

# The Alabama Baptist

Toll free 800-803-5201  
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October 21, 2021

Vol. 186, No. 41  
Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

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# A church FOR ALL PEOPLE

## Congregation in Alabama's poorest county experiences 'little taste of heaven'

By Grace Thornton  
TAB Media

**D**avey Lyon says for many people, Lowndes County is “just kind of forgotten. It’s rural, it’s poor, it’s between Selma and Montgomery, and people just pass right through.”

But for Lyon, it’s Jerusalem. It’s the place where he was raised and where he’s raising his family.

It’s the place where God called him into ministry, and it’s the place where he and God did business about some prejudices he grew up with.

And most of all, it’s the place where God is starting to write a new story, Lyon said.

“I’ve lived in Lowndes County my whole life. I was born and raised here, and I have seen from all angles the racial divide,” he noted.

“We see in Lowndes County very little of what Revelation 7:9 tells us heaven is like.”

### God’s calling

In the past couple of years, as racial tensions escalated across the country, Lyon and his wife, Amber, began to feel God calling them to be active participants in sharing the gospel

with people who look different.

“Our world is a broken world, and the only thing that is going to make any sense of it, the only thing that is going to bring hope of healing or (See ‘A message,’ page 10)



De’Andre Burns, youth and family pastor at Flatline Church at Chisholm in Montgomery, speaks March 27 at a block party held in White Hall by Imago Dei Church at the 45.

Photo courtesy of Davey Lyon



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**Ronnie Floyd explains resignation from SBC Executive Committee**

See story on page 17

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Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

Haley Piersol (left) enjoys a laugh with fellow TAB staff members during a luncheon held in her honor Sept. 30. After 16 years at TAB Media, Piersol will now serve the community as an emergency services dispatcher.

# TAB's client coordinator Piersol transitioning to dispatcher role

In the past 16 years, Haley Piersol has done a little bit of everything at TAB Media. If you've called the publication's office much in that time frame, it's likely you've spoken with her.

Over the years, she's worked the front desk, worked in three subscription databases, processed locals and mail lists for the weekly newspaper, deposited payments and served as an assistant to Debbie Campbell, TAB's director of communications.

And now she's leaving to serve in a different role — as a dispatcher for emergency services.

“My favorite part of TAB is my coworkers,” Piersol said.

“It is family here. I will miss all of my coworkers and our church secretaries that I have gotten to know so well over the years.”

TAB Editor-in-Chief Jennifer Davis Rash said Piersol's caring heart “flows over into her role as client coordinator.”

“Subscribers and group subscrip-

tion managers know Haley has looked out for them through the years and is always available to clarify any confusing situation,” Rash said.

As Piersol has prepared to leave, she has worked alongside Rash to make sure every part of her job is

covered by someone else so no one who interacts with TAB will be without that level of attention, Rash said.

Her final days at TAB have been “the perfect demonstration of the love, compassion and dedication she shows as both a friend and a coworker,” Rash said.

“Haley tackles problems with determination and rounds out her effort with a loving

heart and deep friendship that provides a sense of security and value for all who are fortunate enough to call her friend,” Rash said.

“We are going to miss having Haley as part of our team, but we are all super excited about her new opportunity and wish her only the best.” (Grace Thornton)

**“Haley tackles problems with determination and rounds out her effort with a loving heart and deep friendship that provides a sense of security and value for all who are fortunate enough to call her friend.”**

**Jennifer Davis Rash**  
TAB editor-in-chief

## 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

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

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

Website: www.thealabamabaptist.org

Email: news@thealabamabaptist.org

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Periodicals postage paid at Hattiesburg, Miss.

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as judged by Associated Church Press, Baptist  
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The crossword puzzle  
can be found on page 14.

# RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

**By Jennifer Davis Rash**

President and Editor-in-Chief



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@RashionalThts

## Ever feel like screaming when pressured from all sides?

**F**all Saturdays in the South are some of my all-time favorite days. Whether it be spending the day in a stadium cheering for our favorite team or curled up watching back-to-back games in the comfort of our home, I love when football is the only item on Saturday's agenda.

And even when we have to suffer those difficult game day losses, I still enjoy the overall experience.

However, one thing I've noticed is the difference of how loud I cheer when in the stadium (especially during an intense game) versus tucked away at home or at a friend's house.

You know what I mean, right? Screaming at the top of our lungs, shaking pompoms, jumping up and down and basically exhausting ourselves physically, mentally and emotionally — all totally acceptable in a stadium atmosphere, of course.

It's also common to find a similar atmosphere in some TV rooms across the state but definitely not all of them.

This got me thinking recently about all the college football and NFL stadiums that sat empty in 2020. Those empty stands also meant tens of millions of people over the course of last year's football season did not

spend their routine fall Saturdays screaming and jumping up and down for several hours.

Is it possible that without the natural stress relieving exercise of cheering at a football game, an unusually large number of people ended up with pent-up anxiety and frustrations with nowhere to go?

And could that be part of why so many people have seemed extremely angry and on edge this year?

Is it possible that as more people return to the stadiums, some of the fragile emotions will balance back out?

I know it seems a bit wacky to think about the heightened levels of anxiety and edginess this way, but some research does claim releasing stress through screaming can be helpful.

It's not the same as yelling in anger to be hurtful or ugly, but more like a pressure-release valve or like what you might do when lifting a heavy object.

Fun fact — I tried it and can document it works. Don't tell the TAB staff, but if one of them had stopped by the office a few weekends ago when I had the upstairs to myself, they might have been frightened.

Pressure is normally my friend and helps me prioritize, but that

particular day it tipped the scale beyond what I thought I could handle — but only for a few minutes.

Once the "last straw" entered the scene, the scream came out at the top of my lungs and I discovered those years of breath-control training for band immediately sprang into action.

I've still got it, y'all — holding that scream for what seemed like two minutes (while probably only 10 seconds) absolutely evened me back out. I was then able to calmly tackle all items needing attention that day.

So, would a few screams at the top of our lungs serve as the

pressure-release valve we all need from time to time? And if so, what options do we have for spaces to scream and not cause concern or embarrassment? Do we need to purchase one of those foam boxes made for screaming exercises? Could we hide out in our vehicle?

And while strategic screaming may not be for you, I would encourage you to find some type of exercise to help when the pressure piles on and life seems out of control.

The ability to remain steady in the midst of intense stress prevents saying hurtful things we don't mean and adding extra frustration to our day.

## Word of appreciation to our church and associational partners from Haley

**H**elping care for our church and associational partners has been such a special part of my 16 and a half years at The Alabama Baptist and TAB Media.

I have enjoyed my time here and have made lifelong friendships with my co-workers as well as those of you partnering with us through subscriptions and local editions.

It's amazing how many of you I have gotten to know person-

ally, and I want you all to know that I don't take any of that for granted.

I worked hard to make sure you will be covered with the same attention you've always had. You are important to our entire team, and I'm going to miss you.

The relationships made through TAB Media are what has made this job

so great for me.

—Haley Piersol



PIERSOL

# Your Voice



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

## Responses to 'Will unbelievers blame Christians for virus spread?'

**EDITOR'S NOTE** — We received several responses to Dr. Bob Cosby's opinion printed in the Sept. 23 Your Voice section, "Will unbelievers blame Christians for virus spread?" Those who disagreed with Cosby expressed concerns about COVID-19 vaccine safety and how medical research was conducted, as well as concerns about not gathering as believers and government mandates in general. Here are excerpts from those responses.

The world is going to hate and blame Christians no matter what, even as they blamed Christians when Nero burned Rome. The Roman Empire justified the persecution of Christianity right up through the mid-third century by making false claims against believers.

Neither is the refusal to follow the government's laws when they conflict with our conscience or God's moral law foreign to Scripture. Indeed, we are expected to follow both our conscience and God's law above that of man's immorality or ungodly edicts, even as Daniel (Dan. 6:6–28), Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Dan. 3:8–30), and Peter and the other apostles (Acts 5:29), refused to obey such rules.

**Desmond Allen  
Opelika, Ala.**

We are to stand against injustice. If the world blames me for the pandemic, they are wrong, not me. I

will not give up church or singing for the government or non-Christians.

**Lana Meadows  
Jackson, Ala.**

First, I will say that I have had both COVID shots. But it seems to me that the author is not taking into consideration in any way the people who for whatever health reason feel they should not at this time take the "shots" or those people with natural immunity.

His comments, "It is unwise to promote congregating in church buildings simply to socialize and fill pews" may be the reason he goes to church, but not me.

My church did worship online for a few months, but soon we realized we needed to be together and began worshipping in person. I believe we should obey God "above governmental authorities."

So while I am "fully vaccinated" as they say, I believe everyone should be able to make his own decision without blame or ridicule.

**Susan Pate  
Gordo, Ala.**

Many in the modern church have a poor view of the physical gathering of the church. Having church in person isn't simply socializing and filling pews, it's a command of God. It is impossible to be doing life together unless we are actually together.

Watching from home is not the

answer, only a short-term solution. Cosby suggests we "get vaccinated, wear masks and meet virtually," all reasoned on "scripturally submitting ourselves to every authority by following the recommendations of our God-given leaders."

This sort of an understanding is narrow, binds consciences without direct biblical teaching, puts the impetus on Christians to appease the world in this way so as to avoid them hating us and removes the ability from Christians to follow other commands like missionary work and evangelism.

Such an understanding undermines the gospel, gospel efforts and commands given to the church.

Such arguments basically say we should not do what God has clearly said for an undefined period (When will COVID-19 be gone? Health officials say that it won't be.).

And when we meet together (remembering that online meetings are not actually meeting together), we are giving the world an opportunity to hate us and blame us and persecute us.

My immediate problem with that is a question: why is worldly America still OK with the church here at all? Jesus says faithful followers will be hated by the world. What those who argue such things are afraid of is the very thing Jesus said will happen to His faithful followers. This seems then like a poor motivation for any decision.

Some have asserted the only

reason the government hasn't mandated vaccines and masks and prohibited gathering physically is fear of man. But isn't that the whole reason for Cosby's argument that we should be censoring ourselves?

I do think wearing masks when out in public is a loving alternative to vaccines, but when assembling together, we have the freedom to choose whether we wear a mask based on each other's comfort with the situation. So what seems best is a constant, loving conversation among the church about mask wearing. But to push the idea being injected with something is obedience to God? We'll need a "book, chapter, verse" for that strong of an assertion.

And even if the world does blame us, is it a justified blame? There is no evidence in the Bible linking potentially exposing another to sickness as an unloving or sinful action. We are not blameworthy for accidentally infecting someone with something we don't know we have. Deaths from COVID-19 are tragic. Death also reflects the consequences of the fall and our motivation for evangelism.

But does it make us worthy of blame? No, it doesn't.

If someone knew he were sick and came to church anyway, that would be unloving at the very least. It wouldn't reflect the careful heart of Jesus. But in our kingdom of redemption, it would still be forgivable. Cosby's reasoning and counsel are more reflective of fear and cancel-culture than that of trust, wisdom and redemption in Jesus.

**James Hammack  
Prattville, Ala.**

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“Apart from submission to God, suffering is meaningless.”

MORRIS MURRAY JR.

*Jasper, Ala.*

The decision for hope rests on what we believe at the deepest levels — what our most basic convictions are about the world and about God and about the future. We choose hope, not as a naive wish, but as a choice with our eyes wide open to the reality of the world and our responsibility to be at work in it.

**Diana Garland, author**  
“Why I Am a Social Worker”

My dear friends ... lost, blinded, hurting people all around us could care less about our theological debates or stances.

They do not care a thing about our creeds or credentials. They do not care about what version of the Bible you use because it does

not matter the version if you are not sharing it with them. They do not care about our meetings, but whether or not we will do ministry.

What they need from us is not more denominational strategies, but real devotion to the Savior. It is time to work while it is still day because darkness is setting in!

**Clay Hallmark, senior pastor**  
**First Baptist Church**  
**Lexington, Tenn.**

October is Pastor Appreciation Month. I have been a Christian for over 35 years. I've been blessed to be in ministry for over 25 years now. Over these years, the Lord has been good to place some godly men in my life who have influenced me. There's no way I could possibly

thank them all, but over the next several days, I will make an attempt to publicly acknowledge many of these men who God has used greatly in my life and ministry.

**Pastor Andy Frazier**  
**Grace Baptist Church**  
**Sumiton, Ala.**

Got a phone message today that was simple but powerful:

“Hey bro, ... I'm proud of you, and I love you.”

I'll say this. Sometimes you just need some people in your corner that believe in you. No matter how small it may seem, a little encouragement goes a long way.

**Pastor Jarman Leatherwood**  
**House of Hope and Restoration**  
**Huntsville, Ala.**

## Equipping high school seniors

The college campus is one of the most strategic missions fields in the world. As Bill Bright said, “If we can reach the campus, we can reach the world.”

Thousands come and gather together in college towns all across the nation every single fall. This movement presents one of the greatest opportunities in the world to reach, disciple and send college graduates to the ends of the earth. It is a big deal.

Therefore, youth ministry matters. And the decisions a leader makes in the final chapter of high school ministry can alter the trajectory of how incoming college freshmen approach their campus.

Instead of fumbling over the finish line, it is essential a leader finishes strong in his equipping of a student for this new season of life.

College campuses do not need incoming freshmen who have merely come in contact with the Word. They need students for whom the Word lives inside of them (John 15:7).

Commit to discipling students in your church. Do whatever it takes to see that they mature as fully devoted followers of Jesus who not only hear the Word but do the Word (James 1:22).

One of the biggest challenges incoming freshmen face is connecting with a local church in their college town. Equip your students to find a gospel-centered, Bible-believing, missional church.

What if instead of senior recognition, we had sending recognition: a celebration as students took a step of obedience into a missions field of engaging people far from Jesus with the gospel?

We are saved to be sent. Therefore, send those seniors.

**Pastor Ethan McCreary**  
**The Well Church**  
**Huntsville, Ala.**

## From the *Twitterverse*

### @macbrunson

Pastors, does your desk transform into an altar when you sit down behind it? That will make a huge difference when you stand up in the pulpit.

### @EdLitton

Pray and give some thought today as to how you might encourage your pastor ... Faithfulness does not attract a lot of attention, so let it attract yours and express your gratitude. #PastorAppreciationMonth

### @jontyner

Faith has 3 distinct stages: The faith that reckons; The faith that rests; The faith that risks.  
—Leonard Ravenhill

### @jeffredding

The more time passes, the more thankful I am that because of Jesus, the greatest memories we'll ever have of times with loved ones at

home now in heaven — have yet to be made. #SeeYouSoon becomes #WelcomeHome #Heaven

### @LysaTerKeurst

Trying to maintain control in situations I face makes me feel like I'm trusting God when, in reality, I'm just counting on Him to the level that He comes through for me. Let's rest in the knowledge that the One who brings about good is actively working on our behalf right now.

### @davidcofield

The cumulative effect of too much information — so easily and constantly accessible to us — creates a burden that our minds and souls were not created to bear.  
—Brett McCracken

### @MattSmethurst

Satan loves sowing seeds of suspicion. Do you make his job easier?

Or do you assume the best of those with whom you'll live forever? Which more energizes you: edifying people or exposing people?

One way we can fight worldliness is by not acting like the world.

### @ronniep

New day. New mercies. Same God of steadfast love and faithfulness.

### @PastorJFC

Without a strategy for saying no, you default to yes, and your life vaporizes with other people's priorities being realized rather than yours. @cnieuwhof

### @DustinBenge

The problem is never Scripture but our unwilling hearts to believe what Scripture clearly teaches.

### @ArtRainer

Our first place of generosity should be our local church.

# 3 stories you should know



AP photo courtesy of Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

Archaeologists believe they have discovered the foundation of the original building of First Baptist Church Williamsburg, Virginia, one of the nation's oldest black churches. Tax records indicate the congregation was worshipping on the site by 1818 in a building called the Baptist Meeting House, which was likely the congregation's first permanent home after members moved from a brush arbor begun in 1776 by enslaved and free blacks. (AP)

## *Decline in religious terrorism, Pew reports*

Religion-related terrorism decreased globally in 2019, but government restrictions on religion remain at historic highs, Pew Research reports.

Pew's 12th annual study of global restrictions on religion, which examines 198 countries, found 43 countries had "high" or "very high" levels of social hostilities related to religion in 2019, down from 53 countries in 2018.

However, government harassment against religious groups and government interference in worship increased in 2019.

In total, 180 countries had at least one reported incident of government harassment or interference in worship in 2019 — more than in any other year since the study began in 2007, Pew reported.

(TAB Media)

## *Members of Committee on Cooperation named*

A five-member Committee on Cooperation has been named to act as a liaison between the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, the Sexual Abuse Task Force and Guidepost Solutions during the investigation of possible mishandling of reports of sexual abuse in the SBC.

Per the Guidepost contract agreed upon by EC members Oct. 5, the committee will be led by SBC President Ed Litton, who will also serve as a member.

EC chairman Rolland Slade named EC members John Batts and Nancy Spalding to serve. The Task Force named pastors Mike Keahbone and Chris Dupree to serve, according to Task Force vice chairman Marshall Blalock.

Read the full story at [tabonline.org/cooperation](http://tabonline.org/cooperation). (Baptist Press)

## Persecuted church

### *Police in India arrest Christians for comforting bereaved Hindu*

PHOOLPUR, India — Three Christians were jailed in India on Aug. 3 after two of them were attacked for comforting a bereaved Hindu man.

Two pastors, Neel Durai and Vijay Kumar Patel, along with Patel's wife, Kiran Devi, had gone to the home of Lalji Vishwakarma, a Hindu, to pray for him and his granddaughters — his wife, son and daughter-in-law had recently died of COVID-19.

A nearby shopkeeper heard the prayer and brought a mob to Vishwakarma's home. About 20 Hindu extremists entered and others surrounded the house. The extremists beat the two pastors and Vishwakarma and threatened to kill them.

Under pressure from villagers, Phoolpur police arrested the Christians on charges of forced conversions and other crimes. The next day people gathered at the police station to protest

against the Christians. On Aug. 5, a judge rejected bail for the three. Alliance Defending



MS photo

Freedom India said 28 incidents of hostility against Christians in Uttar Pradesh state have occurred already this year.

India is No. 10 on

Open Doors' 2021 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian. (MS)

### *Soldiers in Myanmar kill pastor, cut off his finger to steal ring*

THANTLANG, Myanmar — Soldiers in Myanmar's military shot and killed a Baptist pastor who was trying to help put out a fire caused by an artillery attack, according to a Barnabas Fund report.

The Tatmadaw soldiers' Sept. 18 artillery attack is part of an intensifying conflict in Chin State, which is predominantly Christian. As many as 19 homes were destroyed, stated Barnabas Fund.

Cung Biak Hum, 31, was shot and killed on his motorcycle heading toward the blaze. Barnabas Fund stated soldiers also reportedly cut off his finger to steal his wedding ring.

Four days earlier, Tatmadaw artillery hit a Thantlang church. Early in September, all of Taal village in Chin State fled after soldiers ransacked houses, destroyed valuables, Bibles and hymn books and killed animals, Barnabas Fund reported.

The ongoing violence in Chin State has displaced thousands, with some taking refuge in neighboring India. Tatmadaw soldiers have persecuted Christians in Chin State for years, stated Barnabas Fund.

Myanmar is No. 18 on Open Doors' 2021 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian. (TAB Media)

# Alabama news

## AUTAUGA ASSOCIATION

▶ **Calvary Baptist Church, Prattville**, is hosting Trunk or Treat on Oct. 31, 3–6 p.m.

## BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

▶ **James “Jim” Auchmuty** said he never would’ve expected he would get to spend two decades at **First Baptist Church Roebuck Plaza, Birmingham**. He had already retired after 27 years as pastor of Shades Crest Baptist Church and was named pastor emeritus.

But, Auchmuty said, he’s “delighted” God gave him the opportunity to come out of retirement and spend 20 more years as pastor. He celebrated that milestone earlier this year.

Auchmuty, who is in his 75th year of ministry, has also served in part-time and volunteer roles over the years as an industrial chaplain, fire chaplain and director of a funeral ministry that provides preachers and pallbearers to local funeral homes. He has also taught courses at Samford University and written two books. He said he is thankful for the small congregation at FBC and how they have continued to serve and give faithfully.

“The people have been mighty faithful, and we have fared unbelievably well during the COVID pandemic,” Auchmuty said.

▶ On Oct. 24, 1971, **Herman Pair** was ordained to the gospel ministry at Henagar Baptist Church. This Oct. 24 — which also falls on a Sunday — Pair, who currently serves as minister to senior adults at **Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham**, will celebrate 50 years of full-time ministry.

Pair has served in many staff positions through the years and has been the pastor of churches across Alabama. In the late 1980s, he and his wife, Linda, were appointed by the Home Mission Board (now North American Mission Board) as church planters to St. Paul, Minnesota. In 1988, he took his first international missions trip. Trips to Romania and Ukraine soon followed.

Pair also served as a trustee of the International Mission Board for eight years, during which time he visited South America and the Pacific Rim. He also made 17 trips to work with the International Bible Institute in Nairobi, Kenya, training village pastors in preaching, evangelism and administrative skills.

## CONECUH ASSOCIATION

▶ **Olive Branch Baptist Church, Evergreen**, celebrated its 200th anniversary Sept. 3 and was

surprised when its founding pastor Alexander Travis — portrayed by church member Dalton Campbell — came walking down the aisle in a top hat and carrying saddle bags.

Campbell and longtime member Eugenia Brown gave a historical presentation of Travis’ life and ministry, as well as the church’s ministry, including history with the state Baptist newspaper. “The Alabama Baptist was put in the church budget in 1947, and to this day Olive Branch Baptist Church continues to provide it for members,” Brown said.

Also during the service, Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, preached, and Lonette Berg (right), executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented Pastor Herbert Brown (left) with a plaque for the church. Former member Lonny Finley shared hymns, including “On Jordan’s Stormy Banks” and “I Am a Pilgrim.”



Photo courtesy of Lonette Berg

## SAND MOUNTAIN ASSOCIATION

▶ **Dutton Baptist Church** is hosting its 100th anniversary Oct. 24 at 10 a.m. with four former pastors. Terry Robertson, a former member and executive director/treasurer of Baptist Convention of New York, will be in attendance as will two associational missionaries. The Tigue family plan to sing. Shannon Brewster is the pastor.

## SULPHUR SPRINGS ASSOCIATION

▶ **New Temple Baptist Church, Dora**, will host a grand opening/ribbon cutting Oct. 31, 4 p.m., for its Life Center located on Manning Road, just before the church’s Fall Festival.

## OBITUARIES

▶ **Anneli Valtonen Dotson**, former Southern Baptist missionary to Zimbabwe and Namibia, died Oct. 4. She was 92.

Dotson was born in Finland and felt a missions call on her life from a young age. She became a registered nurse and a midwife, and in 1960, she boarded a ship and headed to her first missionary posting to Namibia in the Kalahari Desert.

A few years later, she married Clyde Dotson — a native of Florence — and joined him in his Baptist missionary work in Rhodesia (now called Zimbabwe).

During her missionary career, she served alongside her husband, ministering through medical clinics and evangelism. She was fluent in multiple

languages and served tirelessly to show the love of Christ to the people of Rhodesia.

Although Dotson had to leave the missions field in 1971, she never relinquished her missionary calling. She actively promoted missions in both Finland and the U.S. and faithfully spoke about Jesus wherever she went. For as long as she was able, she served at Grace Baptist Church, Oxford, and was actively involved in Woman’s Missionary Union.

Dotson was preceded in death by her husband; stepdaughters, Lolete and Margaret; and stepson, John. She is survived by her stepdaughters, Ruth, Betty, Grace and Joy; 19 grandchildren; 34 great-grandchildren; and six great-great-grandchildren.

▶ **Charles Freeman**, 70, longtime pastor of **Hillwood Baptist Church, Huntsville**, died Oct. 12. A native of Bessemer, he accepted Christ at age 9 and went on to study at the University of Montevallo, New Orleans Seminary and Andersonville Baptist Seminary, Camilla, Georgia.

Freeman served as minister of music/students at Shady Grove Baptist Church, Bessemer, from 1971 to 1973, then served as pastor of Ruth Baptist Church in Mississippi while he was in seminary in New Orleans.

After that, he served as associate pastor of education and youth at Mount Hebron West Baptist Church, Elmore; as pastor of Camellia Baptist Church, Prattville; and as pastor of First Baptist Church Atmore. He went to serve at Hillwood in 1987.

Freeman is survived by his wife of 48 years, Paula; daughter, Keri; son, David; and four grandchildren.

▶ **James E. Messer Sr.**, a pastor and evangelist for more than 50 years, died Oct. 6. He was 76.

A Mississippi native, Messer served for more than 20 years as pastor of churches in Mississippi and Louisiana and two in Alabama — First Baptist Church Creola, and First Baptist Church St. Elmo. He then served as a full-time evangelist for 34 years, preaching more than 1,000 revivals

across the U.S. and two countries — India and Germany. His ministry, James E. Messer Ministries, also sponsored Bible conferences throughout the Southeast. He also served as president of the Alabama Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists. Messer graduated from William Carey College (now University), Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

He is survived by his wife of 54 years, Toby; sons, Jimmy and Chris; daughter, Amanda; and seven grandchildren.



AUCHMUTY



PAIR



DOTSON



MESSER

# Headline news

## from around the Southeast

### FLORIDA

Once a thriving church, Moultrie Baptist Church in St. Augustine was in decline in 2018, the Florida Baptist Witness reported. At that



Florida Baptist Witness photo

time the church called Johnny Weldon to serve as interim pastor; he soon discovered church members thought the church's best days were over.

Weldon accepted an offer to become pastor, knowing remaining members "would have to long for change within themselves and within the church [and] believe that was what God wanted." When the pandemic began in 2020, the church realized it had an opportunity to make a difference in the community.

The church launched outdoor and online services and adopted a new tagline: "Together we make a difference." "Moultrie is a God story," said the pastor. "He is getting hold of members' hearts, and they now want to see themselves as a missions center in their community."

### GEORGIA

Legacy Baptist Church in Dallas recently hosted an old-fashioned hoedown to reach its community with the gospel in a nonthreatening way, the Christian Index reported. The fall festival is designed

to be an alternative family event with a non-Halloween theme. It's a huge undertaking for the church, requiring more than 75 volunteers to staff the food booths, games, hayrides and more.



Christian Index photo

The church's women's ministry organizes the annual event, which has been held every year since 2011 with the exception of last year when it was canceled due to COVID-19 restrictions. "It's an opportunity to love on the community," said Rhonda Yearwood, who leads Legacy's women's ministry.

"Families who might not come to the church for a sermon will come for the hoedown," she said. Each hayride includes a fall-themed presentation of the gospel, using an illuminated pumpkin to illustrate how Christ fills Christians with an inner light after cleansing them of sin.

### KENTUCKY

In a world where stress and anxiety have become prevalent in teens and adults, Southside Baptist Church in Princeton is staging a Judgement House drama titled "I'm Fine" that follows a young girl struggling with anxiety caused by the pandemic. The anxiety affects her academic, social and family life.

The walk-through drama will be held in the church's new Life Action Center, allowing for an accessible experience for those with disabilities. "The drama presents the gospel as it shows people making — or failing to make — a decision that will determine their eternal destiny," reported Kentucky



Kentucky Today photo

Today. Pastor Kyle Noffsinger explained, "[The gospel] is the sole reason we do this — we are not actors. ... We have volunteers who have found an effective way to share the gospel."

### MISSISSIPPI

Back Bay Church in St. Martin recently became the first known Southern Baptist church to allow members to use cryptocurrency as a giving method, reported The Baptist Record. Pastor Adam Bennett was inspired after conversations with different church members.

"I did some research and found that the Salvation Army accepts it. I looked into their platform and ended up deciding to use a different one for us."

Bennett believes as interest grows, cryptocurrency could be the future. He notes Back Bay is moving forward cautiously and encourages others to do research before diving in. The plan is to use cryptocurrency assets to provide financial assistance for missionaries in financially unstable countries.

"If someone wanted to donate to our church like [he] would with a parcel of land, [he] can. Then we can sell it and use that money for the mission of God," said Bennett.



Baptist Record photo

### NORTH CAROLINA

Allan Blume has been named interim editor of

North Carolina's Biblical Recorder. Blume previously served as executive editor and president of the Recorder for eight years, retiring on May 31, 2019. Prior to serving as editor, Blume was a pastor for more than 35 years in Texas, Oklahoma and North Carolina.



BLUME

He also served a three-year term as president of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina's board of directors and one term as president of the North Carolina Pastors' Conference.

In a written statement, the Biblical Recorder's board of directors said, "Blume's ministry among North Carolina Baptists as a pastor and past editor of the [Recorder] makes him the ideal transitional leader for the organization."

In his part-time interim role, Blume is filling a vacancy left by Seth Brown, who served first as content editor (2015–2019) and then as executive editor and president (2019–2021) of the Biblical Recorder.

In September, Brown joined the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina staff as director of the new convention relations group.

### SOUTH CAROLINA

"The church is not a building ... that can be destroyed," Pastor Marty Middleton reminded members of Fort Johnson Baptist Church in a Facebook video on Sept. 9 after a fire in the steeple destroyed the sanctuary and damaged the Charleston church's educational space, reported the Baptist Courier. Middleton recalls hearing a huge lightning strike Sept. 8, and he went looking for damage.

When he didn't find anything, he and the students who were at the church went home. The next morning, the first person to raise alarm was the child of one of the church's preschool teachers.

"He came to his mom and said, 'Hey, it smells like there's a cookout here,'" Middleton explained.

Everyone was able to evacuate the building before anyone was injured. The family life center wasn't damaged, so Sunday services are in the gym.

"We worship a great God who can do some great things even through this disaster," Middleton encouraged his congregation.



Courier photo

# Nominees announced for state convention officers

By **Jennifer Davis Rash**  
TAB Media

Among business items to be conducted during the upcoming Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting is electing a new slate of convention officers.

Elections will take place on the second day of the Nov. 16–17 meeting at Whitesburg Baptist Church in Huntsville.

Nominees announced so far are Buddy Champion for president, Morgan Bailey for first vice president and Jarman Leatherwood for second vice president.

**Nominee for president — Buddy Champion**

Champion, pastor of First Baptist Church Trussville since 2006, will be nominated by Blake Kersey, pastor of First Baptist Church Decatur.

“It is a distinct honor and privilege to be able to nominate my mentor and one of my heroes in the faith for president of the state convention,” Kersey said. “Buddy is an example of an authentic, genuine leader who consistently puts the needs of others in front of his own. He is

humble, kind, generous and a true visionary.

“I had the privilege of serving under Buddy for almost eight years, and I can honestly say that most of what I have learned, I learned from watching him closely,” Kersey added. “I hope to one day be the husband, father and pastor that Buddy Champion is today.”

## Ministry and service

Champion said he sees the opportunity to serve as president as a ministry and a service. “I have an understanding of what it’s like to pastor in many different areas and types of churches,” he said, noting he previously served in Decatur and before that in a rural church outside of Selma.

“I think Alabama Baptists have done a great job staying focused on the Great Commission, evangelism and making disciples,” he said.

“Hopefully we can maintain that culture ... and be known for our love. By loving God with all our heart and loving one another, we can display that to a lost community and others ... and show that even in spite of our differences,

we can love one another.”

Champion is concluding his third year as first vice president of the state convention and served as second vice president for two years prior to that. He and his wife, Lynn, have four children.

**Nominee for first vice president — Morgan Bailey**

Bailey, pastor of Macedonia Baptist Church in Ranburne since 2019, will be nominated by evangelist Scott Dawson.

“Morgan Bailey is a faithful husband, godly dad, incredible preacher and a real leader for Alabama Baptists,” Dawson said. “He will seek unity among the churches and continue to burn the embers of evangelism for our denomination.

“I’ve known Morgan for over 25 years, and he has been a friend, adviser and a constant encourager for me, my family and the ministry I lead. This isn’t a political position for him. This is another platform to serve the body of Christ. We need more men like Morgan Bailey to lead Alabama Baptists. I am thrilled to nominate him.”

Bailey is concluding his third year as second vice

president of the state convention and previously served as chairman of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. He also previously served as pastor of Canaan Baptist Church in Bessemer for 13 years. He and his

wife, Ritta, have two children.

**Nominee for second vice president — Jarman Leatherwood**

Leatherwood, founding pastor of House of Hope and Restoration in Huntsville, will be

nominated by Craig Carlisle, director of missions for Etowah Baptist Association.

## ‘Influential leader’

“Jarman is a man of influence and a trusted adviser for many pastors and especially church planters in the state of Alabama,” Carlisle said. “He’s also an influential leader in the city of Huntsville. Key leaders in the community call on him ... and his church does an incredible amount of community ministry. He’s always seeking wisdom and what to do to make the right and proper decisions. And while he’s not afraid to ask questions, he’s a humble guy. “Jarman is a faithful, loyal Alabama Baptist who is proud to be part of the convention and is a supporter of the Cooperative Program and Madison Association,” Carlisle added.

“He’s more than qualified

to be a leader in our state convention.”

Leatherwood partnered with Madison Association and the SBOM to plant House of Hope and Restoration in 2014 and is vice moderator of the association. He also has served with Etowah Association for the past year in a part-time congregational wellness strategist/catalyst role. He and his wife Camillus have three children.

**EDITOR’S NOTE — State convention officers are elected for one-year terms and traditionally only serve two back-to-back terms. Champion and Bailey served a third term in their previous officer positions because the business portion of the 2020 annual meeting could not be held due to the COVID-19 pandemic. All elected positions from the 2019 annual meeting remained in place through 2020 and until the upcoming 2021 meeting. Also included in officer elections are recording secretary and statistical/registration secretary, which do not have term limits. Billie Davis currently serves**

**as recording secretary and Bobby DuBois was the most recent statistical/registration secretary but has since retired from his role as associate executive director of the SBOM. Mike Jackson, who is now associate executive director, will be in an acting role for the upcoming annual meeting.**



CHAMPION



BAILEY



LEATHERWOOD



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# A message THAT NEEDS SHARING

## Church planter takes leap of faith to serve in his ‘Jerusalem’

(continued from page 1)  
any healing at all, is Jesus,” Lyon said.

So he prayed and began to explore what God might be asking them to do. From 2017 until early 2020, he’d been pastor of a small church in the county seat of Hayneville and working for the Alabama Department of Transportation.

He stepped away from the church to finish seminary, but God made it clear he was to stay in Lowndes County and take extension classes.

### Starting a church

The fact that Lyon felt led to stay guided his prayers.

It wasn’t long before the focus of

the new calling began to sharpen: to start a church for all people.

In July 2020, he and his family started going to the old Piggly Wiggly building in White Hall, a town of fewer than 1,000, and praying there. Lyon didn’t know where to begin, but he knew God would guide him.

Through a variety of connections, Lyon was put in touch with Neal Hughes, Montgomery Baptist Association director of missions. He met with Hughes, who began pulling together resources, including connecting him with the office of church planting

at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

Hughes also introduced Lyon to Dewayne Rembert, lead pastor of Flatline Church at Chisholm in Montgomery.

The two became fast friends and began meeting once a week for Rembert to mentor Lyon.

“I’ve been working with him to teach him urban and rural culture from the African-American perspective,” Rembert said.

That cultural perspective is important for understanding, but most of all, Rembert told Lyon not to change who he is — just show

people he loves them, that he’s genuine, and that God loves them.

That’s exactly what Lyon wants to do. Early on he started building relationships with local leadership in White Hall. In November 2020, with the help of his home church, Benton Baptist, and Montgomery Association, Lyon started organizing food distributions and praying with people in the old Piggly Wiggly parking lot.

He’s also thrown a couple of block parties for local residents. Lyon “has won the respect of that community already,” Rembert noted.

Rembert has experience with what it’s like to plant a church in an impoverished area. He also has a grasp on what Lyon’s home county is like. “When I first came to Montgomery back in 1995, I was warned not to mess with girls from the 45 (‘four-five’),” Rembert said, noting the nickname came from the number for Lowndes County on area license plates. “Those guys in the 45, they would get you when it came to their girls. That’s a cultural thing in the African-American community — they’re very territorial.”

### Through God’s eyes

And the residents of the county also struggle with entrenched poverty and racial tension that’s been there for generations, Rembert noted. None of it makes church planting easy.

But with the needs in mind, Lyon began praying about what the church should look like, and kept coming back to Genesis 1:26–27, which says God made man and woman in His image.

“The Lord began to tell us that people wouldn’t treat each other the way they do if they understood that everyone was made in His image,” Lyon said.

For more information, visit *Imago Dei Church* at the 45’s Facebook page.



Photo courtesy of Davey Lyon

Volunteers serve lunch at a block party held by Imago Dei Church at the 45. The block parties have been a joint effort of people in the community and volunteers from Benton Baptist Church, Flatline Church at Chisholm and Montgomery Baptist Association.



Photo courtesy of Davey Lyon

Amber Lyon and other volunteers load bags of food into cars during a community food distribution at Imago Dei Church at the 45.

“Because we are made in His image, we have value in and of being His creation. We felt like that was a message God wanted us to share.

“So our prayer would be that we would see a church in Lowndes County that would look like heaven. We want to see people as God sees them, so that we can love them like God loves them.”

Lyon came up with the name Imago Dei Church at the 45 — imago dei, Latin for “the image of God,” and “the 45” to represent the local community.

Rembert said for Lyon to put the 45 in there “already shows them he is being intentional about understanding their culture.”

In January, Lyon felt like it was time to begin leading a Bible study but didn’t know where to do it.

The State Board of Missions provided two trailers, and as Lyon and others prayed about where to put them, they felt led to pray specifically for the old Piggly Wiggly building.

Hughes felt the large building could be split up and also used for other ministries, like a food bank, job readiness training, financial literacy classes and counseling.

“Another part could be the church running a community ministry like food for senior adults at lunchtime, Celebrate Recovery (an addiction recovery program) at night, and maybe we could build a place where we could house people

who could come and help more in the Black Belt [region of Alabama],” Hughes said.

They keep dreaming, and “God keeps showing up,” he added.

Lyon built a relationship with the owner of the Piggly Wiggly building, who offered to rent it to them at a “cost recovery” price.

“All of what is happening there is gospel-centered, all of it is meeting a physical need with

the intent of sharing the gospel and planting physical seeds,” Lyon said.

### Intentional conversations

As he’s distributed food and had conversations, very few have heard the gospel message.

“I would say in the last six months, if I’ve talked to 100 people about the gospel, there’s been one person I felt like could clearly articulate the gospel in a way I felt confident [he was] saved and could

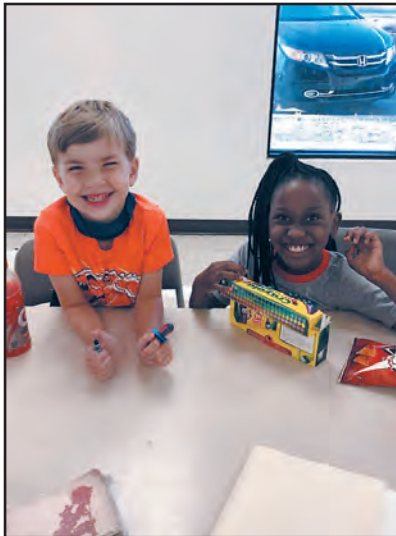


Photo courtesy of Davey Lyon

Sawyer (left), son of Pastor Davey Lyon, visits with a friend in the White Hall community during one of the church’s community nights.

share the gospel with someone else,” Lyon said. “We’ve just seen this void of the gospel.”

Attendance at Imago Dei already is up to around 25 meeting for Bible study.

“It brings joy to our lives, and it brings a little taste of heaven to our lives. And I want more of it,” Lyon said.

“I don’t want to have to wait for heaven to experience more of this.”

Since God began drawing his heart toward planting Imago Dei Church, Lyon has taken a leap of faith and quit his full-time job to focus more on the community and finish seminary.

“We believe God has called us to be missionaries to Lowndes County, and He wants us to be fully devoted to that,” Lyon explained.

He also is praying for an African-American associate pastor to come alongside, and he trusts God will bring that person as the church strives to be multicultural in focus, fellowship, partnership and leadership.

### God’s provision

Lyon said he’s grateful for God’s provision every step of the way.

A big part of that provision is the way his sending church, Benton Baptist, has partnered in the work.

Lee Tate, Benton’s pastor, said

**“We believe God has called us to be missionaries to Lowndes County, and He wants us to be fully devoted to that.”**

**Pastor Davey Lyon  
Imago Dei Church**

for everyone at the church who’s been involved in praying, gathering resources or volunteering with Imago Dei Church at the 45, it has “been a life-altering, eternity-altering event.”

### ‘God is behind all of it’

“It has changed the way they’ve seen the body of Christ, the Holy Spirit, the truth of the Word and how God is behind all of it,” Tate said.

The church wants to see the gospel go out, he added.

“It’s been a blessing. We’re happy. We love praying about it and talking about it.”

Lyon expressed his gratitude.

“If you ask for the epitome of a sending church, it is Benton Baptist.

“If you ask for the epitome of a support network, it is the Montgomery Baptist Association.

“And if you ask for the epitome of a mentor, for me, it’s Dwayne.”

Hughes said he’s grateful for Lyon’s heart for his home county.

Lyon didn’t make the decision to quit his job and plant the church impulsively, Hughes said.

His heart “was warmed by the Spirit, and he has prayed over and cried over that community,” Hughes said.

“In the end, he knew God said it, and that settled it.”



Photo courtesy of Davey Lyon

Davey and Amber Lyon and their children (from left) Sawyer, Grace and David, have made their home in Lowndes County, the place Davey Lyon was raised and the place where God called him into ministry.



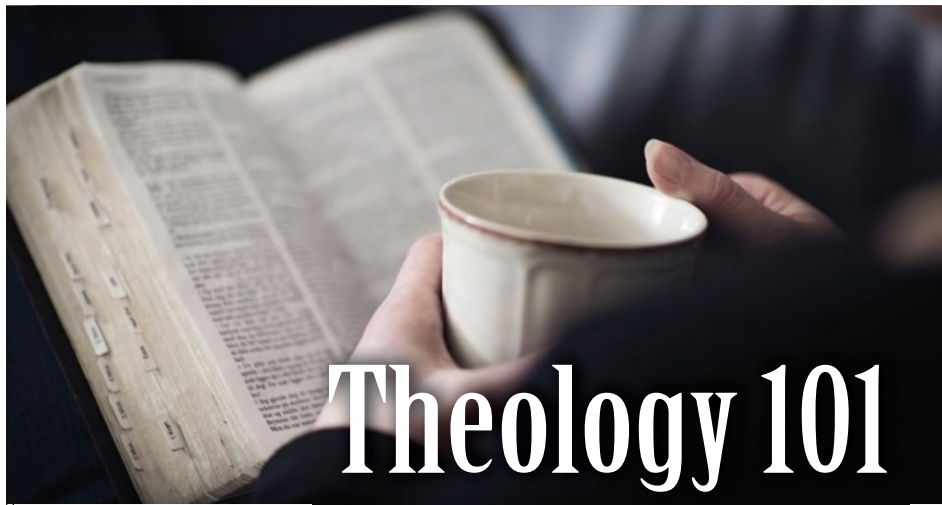
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# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## What Is Man?

### Regained Image and Likeness

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.  
TAB Media

Last week's focus was on the fact that sin and disobedience to God affected the human likeness to God. While not obliterating all likeness to God, sin has distorted or marred that likeness.

Against the backdrop of the bad news caused by human sin, the Bible's message is one of good news in that God has a plan for humans to regain likeness to Him.

Why such a plan? The primary answer lies in God's nature as a God of love. What depth of meaning is compressed into the simple statement of 1 John 4:8 and 16, "God is love."

His love is far more than mere sentiment of the heart. It is action and not just emotion. It is not grasping but giving. As perfect love, it seeks objects upon which to bestow itself. By creating us in His own image and likeness, God made us capable of recognizing and receiving His love and of loving Him back in return.

We might simply say the perfect love that motivated God's creation of human beings is the same love that motivated Him to provide a way for sinners to regain His image and likeness, as well as to live unto His glory.

The beginning point in that plan is regeneration or a new birth launched through repentance of sin and faith in Christ Jesus and carried out by the indwelling presence of His Holy Spirit in those who open themselves to the Savior.

We term that beginning point Christian conversion. At that point, God's saving grace covers our sins with the perfect righteousness of Christ. However, as glorious as it is, conversion is but the beginning point in God's redemptive plan for sinners.

#### Progressive growth

The ongoing part of God's plan calls for progressive or gradual growth and development in spiritual matters — increasing commitment to God's ways, continual transformation by the renewing of our minds, gradual embodiment of revealed truth, persistence in the practice of prayer and, all the while, experiencing a growing conformity to the likeness of Christ, Who, though becoming fully human in His incarnation, did not inherit a fallen nature. Rather, He was in His earthly life in every way "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15).

The completion of God's restoration plan for fallen humanity awaits Christ's return, when we shall be transformed into His likeness and restored to perfect and unhindered fellowship with God in order that we might bring Him glory through endless ages.

*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.*



## Famous Christians from previous centuries

# Heroes of the Faith

## 2021 marks 200th birthday of international missionary

William Taylor (1821–1902) was an American missionary of the Methodist Episcopal Church for 47 years.

This year is the 200th anniversary of his birth.

He was born to Stuart and Martha Taylor on May 2, 1821, in Rockbridge County, Virginia.

His conversion occurred at a Methodist Episcopal camp meeting in 1841.

His first pastorates were in Georgetown, Baltimore and Washington.

In 1846, he married Ann Kimberlin, who accompanied him on his early travels. Later, she stayed in America to care for their five children.

The couple traveled to California in 1849. Taylor was a volunteer missionary to Native Americans and Chinese immigrants. He founded several Methodist churches in the state. He began his career as a world evangelist and missionary in 1856. He ministered on six continents.

#### Thousands of conversions

Beginning in 1856, he worked for five years in eastern and western states and also in Canada. He traveled to Australia and South Africa from 1863 to 1866.

In 1867, his family traveled to

England, Scotland, Barbados and British Guinea in South America. He journeyed again to Australia and in 1870 reached Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), where he witnessed thousands of conversions.

His revivals in Bombay, Madras, Calcutta and Bangalore, India, led to countless converts. He initiated two annual Methodist Episcopal conferences.

Spending nine years in South America, he traveled 1,500 miles up the Amazon River and then labored in Peru and Chile. He recruited missionaries, eventually reaching 43 self-supporting ones on the continent. One

of them, Ira H. La Fetra, helped found Santiago College.

#### Modesty and faith

Elected Missionary Bishop of Africa in 1884, Taylor served there for 12 years and started numerous missions. He retired in 1896.

Believing missionaries should be self-sufficient, he paid for his travel and expenses with money from the 17 books he wrote.

His remarkable physique equipped him for his strenuous labors. As a young man, he swam 14 miles across San Francisco Bay to Alameda. He could easily carry loads of books which weighed 500 pounds.

When he was 75, he walked over 400 miles into the interior of Africa. He worked with his missionaries, digging wells and building homes.

He possessed a great wit and was an unmatched storyteller. Modesty and faith, though, were his prominent character traits.

Taylor died peacefully on May 18, 1902, in Palo Alto, California.

Taylor University in Upland, Indiana, is named for him.



TAYLOR

#### By Joanne Sloan

*Joanne Sloan, a member of First Baptist Church Tuscaloosa, has been a published writer of articles and books for 30 years. She has a bachelor's degree double majoring in history and English from East Texas State University (now Texas A&M—Commerce) and a master's degree specializing in English from the University of Arkansas (1978).*

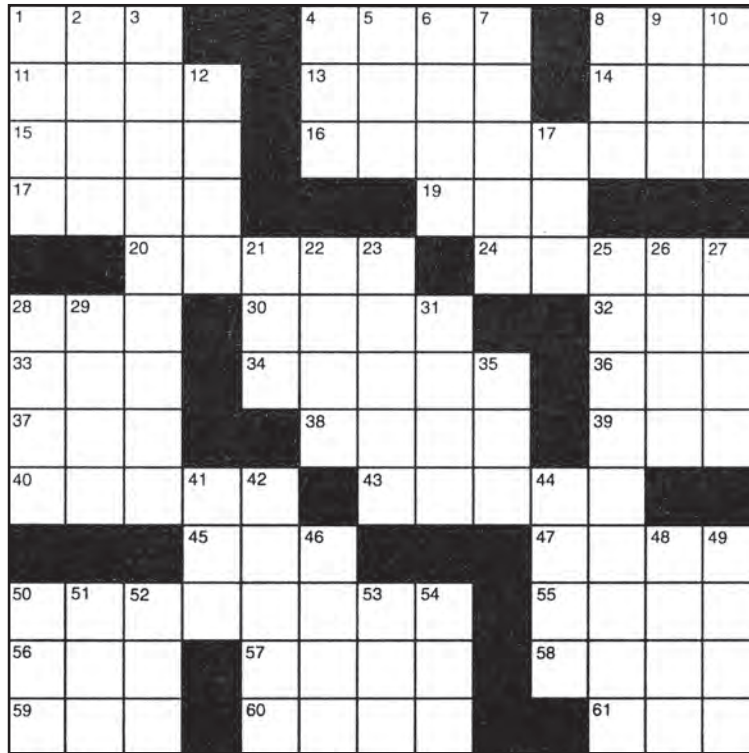
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### ACROSS

1. And \_\_\_ Israel that were round about them fled. (Num. 16:34)
4. And \_\_\_ the son of Omri did evil. (1 Kings 16:30)
8. Have ye not read in the \_\_\_? (Matt. 12:5)
11. This is the \_\_\_ of the generations of Adam. (Gen. 5:1)
13. There shall not a \_\_\_ of him fall to the earth. (1 Kings 1:52)
14. Anger.
15. With long \_\_\_ will I satisfy him. (Ps. 91:16)
16. And they \_\_\_ him, and put on him a scarlet robe. (Matt. 27:28)
17. Be not forgetful to \_\_\_ rtain strangers. (Heb. 13:2)
19. Come, \_\_\_ the place where the Lord lay. (Matt. 28:6)
20. Unsuitable.
24. Be not afraid of their \_\_\_. (Jer. 1:8)
28. Therefore called she his name \_\_\_. (Gen. 30:6)
30. Aim.
32. Alkali.
33. Ye tithe mint and \_\_\_ and all manner of herbs. (Luke 11:42)
34. He went and took \_\_\_ the daughter of Diblaim. (Hos. 1:3)
36. Ever. (poetic)
37. Tax agency.
38. To wash.
39. He went out to meet \_\_\_. (2 Chron. 15:2)
40. Adhesive.
43. She scorneth the horse and his \_\_\_. (Job 39:18)
45. The \_\_\_s are a people not strong. (Prov. 30:25)
47. Before. (prefix)
50. Lift up a \_\_\_ against him. (Isa. 59:19)
55. Set me as a \_\_\_ upon thine heart. (Song of Sol. 8:6)
56. I am like an \_\_\_ of the desert. (Ps. 102:6)
57. Canal.
58. The son of Naum, which was the son of



By Evelyn M. Boyington Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

- \_\_\_ (Luke 3:25)
  59. \_\_\_ unto them that are wise in their own eyes. (Isa. 5:21)
  60. College official.
  61. The son of Arphaxad, which was the son of \_\_\_. (Luke 3:36)
- DOWN**
1. Our God whom we serve is \_\_\_ to deliver us. (Dan. 3:17)
  2. Having your \_\_\_s girt about with truth. (Eph. 6:14)
  3. The \_\_\_ of man shall be bowed down. (Isa. 2:17)
  4. Exclamations.
  5. "The Cat in the \_\_\_."
  6. Put on.
  7. Short.
  8. The \_\_\_ of truth shall be established forever. (Prov. 12:19)
  9. Your fathers, where \_\_\_ they? (Zech. 1:5)
  10. Married.
  12. Sharp.
  17. Green vegetable.
  21. Is there any taste in the white of an \_\_\_? (Job 6:6)
  22. Go, wash in the \_\_\_ of Siloam. (John 9:7)
  23. I love \_\_\_, my brother Absalom's sister. (2 Sam. 13:4)
  25. As it were the body of
  - \_\_\_ heaven in his \_\_\_. (Ex. 24:10)
  26. I will lift up mine \_\_\_ unto the hills. (Ps. 121:1)
  27. Antitoxin.
  28. Dribble.
  29. Invisible emanation.
  31. The priests the sons of \_\_\_ shall come near. (Deut. 21:5)
  35. Though they be \_\_\_ like crimson. (Isa. 1:18)
  41. Light brown.
  42. On the seventh day God \_\_\_ His work. (Gen. 2:2)
  44. I will \_\_\_ me of mine adversaries. (Isa. 1:24)
  46. The king arose, and \_\_\_ his garments. (2 Sam. 13:31)
  48. We spend our years as a \_\_\_ that is told. (Ps. 90:9)
  49. They took their journey from \_\_\_. (Ex. 16:1)
  50. They that \_\_\_ in tears shall reap in joy. (Ps. 126:5)
  51. For \_\_\_, saith he, shall be one flesh. (1 Cor. 6:16)
  52. Brewed beverage.
  53. Radioimmunoassay. (abbr.)
  54. Ye have made it a \_\_\_ of thieves. (Matt. 21:13)

### CHURCH POSITIONS

#### SENIOR PASTOR

First Baptist Church of Jemison is seeking a full-time senior pastor. He should possess a conviction to preach from the Holy Bible, teaching biblical truths and doctrine of Christianity, as stated in the Baptist Faith & Message 2000. Must provide pastoral care and counseling; be engaged to all age groups; mentor and supervise church staff; and provide visionary leadership for the future of our church. He will shepherd our congregation in worship, Christian spiritual growth and community outreach as we strive to carry out The Great Commission. Mail resumés to: Jemison First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 760, Jemison, AL 35085 or [resumes@jemisonfirstbaptist.com](mailto:resumes@jemisonfirstbaptist.com).

#### PASTOR

First Baptist Church of Grand Bay, Ala., is accepting resumés for a full-time pastor. Please remit to: ATTN: Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 326, Grand Bay, AL 36541.

#### PASTOR

Brindlee Mountain Baptist Church is seeking a full-time pastor. Please send resumé to: Brindlee Mountain Baptist Church, ATTN: Search Committee, 3422 Hwy 231, Lacey's Spring, AL 35754.

#### BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Mount Philadelphia Baptist Church, Cordova, is prayerfully seeking a bivocational pastor. Please send resumés to: Mount Philadelphia Baptist Church, ATTN: Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 13, Cordova, AL 35550.

#### BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

County Line Baptist in Trafford, Ala., is prayerfully seeking a bivocational pastor. Please send resumés to: Pastor Search Committee, County Line Baptist, 74 Smith Mill Road, Trafford, AL 35172, or email: [countylinebaptist1@gmail.com](mailto:countylinebaptist1@gmail.com).

#### BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER

Union Springs Baptist Church in Newville, Ala., is looking for a bivocational music minister. Choir experience is preferred. Please email Jim Cordes at [cordes0238@gmail.com](mailto:cordes0238@gmail.com) to submit your resumé or get further information.

### STUDENT MINISTER/MUSIC

FBC Abbeville, Ala., is currently searching for a full-time student minister or a combination of student minister/music. If you are interested in this opportunity, please contact the church at 334-585-2367 or email: [todd@fbcabbeville.net](mailto:todd@fbcabbeville.net).

### ASSOCIATE PASTOR

First Baptist Church of Slocomb is currently seeking a full-time associate pastor, with primary responsibilities of leading youth. Applicants can call FBCS at 334-886-2200 for information or send resumés by email to: [FBCS206@aol.com](mailto:FBCS206@aol.com). All applications should be received by Oct. 31.

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### MINISTRIES

#### TAB HIGHLIGHTS

TAB Highlights is an email newsletter delivered to your inbox every Monday-Wednesday-Friday with the day's top stories from the world of faith-based news. The complimentary service is managed by the TAB Media team. Headlines come from international, national and Southern Baptist coverage, as well as one story that has been trending during the week. TAB Highlights also provides a link to the latest podcast released from the TAB Media team. To sign up, email [news@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:news@thealabamabaptist.org).

# Proactive protection

## Ready for disaster? It may be time to update your church insurance

By Shawn Hendricks  
TAB Media

**A**s pastor D.J. Smith watched Hurricane Baptist Church in Gilberttown become engulfed in flames, many questions raced through his mind.

On July 15, lightning struck the rural Choctaw County church's worship facility, sparking a fire that destroyed the building.

"At the time it was burning, I was thinking, 'Where are we going to be Sunday? What are we going to do? How are we going to build back?'" recalled Smith, who had only been the church's pastor for six months.

Following a disaster, many ministry leaders face those same questions. They are left wondering whether their facility is adequately covered by insurance and if they will be able to afford repairs — or even a new facility if necessary.

Fortunately for Smith and Hurricane Baptist, which averages about 55 in attendance on Sunday, the church's deacons had reviewed their insurance policy in 2020 and made adjustments that helped cover the damage.

### 'Extremely blessed'

"We were extremely blessed, and I want to commend my church because they took the opportunity to make sure that we had enough coverage," said Smith, who said the demolition of the building has been completed and they are making plans to rebuild while worshiping rent-free in a nearby church building.

"That is a huge blessing for our church. ... The Lord has definitely provided," he said.

Unfortunately, many churches learn too late they are not adequately covered by insurance, said Lee Wright, coordinator of church compensation services for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. Every church should



Photo courtesy of Jeremy Giles  
A lightning strike ignited a fire at Hurricane Baptist Church in Gilberttown on July 15. The church's sanctuary, fellowship hall and classrooms were a total loss for the congregation.

review their policies and make needed changes at least every three years — and possibly more than that, he said.

"A lot of churches haven't looked at [their policies] in years and years," Wright said. "Real estate values have tremendously increased and building costs have tremendously increased, and the church may be underinsured."

Often a higher deductible is in order, he noted, recalling one church that lost its policy because they filed too many claims over relatively small issues they probably could have handled themselves.

"That church would have been better off to raise their deductible and pay for these \$700 events," Wright said.

For most churches, the priority should be on "big events" that might happen, such as losing an entire roof or someone suffering

an injury on church property that required surgery or long-term recovery.

"It's just a really important area of church life, and I know when budgets are tight, that's one area where they want to save money ... but they need to do that in a wise way."

Wright recommended church leaders also consider working with insurance agencies and related organizations that have experience helping ministries deal with these and other critical issues, including religious liberty, church security and sexual abuse.

### Options for churches

Wright recommended GuideStone Financial Resources, Brotherhood Mutual Insurance and MinistrySafe as options for churches because of their familiarity with these and other related issues.

For instance, MinistrySafe provides training and offers resources and tools to help protect churches

from sexual abuse issues.

"The statistics are just jaw-dropping," said Dave Hargrave, senior account manager with GuideStone's property and casualty team for Alabama, who represented Brotherhood Mutual for six years and also worked alongside MinistrySafe.

"Churches that do not have the proper screening in place are actually a target for sexual predators," Hargrave said. "It's extremely important ... to be proactive in protecting the church through proper policies, and training and screening of volunteers and employees who work with children."

### Proper policies in place

Church security also is a critical issue churches should evaluate to ensure they have proper policies in place and everyone involved with the security team is adequately covered, Hargrave said.

Religious liberty is another issue. Many secular companies may not be as equipped to help a ministry deal with having its tax-exempt status challenged over a same-sex marriage-related dispute or other hot-button issue, for example.

"There is a considerable difference in working with a secular insurance company and one that's focused exclusively on ministries," Hargrave said. "There are liability coverages that are afforded to ministry specific policies that are not available on the secular side."

"Having that ministry connection is important," he added. "If you need heart surgery or brain surgery and you go to a general practitioner, there is only so much [he] can do. You need to go to a specialist."

"Religious freedom protection is an increasingly needed coverage as our society continues to shift away from biblical foundational beliefs."

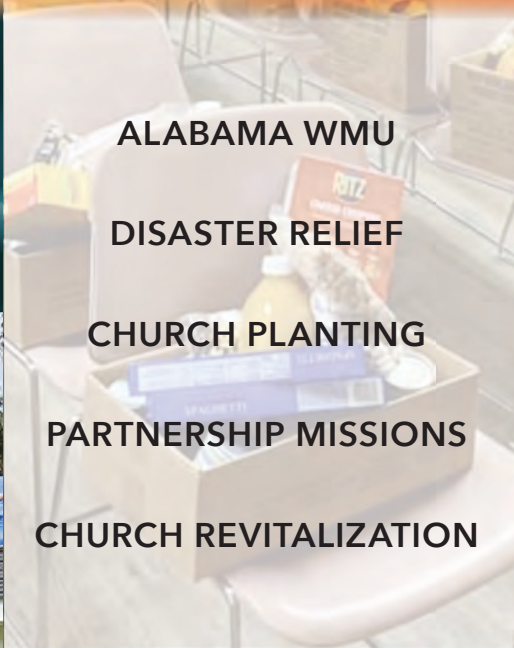
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# HAS YOUR CHURCH COMPLETED THE ANNUAL CHURCH PROFILE?

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## COMPLETE YOUR ANNUAL CHURCH PROFILE

*Know well  
the condition  
of your flock,  
and pay attention  
to your herds.*

PROVERBS 27:23 (CSB)

# ‘No other decision ... to make’

## Floyd, longtime legal team explain reasons for resigning from SBC roles

After four months of pleading with authors and advocates of a directive to the SBC Executive Committee related to waiving attorney-client privilege, Ronnie Floyd shifted his attention to a different kind of waiver — the right to step away from his current position.

In an Oct. 14 emailed letter addressed to EC trustees and the SBC family, Floyd announced his plans to resign from his role as president and CEO of the EC effective Oct. 31.

“Due to my personal integrity and the leadership responsibility entrusted to me, I will not and cannot any longer fulfill the duties placed upon me as the leader of the executive, fiscal and fiduciary entity of the SBC,” Floyd said. “In the midst of

deep disappointment and discouragement, we have to make this decision by our own choice and do so willingly because there is no other decision for me to make.”

Floyd’s two-and-a-half-year tenure as EC president has been plagued by growing conflict within the convention ranks.

Even as messengers to the June SBC Annual Meeting in Nashville adopted Floyd’s Vision 2025 to reach the world with the gospel, messengers also overwhelmingly approved a motion calling for action

related to the EC’s handling of sexual abuse cases within SBC life.

The motion called for a task force to be appointed to oversee a third-party investigation into the allegations



FLOYD



Photo by Van Payne

Jim Guenther and Jamie Jordan listen to discussions taking place during the Sept. 20–21 Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee meeting in Nashville.

of mishandling abuse claims and mistreating abuse victims by the EC between Jan. 1, 2000, and June 14, 2021.

SBC President Ed Litton appointed the Sexual Abuse Task Force, chaired by North Carolina pastor Bruce Frank, in July.

While the investigation itself was not opposed by the EC, the call for EC staff and

trustees to waive attorney-client privilege for the investigation did cause concern.

After four intense sessions over the course of two weeks, the EC voted to waive privilege by a vote of 44 to 31 on Oct. 5.

Doing so, Floyd said in his letter, places “our missionary enterprise as Southern Baptists into uncertain, unknown, unprecedented and uncharted waters,” and led to his decision to resign.

The decision to waive attorney-client privilege also led to a decision by Nashville law firm Guenther, Jordan & Price to end its long

tenure as legal representation for the SBC and the EC.

In an Oct. 11 letter signed by James P. Guenther and James D. Jordan, the firm said, “The decision causes us to carefully consider the prospect of moving forward ... in an alien environment.

“We simply do not know how to advise a client, and otherwise represent a client, with the quality of advice and representation the client must have, and in keeping with the standard of practice our firm tries to uphold, when the client has indicated a willingness to forego this universally accepted principle of confidentiality.

### ‘Leaves us no choice’

“For these reasons, we believe our commitment to a certain standard of professional conduct leaves us no choice but to advise you that we are withdrawing from our role as general counsel to the Southern Baptist Convention and the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention.”

To read the full text of Floyd’s resignation letter, visit [tabonline.org/floyd-resigns](http://tabonline.org/floyd-resigns). (TAB Media)



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# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For October 24

## Explore the Bible

By Robert Olsen, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



### THE GOSPEL'S GOAL Colossians 1:24–2:3

#### Committed as a Messenger (1:24–27)

Paul was writing to the Colossians while he was in prison, suffering for the cause of the gospel. But instead of being depressed or frustrated about his condition, Paul rejoiced because he saw this as being afflicted for Christ.

We must be careful to note Paul is not saying Christ's suffering, including His death on the cross, was not enough and we must suffer to complete our salvation. Indeed, Paul is referencing the fact that because Christ has died, we are the ones who receive affliction on His behalf.

Jesus Himself said if they persecuted Me, they will persecute you (John 15:18–25). Paul takes a negative situation and turns it into a positive as he is prone to do.

The joy of serving Christ is so deep within Paul that even being punished for Christ is something to rejoice about.

Given the current state of the world, in which Christians are persecuted from Nigeria to Afghanistan to China, this is relevant. Even in the U.S., where Christianity is more and more pushed aside in the culture, we don't have to wonder where God is in all of this. Rather, it gives us an opportunity to join Paul in suffering for the gospel.

Historically, Christians have suffered for the faith, honoring God in the process and witnessing to His love, mercy and judgment. When Christians are persecuted for the gospel, it is imperative we respond as Paul did — seeing it as a way to honor God.

The early disciples rejoiced they were considered worthy to suffer disgrace for the name of Jesus (see Acts 5:41). We need to remember if we face persecution, we honor and bring glory to God by standing firm in our beliefs.

The gospel Paul preached, for which he was in chains, was what he called a mystery. This did not mean it was something unknown; instead, it was something that had been unknown until Christ came — the

gospel is for Gentiles as well as Jews! Even though it was God's plan for Israel to be a light for the nations, the gospel meant Gentiles did not have to live as Jews. Instead, the gospel meant God loved the Gentiles, and Christ's death atoned for them as well, to those who believed in Christ.

This is the message that inspired Paul to go to the Gentiles. It is also the message that allows us, even compels us, to go to our neighbors across the street, at work or across the world to share the gospel.

#### Focused on Maturity (1:28–29)

Part of Paul's message was not just a basic gospel presentation. When Paul taught believers, his goal was not just they be saved, but also that they become mature believers. This is often a neglected part of ministry — discipleship.

One of the problems with 20th century Christianity in the U.S. was its focus on the conversion experience, leaving believers with little knowledge about discipleship.

It is one reason why so many churches have experienced decline in numbers. It is also an encouragement for churches today to focus on the teaching ministry so believers understand the Bible and what it means to be a follower of Christ.

Discipleship will help bring glory to God and expand our witness to the world around us.

#### Concerned for the Faithful (2:1–3)

When we realize we are not alone in our struggle to live out the Christian life and against the world, it brings encouragement. When we know we have others praying for us, it helps us live and act in boldness.

Paul encouraged the Colossians and the Laodiceans (with whom the letter was to be shared) to be united, not given to arguing with each other, but being unified in love for Christ manifesting itself in love of each other. As Christ said, the world will know us by our love (John 13:35).

## Bible Studies for Life

By James Riley Strange, Ph.D.

Professor of New Testament, Samford University



### CONFIDENCE IN THE FACE OF FEAR Genesis 12:10–13, 17–13:4

At the beginning of Genesis 12, the biblical narrative becomes more coherent than it has been, tracing Israelite history from a family of Mesopotamian tribal nomads to a nation of settled city dwellers with a central government and thence to landless exiles living shattered back in the land in which their ancestors had been born.

That story takes us to the end of 2 Kings (12 books). If we add Ezra and Nehemiah, we end with the reestablishment of these people in their ancestral home, now diminished and under foreign dominion.

Centuries later, the Gospels pick up the story, and it comes through the years to our own lives. We are still living the story of God's call.

The story begins with a promise of a miracle to a childless couple: Despite their advanced years, their descendants will become "a great nation."

The couple will grapple with God and resist righteousness, and they will pass their struggle down through generations. We, the heirs of their victories and losses, see ourselves in these episodes.

Read chapters 12–14 for context.

#### Trust God despite fear of circumstances (12:10–13).

Despite God's promise of protection in verse 3 and despite the promise of wealth that is already being fulfilled, in Egypt, Abram decides to protect himself by passing Sarai off as his sister rather than as his wife (the claim in 20:12 might be another falsehood; the genealogies offer no confirmation).

Abram might have been right about what the Egyptians would have done to him upon seeing Sarai's beauty, but he puts her in jeopardy when he turns her over to Pharaoh. The phrase, "and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house," is surely a euphemism for Sarai becoming one of Pharaoh's concubines. Hence, this act also jeopardizes the promise of descendants.

In this way, the story also foreshadows the sexual abuse of the enslaved woman Hagar.

#### Our fear can affect others (12:17–20).

The plagues with which God afflicts "Pharaoh and his house" ought to have taught Abram his deceit was unnecessary, for God would have fulfilled the promises made in Haran and at the oak of Moreh.

Hence, Abram and Sarai could have sojourned safely in Egypt. Instead, because Abram's trust failed him, Sarai must have suffered great anguish in Pharaoh's harem. Certainly, Pharaoh's entire household suffered harm.

Did Abram and Sarai have any hope they would be reunited? As we shall learn, Abram will repeat this sin (chapter 20), as will Isaac, the child born of the promise (chapter 26). Fear has a way of erasing lessons we have learned.

#### Return to confident trust and worship of God (13:1–4).

Abram and Sarai have grown wealthier as a result of the misadventure in Egypt, but at a dear cost to Sarai and to her relationship with her husband. Later events will reveal a great strain between the two, and the treatment of Hagar will betray the depths of Sarai's wounds. It turns out saying yes to God is not the first step. It is like walking: Each yes must follow the last.

For now, Abram repents by returning to the place where he first called to the Lord.

Nevertheless, let us not grow cynical at Abram's temporary penance and Sarai's coming cruelty, for that will keep our eyes fastened on the wrong characters and our attention on the wrong deeds.

Let us instead recognize the tenacity of God's faith in Abram and Sarai, God's repeated forgiveness and God's refusal to call someone else.

No, neither this episode nor the ones to follow will cause God to repent of choosing these two. And so it is with us. Thanks be to God.

# MEDIA REVIEWS

By Michael Foust

TAB Media

## Newsboys say they'll tour until they're 80: 'We're just getting started'

**M**ichael Tait says he's spent most of his life "on the road," traveling in a bus from city to city and performing in big and small arenas.

Until last year, that is.

Tait, lead singer for the Christian band Newsboys, remained at home for most of 2020, unable to tour because of the COVID-19 pandemic and searching for a way to channel his energy.

"It was a bit freaky," he told The Alabama Baptist. "I was like, 'Will it ever be the same again?'"

Tait, who got his start as a member of DC Talk, said he wrote 60–65 songs during the pandemic and picked the best ones for the Newsboys' newest album, "Stand." One of those songs, "Magnetic," which features a message about God's infinite love, has been on Billboard's Hot Christian Songs chart for more than a dozen weeks.

Tait and his bandmates believe it's one of the best albums ever from the group, which launched in 1985 with Peter Furler on lead vocals. Tait, 55, became the frontman in 2009.

He said he has plans on touring until he's at least 80 — similar to members of the Rolling Stones.



MICHAEL TAIT

Photo courtesy of Capitol Christian Music Group

"Here we are, all these years later, still doing it, and we're not quitting — because Mick Jagger was 80 years old still doing it," Tait said, joking about the Rolling Stones singer, who is 78 and still touring. "We're just kids!"

In early October the Newsboys embarked on its latest tour, which will travel to cities

across the U.S., including Mobile on Nov. 5.

Tait and his bandmates are known for their love of live performances.

"It's everything that I am. I love

it," Tait said. "I love seeing people smile. I love serving people.

"I enjoy watching mom and dad come with Bobby and Jennifer or Lequan and Tavon and be blessed. It's fantastic."

Drummer Duncan Phillips calls touring "the best life in the world if you're built for it."

"When you're called to what you do, they say you don't work a day in your life," Phillips said. "I just love touring. I love what I do. I love playing drums. I love meeting people.

"You get to a venue, then you get this energy — this kind of symbiotic energy from the crowd. There's nothing better than playing a full house, no matter if it's 1,500 people or 15,000 people."

The theme of the new album, Tait said, is simple: "God is still in control, and God is still good."

Phillips also believes the band will be touring for years to come.

"We're just getting started," he said.



### EDITOR'S NOTE

Reviews of films, books, music or other media that appear in TAB are intended to help readers evaluate current media for themselves, their children and grandchildren in order to decide whether to watch, read or listen. Reviews are not an endorsement by the writer or TAB Media.

**"Here we are, all these years later, still doing it, and we're not quitting."**

Michael Tait

### MEET THE REVIEWER

Michael Foust covers the intersection of faith and entertainment as a media reviewer for The Alabama Baptist. He also is the husband of an amazing wife and the father of four young children.



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