.

All three of them had the *yoh* character, which means "sheep," as their top half.

"Sheep are choice



Photo by Grace Thornton
Pratt Dean, a retired missionary to Japan, holds a vase with a Chinese character on each side that tells the story of the Trinity.

animal sacrifices for sins and symbolize the sacrificial love of God who gave His unique Son, Jesus Christ, as 'the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,'" Dean said, quoting John 1:29.

Then underneath the *yoh*, the bottom of each of the three words was a picture of something else unique to each Person of the Trinity, he said.

Profound meaning

The bottom portion of the character for "beauty" — or *bi* — was the *dai* character, which means "big." To Dean, that represents God the Father — the immeasurable Creator of beauty.

The bottom portion of the character for "righteousness" — or *gi* — was made up of three characters. The first, *ga*, means "I" or "me." The second, *te*, means "hand," and the third, *hoko*, is a long weapon for killing.

This had profound mean-

ing for Dean, the idea that the character for "righteousness" would be made up of a lamb paired with "me," a hand and an instrument of death.

"Christians have long noted that this portrays exactly the idea of righteousness — covered by the sacrificed Lamb," he said.

For Dean, this easily represented Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity. He saw the Holy Spirit represented by the character *zen*, which means "goodness."

"It is the word *yoh* or 'sheep' (on top) plus *gen* (on the bottom) which means 'word,' written twice," Dean said. "That represents the Holy Spirit — the communicator of the Trinity."

The Holy Spirit helps people understand the things of the Father and the Son and helps people communicate with God in prayer and praise and communicate God's Word to others, he said.

Dean decided that a great way to highlight these three Chinese characters and use them as a tool to share the gospel would be to have them imprinted on three-sided vases. And he knew just the person to do it.

Over the years he had developed a friendship with a Japanese native he knew as Mr. Eguchi, a former kamikaze pilot who had owned a big pottery business and was visited once by Helen Keller, an Alabamian who was both blind and deaf.

Keller had run her fingers over one of the vases and been so fascinated by its beauty that she asked to see it again years later.

Ministry born

Keller's reaction to the vase touched the potter so much that he decided to sell his business, buy a property formerly used to train kamikaze pilots and turn it into an institute to help people with disabili-

ties produce fine Sansai pottery.

Residents of that institute now craft what Dean calls the Trinity vase. It has been a ministry and a witness in many ways, he said, even now after he's retired.

"We pray that many Japanese, Chinese and others who have interest in Chinese writing will



Photo by Grace Thornton
The Chinese characters for (left to right) beauty, righteousness and goodness tell the story of the three Persons of the Trinity by the way the characters are formed, said Pratt Dean, a retired missionary to Japan.

hear the gospel because they understand the message the vases symbolize," said Dean, now a member of Church on the Bluff in Hoover.



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Associated Press photo

COVID-19 continues to impact India, but cases have declined dramatically since a spring surge strained the country's health care system.

India had low numbers of infections relative to its population in the early months of the pandemic, but that changed in 2021. In May alone, more than 9 million cases were confirmed and 120,042 died, according to Johns Hopkins University's Coronavirus Resource Center. Find an IMB prayer guide for India at tabonline.org/imb-prayer. (TAB Media)

Gen Z kept faith amid pandemic closures

In spite of all the upheaval from the pandemic, roughly half (47%) of respondents to a Springtide Research Institute survey said their faith stayed about the same in the crisis. Just over a quarter (26%) said their faith grew stronger and a slightly higher number (27%) said they doubted or lost their faith.

Only 10% of young people (ages 13–25) said a clergy member had checked on them. But faith communities fared better when young people were asked to consider how institutions handled the pandemic: 50% said their faith community had done “a great job navigating the pandemic,” while two-thirds (65%) said the government did not do its best to protect people. More than half (57%) said they would have a hard time trusting others. (AP/RNS)

U.S. church closures outpace openings

While the decline in new churches was expected, church planting experts were still surprised by the results of a recent Lifeway Research survey.

In 2019, approximately 3,000 Protestant churches were started in the U.S., but 4,500 churches closed. Lifeway had last analyzed these numbers in 2014 when 4,000 churches were opened and 3,700 closed.

“Over the last decade, most denominations have increased the attention they are giving to revive existing congregations that are struggling,” said Scott McConnell, executive director of Lifeway Research.

On average, 42% of those worshipping at churches launched between 2008 and 2014 previously never attended church or hadn't in many years. (Lifeway Research)

Headline news from around the Southeast

Arkansas

Six college women from the Baptist Collegiate Ministry at Arkansas State University — along with Corley Shumaker, BCM's assistant campus minister at ASU — recently participated in a missions trip to New Orleans. They joined in a ministry to vulnerable women who work the clubs as hostesses or dancers on the famed Bourbon Street, and they also ministered at Baptist Friendship House, which has served homeless, substance-addicted and abused women for 75 years, Arkansas Baptist News reported.

Florida

Lackawanna, a Jacksonville, Florida, neighborhood with a high crime rate and many homeless and drug-addicted residents, is a tough place to reach people for Christ, the Florida Baptist Witness reported. “If you feel forgotten and left out, it's difficult to believe there is a God who

cares about you,” said Tony Belle, pastor of Genesis Missionary Baptist Church. The congregation shares God's love with the community in tangible ways — food pantry, block parties, adopt-a-family program and more.

Georgia

As COVID-19 is raging in India, Georgia Baptists are stepping up to help. Working with the Good News Centre, an India-based Christian ministry, Georgia Baptists are purchasing and shipping oxygen concentrators to churches in India to help people who are being turned away at hospitals, the Christian Index reported. They also are raising funds to pay funeral expenses for pastors who have died from COVID-19.

Kentucky

Pastor Al Chandler knows there's power in the blood. He preaches it as the pastor of Northside

Baptist Church, Mayfield, Kentucky, and lives it as a blood donor every two weeks, Kentucky Today reported. One pastoral hospital visit in particular, he said, “opened my eyes to the power of plasma.” As he donates blood every two weeks, he witnesses and builds relationships with the workers in the room.

Louisiana

Six individuals made professions of faith through the evangelistic witness and ministry of disaster relief volunteers helping with cleanup in Lake Charles, Louisiana, following recent flooding. “While it's wonderful to help people get their homes cleaned out so they can rebuild, we are reminded that those homes are temporary,” Louisiana Baptist disaster relief coordinator Stan Statham told the Baptist Message. “Now, those individuals who accepted Christ are prepared for an eternal home.”

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

► **Rick Reaves** — longtime pastor of Hill Crest Baptist Church, Anniston — died April 15. He was 71.

Reaves began his ministry in 1970 as youth pastor of Antioch Baptist Church, Oxford, then in 1977 became youth minister of Moore Avenue Baptist Church, which later changed its name to Hill Crest Baptist. He served in that role for 15 years, then as senior pastor for 25 years before retiring in 2017. During his time at Hill Crest, he baptized 3,471 people.



REAVES

Reaves is survived by his wife of 51 years, Janice; son, Chris; daughter, Gina; and five grandchildren.

► **Frances Tunnell Carter** — longtime faculty member of Samford University and a riveter during World War II — died on Memorial Day, May 31. She was 99.

As a college sophomore, Carter moved from rural Mississippi to Birmingham to work on B-29 planes during WWII. In 1998, she founded the American Rosie the Riveter Association, an organization aimed at honoring the working women of the war and furthering workplace excellence and American patriotism. The organization now has more than 6,000 members.



CARTER

During her years at Samford, Carter taught education and home economics and established the early childhood education major for Samford students.

Her husband, John, was also a longtime Samford professor and former dean of the Orlean Beeson School of Education. Over the years, the Carters supported Samford in a variety of ways, including funding scholarships, sponsoring the annual Young Authors Conference and leading the International Book Project, providing thousands of books to school libraries in other countries.

Carter was preceded in death by her husband. She is survived by her son, Wayne; daughter, Nell; seven grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren.

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION



ROSENBERRY

► **Eric Rosenberry** is the new student minister at **The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham**. He has a bachelor's degree in religion from Carson-Newman University and a master's degree in Christian studies from Union University in Jackson, Tennessee. He and his wife, Dianne, have two daughters.

COOSA RIVER ASSOCIATION

► When **First Baptist Church, Sylacauga**, first asked **Larry Morrison** to come and serve as their minister of education and administration, he thought he would say no. He hadn't been serving long at the church where he was, and he didn't expect to leave.

But when he and his wife, Sallie, left the meeting, "we thought maybe God was leading us here," Morrison said. Another twist came soon though — the next night the pastor called him and let him know he was leaving the church.

"I still felt convinced this was what God wanted us to do," Morrison said of the decision they made 15 years ago.

He offered the church stability and consistency during two interim pastorates prior to Rick Patrick becoming pastor. Morrison has seen children grow up, and he's been to gravesides with a lot of families.

"It's been an amazing journey," Morrison said. "God has a lot of good things happening here."

The church will honor him as he retires at the end of the month with a celebration June 27, 2–4 p.m. at the church. His total ministry spans more than 43 years, including 15 years on staff at Five Points Baptist Church, Northport.

"It's been a real joy," Morrison said. "We've had some great friends and a wonderful season of ministry."



MORRISON

MARSHALL ASSOCIATION

► Pastor **Joel Samuels** was at the funeral of a church member's father recently, and what she

said to Samuels stuck with him. "She said, 'You baptized me, you married me, you have baptized two of my children, you've buried my mother and now you're here to bury my father. In the biggest most significant moments of my life, you've been there,'" he said.

"We just kind of looked at each other with tears in our eyes. It's humbling to get to be with people like that."

On June 13, **First Baptist Church, Guntersville**, will honor Samuels with a special service for his 25th anniversary at the church. The service will start at 10 a.m. and feature guest speakers, testimonies and special music.

Samuels said when he and his family came to First, Guntersville, in 1996, they didn't have a thought one way or another on how long they might stay there — they were just open to whatever God wanted for their future.

But over the years, it became clear to them that God wanted them to stay in Guntersville long term.

"Being a pastor of a group of people this long is very special — getting to be there with them for those milestones of life and faith," he said. "I'm thankful to get to be a part of that."



SAMUELS

TENNESSEE RIVER ASSOCIATION

► **Ron Namanny** is the new pastor of **First Baptist Church, Stevenson**. This is his second time to serve at the church. He has also served as pastor of other churches in Alabama, Tennessee and Texas. Namanny has degrees in accounting and religion. He and his wife, Pamela, have three grown children.

Persecuted church

Christian pastor beheaded in Uganda after public debate

PALLISA, Uganda — Muslim extremists are suspected in the May 3 beheading of a Christian pastor in Uganda hours after he engaged in a public debate about Christianity and Islam.

Independent Pentecostal pastor Thomas Chikooma was killed following a debate in Pallisa town, where he led 14 people — six of them Muslim — to faith in Christ.

Chikooma, father of 11 children, was a well-known evangelist who had planted 50 churches in eastern Uganda.

Area Muslims had invited him to participate in the month-long, public discussion in a Pallisa park. After he defended Christianity and led some of the people to Jesus, angry Muslims

shouted a jihadist slogan. The pastor rushed from the venue.

Following a commotion at a traffic intersection with two motorcyclists who referenced the debate, Chikooma was later found beheaded not far from his home in Komolo village.



MS photo

His tongue also had been removed, Chikooma's wife said.

Uganda's laws and constitution allow the propagation of one's faith. Muslims comprise no more than 12% of the country's total population. (MS)

Churches and taxes: Attentive adherence to guidelines a must

By Michael J. Brooks
TAB Media

New requirements from the IRS mean churches must be up-to-date and prepared to follow all guidelines.

That was the message from Lee Wright, coordinator of church compensation services at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, in a recent webinar, "Church Tax Conference for Small Churches."

"I get many questions about ministers' taxes, and so much of the confusion is because ministers are employees for federal income tax purposes and receive a W-2 each year,

but they are considered self-employed for social security (SECA) taxes," Wright said.

A minister can ask the church to withhold taxes from his salary and for a higher withholding to cover the self-employment taxes, though the church cannot directly withhold or pay FICA taxes. Wright said he also fields many questions about the ministers' housing allowance.

"The allowance can be up to 100% of salary in some cases," he said. "The average bivocational pastor in Alabama, and about half of our pastors are bivocational, makes \$19,000 and about \$1,500 in benefits.

"These pastors could claim 100% of their salary as housing allowance, though I'd recommend they receive some salary in order to participate in the Church Retirement Plan through GuideStone," an organization that provides property and casualty insurance, health insurance and retire-

ment savings for faith-based organizations, Wright said.

Quoting the advice that "everything is taxable unless the IRS code says that it isn't," Wright noted three familiar tax forms have been redesigned for 2021:

► **Form W-4** — According to the IRS, the new design uses the same information as the old design but reduces the form's complexity and increases the transparency and accuracy of the withholding system.

"The W-4 form includes the tax deductions the employee wishes to claim," Wright said. "The new standard deduction, raised to \$25,100 this

year for married couples, means that most Americans won't claim other deductions. But ministers may request federal and state withholding, or they can request no withholding and make quarterly estimated payments themselves."

► **Form 941** — Employers use Form 941 to report

income taxes, Social Security tax or Medicare tax withheld from employees' paychecks and pay the employer's portion of Social Security or Medicare tax.

The church uses Form 941 to report employee withholding, if there are more employees than the pastor, and may receive a credit for salary paid during time off caring for COVID-19 patients, according to the Family Medical Leave Act of 2020. Churches should submit quarterly tax withholdings but must do so monthly if monthly tax withholding exceeds \$2,500, Wright said.

► **Form 1099-NEC** — The church uses the 1099-NEC, rather than the traditional 1099-MISC, to report nonemployee compensation, such as payments to contract workers. Examples are evangelists or interim pastors.

Wright also noted that bonuses and love offerings must be reported as taxable income. And with the increase in the standard deduction, "the traditional package salary plan can end up costing the minister more in taxes," so revisiting the plan in light of 2021 rules is advisable.

For more information, go to alsbom.org/ccs.

SBOM will offer a number of in-person financial issues conferences in July and August.

Contact Lee Wright at 800-264-1225, ext. 241 or lwright@alsbom.org.

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PASTOR

Searching for full-time pastor. First Baptist Church Lanett. Submit resumé to: P.O. Box 365, Lanett, AL 36863 or email fbc.lanett@knology.net.

PASTOR

Forest Hills Baptist Church of Florence, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking God's choice for our next full-time pastor. We are looking for an experienced pastor with a master of divinity degree who is energetic and can focus on growing our membership while staying true to the Scriptures. After praying for God's will on your life, please send resumé to: admin@foresthillsbaptist.net.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Verben Baptist Church is currently seeking a bivocational pastor. Please send resumé to: verbenabaptist@att.net.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

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

ASSOCIATE PASTOR OF WORSHIP

First Baptist Church of Dillon, S.C., is seeking a full-time associate pastor of worship. Applicants should have at least 2 years experience leading worship and a minimum of a 4-year bachelor's degree. For further information and job description, please visit <https://www.fbcdillon.com/associatepastor>. Please send resumé to: search@fbcdillon.com.

CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP LEADER

First Baptist Madison, Ala., is seeking a part-time contemporary worship leader. For more information please go to: <https://bit.ly/3eQpu0p>.

CHILDREN'S MINISTER

First Baptist Church in Greenville, Ala., is seeking a part-time children's minister. Please send resumé to: 212 Fort Dale Rd., Greenville, AL or email to: kelly@myfbcgreenville.com.

OTHER POSITIONS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The boards of Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP) and American Character Builders are seeking a new executive director to succeed Joe Godfrey, who has announced his upcoming retirement. To apply and receive a complete job description and salary range information, send a cover letter and resumé to ALCAP.Search@gmail.com or mail to: ALCAP & ACB, 2376 Lakeside Drive, Birmingham, AL 35244. All information will be kept confidential. Applicants must be willing to submit to a background screening.

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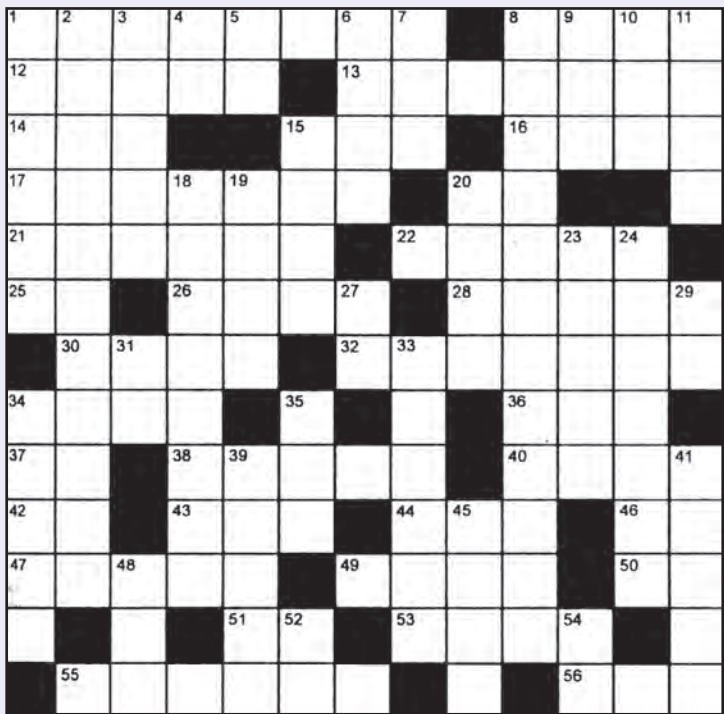
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CHRISTIAN crossword

WORD search

ACROSS

- 1. Your sins are ____.
(1 John 2:12)
- 8. Ye shall be ____
indeed. (John 8:36)
- 12. ____ to pray.
(Matt. 14:23)
- 13. I have ____ by
experience.
(Gen. 30:27)
- 14. Turnpike. (abbr.)
- 15. South-southwest.
(abbr.)
- 16. River in Switzerland.
- 17. Thin cornmeal cake.
- 20. Tennessee. (abbr.)
- 21. A weasel.
- 22. And ____ with her
suburbs.
(1 Chron. 6:75)
- 25. Right. (abbr.)
- 26. The children of ____.
(Jer. 2:16)
- 28. In the ____ of Jordan.
(Mark 1:5)
- 30. Bone from the elbow
to the wrist.
- 32. Set up our ____.
(Ps. 20:5)
- 34. One ____, a
prophetess.
(Luke 2:36)
- 36. Cable News Network.
(abbr.)
- 37. Sixteenth letter in
Greek alphabet.
- 38. They did eat ____.
(Ex. 16:35)
- 40. The name of the well
____. (Gen. 26:20)
- 42. Symbol for element
platinum.
- 43. Abraham and Sarah
were ____.
(Gen. 18:11)
- 44. The desert of ____.
(Num. 27:14)
- 46. Symbol for element
lithium.
- 47. From ____ lips.
(Ps. 120:2)
- 49. King of the ____.
(Matt. 2:2)



By Pamela Jensen Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

- 50. Symbol for element tin.
- 51. ____ of the Chaldees.
(Gen. 11:28)
- 53. There was a continual
____ given him of the
king of Babylon.
(Jer. 52:34)
- 55. With hands on the hips
and elbows bowed
outward.
- 56. Greek island.
- 18. And of sweet ____.
(Ex. 30:23)
- 19. A small buffalo of
Celebes and the
Philippines.
- 20. ____ not to the right.
(Prov. 4:27)
- 23. Frogs ... into thine
____. (Ex. 8:3)
- 24. From the ____ even to
the husk. (Num. 6:4)
- 27. Hemoglobin. (abbr.)
- 29. Royal Society. (abbr.)
- 31. Lane. (abbr.)
- 33. They were ____.
(Job 32:15)
- 34. The ____ of his eye.
(Deut. 32:10)
- 35. Abraham was old,
____ well stricken.
(Gen. 24:1)
- 39. ____ trees and
precious stones.
(2 Chron. 9:10)
- 41. Before rulers and ____.
(Mark 13:9)
- 45. Archaic: certainly,
assuredly.
- 48. I wrote them with ____.
(Jer. 36:18)
- 52. Symbol for element
rubidium.
- 54. Truck. (abbr.)

DOWN

- 1. Peace from God the
____. (2 John 3)
- 2. We have therefore ____.
(Gal. 6:10)
- 3. His sons were Ulam
and _____. (1 Chron. 7:16)
- 4. Greece. (abbr.)
- 5. ____ came to pass.
(Josh. 1:1)
- 6. There is none ____.
(Isa. 45:18)
- 7. He is a ____ creature.
(2 Cor. 5:17)
- 8. Gold and ____.
(Matt. 2:11)
- 9. Ribonucleic acid. (abbr.)
- 10. Poetic: ever.
- 11. Garden of ____.
(Gen. 2:15)
- 15. A straw beehive.

- ANGEL
- BURNING
- BUSH
- CANAANITES
- CHILDREN
- CLOTHING
- CONCERN
- DESERT
- EGYPT
- ELDERS
- EMPTY HANDED
- FLOCK
- GOLD
- GROUND
- HOLY
- HONEY
- HOREB
- I AM
- ISRAEL
- JETHRO
- KING
- MEMORIAL
- MIDIAN
- MIGHTY
- MILK
- MISERY
- MOSES
- MOUNTAIN
- PHARAOH
- PLUNDER
- RESCUE
- SACRIFICE
- SANDALS
- SIGN
- SILVER
- SPACIOUS
- TENDING
- VISION
- WILDERNESS
- WORSHIP

Z Y N X L T L L L P V M K Q W Y
W Z T I L S Z E F J Q N I K I M
N K C H A R A G S P T S N D L D
R P O L G T B N L R E P G K D E
E I N P O I N A D T E K V L E D
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I R R M E Y A I G M E S K E E H
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B R S A A T N K N Q T U U R P P
T I C R M R V M O S E S N K O M
M N A Z D X J R J V H T C D B E
Q H G O L D Y L O H I O N Q U X
P E C I F I R C A S L S Y Q R K
R R E D N U L P M F Y C I Y N S
R E D N F P Y A W J X E L O I U
V S N M Q M I K W T D G N R N O
L C C H I L D R E N L B L O G I
L U M D P M Q I S R A E L N H C
F E I R L Z T P Y G E R X C Y A
N A T N T E N D I N G O T R F P
N L A I R O M E M C R H R T T S

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CHURCH ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINES

Tuesday, June 22

State Board of Missions, Prattville
9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

This conference (formerly known as Church Policies) covers the needs and benefits of proper legal and operating documents. The process for developing Articles of Incorporation and Church Constitution bylaws, policies and procedures is examined and taught.

For questions about content, contact Jim Swedenburg, jswedenburg@alsbom.org, (334) 613-2283. To register, visit alsbom.org/events or contact Linda Hicks, lhicks@alsbom.org, (334) 613-2263.



FINANCIAL ISSUES CONFERENCES

10 a.m.-3 p.m. each day

Tuesday, July 6, State Board of Missions, Prattville

Monday, July 12, Heritage Baptist Church, Dothan

Tuesday, July 13, Mobile Baptist Association Office

Monday, July 19, Tuskegee Lee Baptist Association Office, Opelika

Monday, August 2, Calhoun Baptist Association Office, Anniston

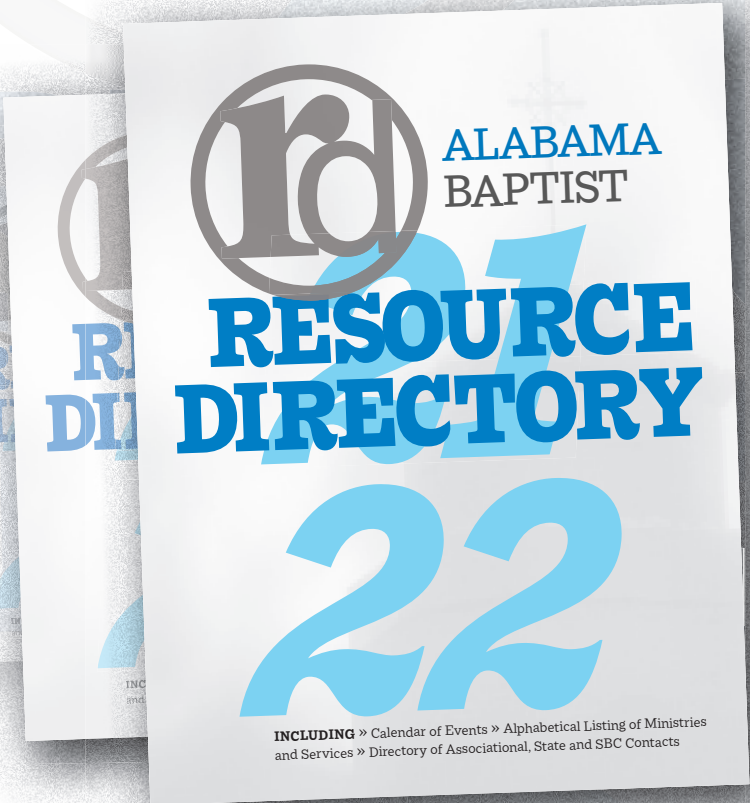
Tuesday, August 3, Huffman Baptist Church, Birmingham

Tuesday, August 10, Woodward Avenue Baptist Church, Muscle Shoals

Each Financial Issues Conference is identical and will provide an overview and opportunity for questions covering these topics: doing benevolence right, internal controls for electronic transactions, and what forms are needed when hiring a new employee. Also covered will be information about what's new concerning tax and payroll, minister compensation, housing allowance and IRS contribution rules.

For questions about content, contact Lee Wright, lwright@alsbom.org, 334-613-2241. To register, visit alsbom.org/events or contact Linda Hicks, lhicks@alsbom.org, (334) 613-2263.

THESE CONFERENCES ARE MADE POSSIBLE BY GIFTS OF ALABAMA BAPTISTS
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THIS 16-MONTH
CALENDAR

(Sept. 2021-Dec. 2022) has State Board of Missions events and emphases already printed with plenty of room for you to add your church's events. It also includes an alphabetical listing of ministries and services along with directories of associational, state and SBC contacts.

Limit 20 copies per church.

Order online at alsbom.org/rd or email your request to Rita Goldman at rgoldman@alsbom.org.

Be sure to include your name, church name, mailing address and number of guides needed up to 20.

'Double honor'

Mission:Dignity Sunday is June 27, opportunity to help pastors, widows, others in need

By Aaron Meraz
GuideStone Financial Resources

One Year. That's how long it was for retired pastor Homer Hinson and his wife, Doris, to touch each other due to COVID-19 restrictions in Homer's nursing home.

"We blew kisses through the window to each other every day," Doris said.

"Being married for 57 years, it was hard not being allowed to touch, hug or kiss him."

Homer was a pastor for almost 40 years in South Carolina, serving bivocationally for the most part.

"God always sent us to churches that were struggling, and Homer and I would give all that we

could to each one," Doris said.

After spending a few years leading a church full-time, Homer suffered two heart attacks and had to resign.

Feeling like the Lord was not done with him, he was called as pastor of a smaller church, but his health continued to decline.

"We just felt like we were going to keep going until we couldn't go anymore," Doris reminisced.

As Homer's health declined due to major surgeries, he became disabled and had to retire.

With little to retire on, Doris began reading about GuideStone's Mission:Dignity ministry.

"I called and heard the voice of an angel telling me there was help on the way,"



GuideStone Financial Resources photo

Homer and Doris Hinson don't want to take their eyes off each other after a year apart due to COVID protocols. Mission:Dignity helps the Hinsons with basic financial needs.

Doris said through tears.

Through Mission:Dignity, Southern Baptist ministers, workers and widows who are age 65 or older and qualify for financial assistance are eligible to receive between \$225 and \$600 per month, an annual Christmas Check and assistance

for emergencies (medical bills, eyeglasses, hearing aids, house repair, etc.).

With Mission:Dignity Sunday approaching June 27, churches, small groups and individuals have an opportunity to give "double honor" (1 Tim. 5:17) to Homer and Doris and more than 2,500 retirement-age pastors, workers and widows in the SBC.

GuideStone provides free bulletin inserts, promotional posters and a DVD with several brief testimonies of people assisted by Mission:Dignity. The materials are not dated and

can be used on June 27 or anytime.

Ways to give

How can churches, small groups or individuals get involved?

► Download or order free resources at MD-Sunday.org or by texting MDORDER to 41444 from a mobile device.

► Share app.mobile-cause.com/vf/MDSUNDAY to set goals, make donations and encourage friends to donate using the power of crowdfunding.

► Give directly to these recipients in need by texting MDSUNDAY to 41444.

Every dollar of each gift to Mission:Dignity refreshes people like Homer and Doris.

Upon Homer and Doris'

reunion, they hugged, kissed through their masks and held hands as they talked.

A little later,

Doris picked up her mail, and a check was there from Mission:Dignity paying for some emergency needs. Doris said with a smile, "I felt doubly blessed."

For more information visit missiondignity.org.

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For June 13

Explore the Bible

By Jay T. Robertson, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



HOPE DEFINED Job 14:1-14

At this point in the unfolding drama of Job, we see a man who was beginning to act as if God had died. His once resilient faith was weakening and wavering, and the emotional state of his soul was struggling as well.

He experienced a severe period of depression which led him into the depths of despair. It was at this time that Job turned to God in prayer.

Questions (1-6)

Speaking from his place of deep darkness, Job declared: "Anyone born of woman is short of days and full of trouble." This is a poetic way of saying everyone experiences trouble, not just the wicked. All of humanity is sinful and experiences the consequences of living in a fallen world.

Job compared the life of a man to that of a flower. Man blossoms like a flower but quickly withers as his life drains away with time. He is like a shadow that flees and does not last.

Seeing the brevity and trials faced in this life, Job asked: "Do you really take notice of one like this? Will you bring me into judgment against you?"

These two questions expect an affirmative answer.

Job believed that God had fixed His eye on him and would bring him to judgment. Faced with his inability to be sinless, Job acknowledged his corrupt condition, yet he was confused about why he was reaping such severe affliction.

In light of the sinfulness of humanity, he asked why his sins deserved such treatment.

Job reminded himself that a person's days are determined, fixed in the unchanging, eternal plan of God. Submitting to the sovereignty of God, he confessed that God had set limits that no one can exceed. His life was in God's hands.

Then Job pleaded with God to look away from him and let him rest. He thought of God as a hard-hearted taskmaster ready to whip a weary worker.

He longed for relief from God's unrelenting gaze and piercing presence.

Despair (7-12)

Job used two illustrations from nature. People are not like trees that grow back after they have been cut down. People are like water that dries up and is gone. There was more hope for a tree than for him.

If a tree is cut down, it will sprout again. Its roots may grow old, and its stump starts to die. These appearances, however, are deceitful. The tree awaits spring, and it will burst forth into new life.

The tree may appear dead, but life is still present, waiting for the right time to thrive. Job believed that a person dies and then fades away. When a person ceases to breathe, that is the end of his existence. Job expressed he had no hope that he would live after death and see himself vindicated before God.

For Job, a person's death was final. A tree had more hope after death than he did. He then compared people to water that evaporates and is no more. People lie down in death and do not rise. He had no hope of living again beyond the grave. "Until the heavens are no more" means eternally "people will not awake." Job thought of the journey to the grave as one of no return. Thankfully, this was not Job's final thought on the subject.

Hope (13-14)

Job wished that God would let him die and enjoy the safety of the grave until His present wrath was over. At least in the grave, Job thought he would find relief. Death was the only way to escape God's fury. In these verses Job seemed to question what he had just stated.

Apparently, he still had hope in God. He said: "If only you would appoint a time for me and then remember me. When a person dies, will he come back to life? If so, I would wait all the days of my struggle until my relief comes."

We see the longing of Job's heart, the possibility of life after death.

Bible Studies for Life

By Roy E. Ciampa, Ph.D., S. Louis and Ann W. Armstrong
Professor of Religion, Samford University



STEADFAST IN DIFFICULTIES Revelation 2:8-11

Jesus' words to the believers in Smyrna speak courage into their hearts of all who suffer due to their faithfulness to Christ.

We are rich in spiritual blessings because of Christ. (8-9)

John describes Jesus in terms that emphasize His power over all life and creation. He is "the first and the last" the one who "died and came to life." Since He has demonstrated that He reigns over life and death, we, like the believers in Smyrna, know we can entrust ourselves completely to His hands.

The church had experienced opposition far beyond anything that which most of us have to deal with today. People in the Roman Empire were expected to offer sacrifices to Rome and its emperors in temples established in their honor or to suffer the consequences for their failure to do so. Jews were exempted from that requirement and Christians benefited from the same exemption as long as they were perceived to be part of a Messianic movement within Judaism.

The "slander" spoken against the Christians in Smyrna was probably the accusation that the followers of Christ were not really Jews and thus were not exempt from the requirement to offer sacrifices to Rome.

When John refers to "those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan," it is likely he is turning against the believers' accusers the very accusation that had been leveled against them by other Jews.

The believers in Smyrna were feeling quite vulnerable and lacking in resources to defend themselves. Christ reminds them that regardless of how they seem in terms of usual human assessments, they are actually rich in Christ and have resources in Him that nonbelievers could not even imagine. Their Lord has power over life and death and a reign that extends beyond the confines of earthly time. The riches of grace and glory that Christ offers believers,

and the infinite blessing of His presence and fellowship, have value beyond any comparison with paltry materialistic and social riches that will not last into eternity or have eternal value.

We do not need to fear adversity. (10)

The One we serve has power that makes the weapons of our spiritual enemies (including the devil) seem laughable by comparison. Once physical death is recognized to be relatively insignificant compared to the eternal rewards in store for faithfulness to our Lord, the suffering that could otherwise instill fear no longer has any teeth.

The church will experience a limited period of tribulation, that is, of various kinds of persecution including social marginalization resulting in significant economic losses, as well as the imprisonment of some of its members and quite possibly the death of some in the church. But God's reward for obedience will always be infinitely greater than anything it might cost us.

As Paul says, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us" (Rom. 8:18).

We do not need to fear death. (11)

While they and we must be ready to face all kinds of persecution and even death, John reminds us that all who faithfully hold fast to their Christian testimony despite terrible adversity will, in the end, know life and glory with their Lord which can never fade, weaken or be taken away.

We are reminded of the truth that was stated so well by Jim Elliot, the famous Christian martyr who died in 1956 as he sought to bring the gospel to the Huaorani people of Ecuador: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose." When we turn our lives over to Christ, what we might lose will never compare to what we have gained for eternity.

MEDIA REVIEWS

By James Hammack

TAB Media

Free, low-cost tech tools help churches, teams communicate

Google Docs and Forms

Purpose: Create, edit and share online documents and forms

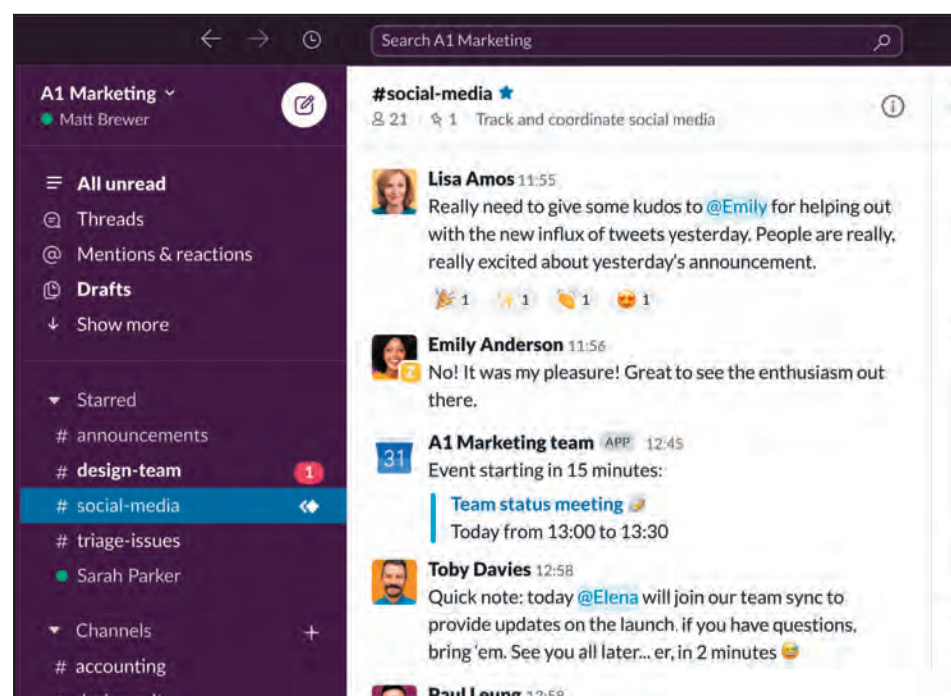
Google provides a suite of online collaborative tools for anyone with a Google email account. You also can pay for Google's business suite that includes custom email addresses that match your website. Either way, these apps have a place in church administrative efforts.

For document creation, meeting notes and even sermon writing, Google Docs is an easy option that allows cloud storage and sharing of documents. You can even invite others to join in and edit the document in real time, which is great for event planning or other collaborative efforts. You can export documents

to Microsoft Word and PDF file formats, as well as print documents directly from your computer.

The app version of Docs allows for easy editing on-the-go, though there might be a learning curve for those who are less tech savvy.

Whether you need a permission form, new visitor questionnaire or some type of survey to gather information, Google Forms offers tem-



Slack

Screenshot

plates and a user-friendly interface to create it. You can drag and drop form fields, and then email the link or text it to others for filling out.

Once submitted, the form entries can be viewed, downloaded as a spreadsheet or emailed to you depending on your preferences.

Things to consider before using Google Docs and Forms:

- ▶ Easiest to use these on desktops and tablets
- ▶ Being a cloud-based application, you'll need internet access in order to use.

Slack

Purpose:

Internal communication

Slack is a great tool for internal communication in churches, offering an alternative to text or email threads. While there are paid plans with per-user pricing, most churches can make the free version work for them. Communication in Slack can

be separated into sections or separate conversations called channels. Our church uses Slack for leadership and volunteer communication extensively this way. We have channels dedicated to sermon discussions and planning for pastors, children and youth for volunteers and teachers, as well as teams for audiovisual and other services.

The free version allows access to a certain number of messages in conversation history before it puts them behind the paywall. Other useful features include private channels that are invite-only for sensitive discussions and direct messaging between individuals.

Things to consider before using Slack:

- ▶ Assess the use for your situation to confirm whether the free version will be good long term
- ▶ Have a good game plan set in place for the use of channels in order to keep the clutter managed.

OneAppWay

Purpose: Personalized mobile app creation

OneAppWay is a newer contender in the mobile app for churches, non-profits and businesses. The platform is built on InfoMark, a proprietary system that has powered websites for several years now.

They gave me a chance to create an app so I could experience the process like a typical customer. Jesse Stallone was my main point of contact. He walked me through the steps to register and choose a template. Then they built the app. The process was super simple with clear instructions provided.

After the app structure was in place, Jesse explained the content controls and management system. He also showed me how to use the InfoMark app to make a lot of content changes from my phone.

All in all, OneAppWay is quickly making itself an easy place for churches to provide a quality service for their members.

Things to consider before using OneAppWay:

- ▶ While it has multiple ways to customize, you can't remove the OneAppWay branding from the app template.
- ▶ The price is affordable, and features are good, with nice templates.
- ▶ Support is very good.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Jesse Stallone was a guest on a recent episode of Amplify, a TAB Media podcast. Check out that episode at thealabamabaptist.org/podcast/jesse-stallone or wherever you get your favorite podcasts.



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.

'Tremendous faith'

Hawaii churches increase ministry amid devastation of COVID-19 shutdown

By Scott Barkley
Baptist Press

The front desk workers and bellboys. Food service. Concierge. Restaurant staff. Custodians. Maintenance workers and lifeguards. Surfing instructors.

Those are just a handful of the jobs lost at Hawaiian hotels and resorts since the onset of COVID-19. Other businesses feeling the damage include helicopter and fishing tours, sunset cruises and Uber and Lyft drivers. Retail businesses ground to a halt.

When COVID-19 all but put a plug into Hawaii's tourism pipeline, the state suffered like no other in the union.

Even when they could get there, travelers didn't care for the 14-day quarantine upon arrival and certainty of getting ticketed should they leave their hotel without permission.

In December 2019 daily airline passenger counts for Hawaii approached 43,000, but by late March 2020 those numbers had plummeted to below 500. That plunge put the state at Depression-era employment levels.

Push in ministry

"Nearly everyone in the community is connected to the resorts or schools," said Chris Martin, Hawaii Pacific Baptist Convention executive director, on how the economic downturn affected those areas.

However, he noted that churches continued to push in ministry and reaching others with the gospel.

"Our churches have been very active in missions locally. And while they haven't been able to engage directly with people as in the past, we've seen a tremendous increase in training and prepara-



Over the last year, Pastor Randy Pauley of Kahului Baptist Church has preached messages remotely from several areas around Maui, hoping to offer "some measure of joy," he said.

tion by churches for ministry in this day," he said.

The HPBC consists of 155 churches, 121 of them located on the Hawaiian Islands.

The rest are spread across the South Pacific Baptist Association (American Samoa and Samoa), Baptist Association of Micronesia (Guam and Saipan) and the Asia Baptist Network (Okinawa, Mainland Japan, South Korea, Thailand and the Philippines).

The physical expanse between convention churches led to an unusual timeline for adjusting to the COVID-19 shutdown. Members of the Asia Baptist Network were the first to directly experience its effects as Freedom Church, located in Seoul, suspended in-person worship in mid-February, a month before churches in Hawaii did so.

Craig Webb, assistant executive

director, had been visiting HPBC churches in Asia at that time and rushed back to Hawaii as COVID travel restrictions began taking shape.

Governmental regulations, he said, had a definite impact on how churches were allowed to gather.

"Hawaii is a more liberal state, so we've had more shutdowns. Things have opened up somewhat. Most of our churches have been able to start meeting again in person, but the recommendations to do so can be confusing. Still, we've gathered as best we can," he said.

Food distribution

In the meantime, churches ministered through outreach efforts, primarily through food distribution.

Those leading the way included Lahaina Baptist, Kahului Baptist and Waiehu Baptist churches on Maui and Life Christian Church and Central Baptist Church on Oahu.

Hawaii Chinese Baptist and Living Faith Church in Honolulu partnered to donate more than 1,000 face shields to medical workers.

Guam Christian Life Fellowship

partnered with other churches to provide weekly meals to the homeless in a park.

Pastor Jay Wright of Lahaina Baptist Church said members stepped up their ministry efforts, and the church witnessed "a tremendous increase in active volunteers."

Serving the community

"Roughly 60 percent of our church members are out of work and spending their time serving people in need throughout the community," Wright said. "Many are delivering groceries to the elderly and shut-ins and working with one of our weekly outreaches to the homeless."

"We're seeing many new relational bridges develop between our members and those disconnected from the local church."

Martin said the early experience HPBC churches in Korea had with COVID essentially gave those on the Hawaiian Islands about a month to prepare logistically for ministry during a shutdown.

Churches' responses were marked by determination to continue serving not only in their community but through fulfilling the Great Commission.

"We witnessed our pastors and church leaders exercising great faith in the ... months of the pandemic," he said.

"They embraced the uncertainty and faced the difficulties, determined to show the power of Christ to a world searching for hope."

And despite the bad economy, Martin said Cooperative Program giving in 2020 actually exceeded its budget by 3%.

Likewise, 2021 brought a promising start.

"Our churches have been incredibly faithful. Even though their primary avenues of ministry were hindered, they found new ways," he said. "They didn't throw their hands in the air and wonder what they were going to do."

"We witnessed our pastors and church leaders exercising great faith in the ... months of the pandemic."

Chris Martin, executive director of Hawaii Pacific Baptist Convention