

The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

INSIDE



Widows ministries provide tangible evidence of God's love to grieving

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Couple faces infertility, grieving process before choosing adoption

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Samford linebacker blends football and Christ

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Women talk on the streets of a Southeast Asian city. Many cities in the area contain few, if any, Christians. Alabama missionaries Samuel and Abby Rudd* live in another city in the area and invest their lives sharing the hope of the gospel with people who have never heard it.

LOTTIE MOON CHRISTMAS OFFERING PREVIEW

Photo courtesy of International Mission Board

Advancing God's kingdom

Alabama couple, thousands of other missionaries rely on prayer, offering support

By Grace Thornton
TAB Media

In the place where Samuel and Abby Rudd* have lived for the past several years with their daughters Lia and Lilly, all they can see is concrete. It's a big city. It's full of millions of people. And most of them are Muslim.

"When we were looking at

where to go, people kept giving us the statistics on this place, and we were just convicted that we needed to be in a place like this that didn't have as many gospel opportunities," Abby Rudd said.

Her call started early — she had grown up in missions education in her north Alabama church. At first, she didn't really think missions was for

her, but then at a youth camp at 13, she sensed God asking her if she was willing to go and serve among people who had never heard of Him.

Answering the call

"I said yes, and I really held onto that commitment," she said.

She met her husband, who had grown up overseas, in

seminary, and the two felt a burden for the great need in this part of the Asian Pacific Rim.

And now, as they prepare to move to another city in the region with even grimmer spiritual statistics, they're thankful for the support of Southern Baptists who have made it possible for them to sustain a (See 'You can help,' page 11)

Coming next week

ALABAMA BAPTIST CONVENTION
annual meeting coverage



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Photo courtesy of Darryl Brunson

A volunteer team from Liberty Baptist Church in Chelsea working with Expedition Church in Livingston, Montana, paints the office building of the Yellowstone Girls and Boys Ranch. YGBR is a nonprofit organization that works with foster kids and foster families.

Montana church continues to grow as volunteer teams come back

By Grace Thornton

TAB Media

About a year ago, TAB shared the story of Darryl Brunson, one of several Alabama Baptists who relocated their families to Montana to plant churches. Expedition Church in Livingston started in May 2018 and was growing.

But then the COVID-19 pandemic happened, and plans screeched to a halt. Volunteer teams scheduled to serve in the community had to cancel, so Brunson came up with a new idea — he posted on social media asking friends and family to help raise \$50,000 for community needs for his 50th birthday.

He called the effort #50for50, and it raised \$73,000.

That gave Expedition Church a big leg up in showing Livingston what the love of Jesus looks like. Over the past year, they've used that money to pour into a variety of community needs.

Planting seeds

In recent months they've welcomed back volunteer teams to continue planting seeds in the ground they've been tilling through community projects.

"It's been a great year as far as making connections and spiritual

growth," Brunson said.

In 2021, Expedition Church hosted 366 volunteers serving with 30 teams from 42 churches, roughly half from Alabama.

Broad reach

Brunson noted that with "our church family and teams, we're somewhere north of 8,000 serving-hours in our community and probably 1,500 to 1,600 spiritual conversations."

The church is growing, and the reach is broadening. Brunson has identified 10 areas within a two-hour drive that need a healthy church, so he and others have initiated community outreach to

prepare the way.

He's training up leaders to serve, and one of them, Justin Cottingham and his wife Alison from First Baptist Church Fairhope, already are serving in an area called Big Hole Valley.

Expedition Church is a church planting residency through the North American Mission Board, and by next year, Brunson could have 11 leaders and potential leaders serving alongside him.

"It's exciting," he said. "This is our heartbeat. This is who we want to be."

To learn more about Expedition Church visit expeditionmt.org.



The crossword puzzle can be found on page 14.

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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RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

By Jennifer Davis Rash, President and Editor-in-Chief



jrash@thealabamabaptist.org



@RashionalThts

Grateful for a year of fresh forms of reader, listener engagement

Have I told you lately how much you mean to me? Have I shared how important you are to all of us at The Alabama Baptist?

Please know we never take you for granted, and we realize it's because of you that we have the opportunity to minister and grow day after day.

Thank you, Alabama Baptists, for your support and trust.

Thank you for helping position us to be what is needed going forward as we seek to serve you with the highest of journalistic ethics and to be Christ-centered in all we say and do.

You've nurtured us, invested in us, encouraged us and challenged us to dig deeper.

You've loved us, cared for us, supported us and shown grace to us when we've fallen short.

You've helped us spread the word about all that's happening with TAB Media and understand the importance of subscribing and engaging with us.

And each time we reach a milestone, we know you are celebrating with us.

A wise friend and mentor shared with me recently that as long as we understand our mis-

sion and stay focused on it, the vision for where we need to go next will unfold in front of us.

As I thought about the concept, I realized we have experienced that exact scenario this year at The Alabama Baptist, most obviously with the launch of two new products.

In February, we debuted a new serial-style podcast — called Stories — where a story is told over multiple episodes.

The audio production is told in the subjects' own voices with narration in between. Other background sounds are included to help you feel as if you are sitting right beside the person sharing the story.

Our special assignments editor Grace Thornton pitched the idea, and we all loved it.

When you listen to TAB Media's Stories podcast, you'll receive an added bonus of getting to hang out with Grace because she serves as the writer, interviewer and host.

About the time Grace was putting the final touches on the first episode of Stories, another full team of TAB Media staff members were diving in deep for the first issue of The Baptist Paper, which launched in May.

We like to describe it as “the best of what you remember about your state Baptist paper, only better.”

The reason for the “what you remember” phrase is because Alabama is the only state left with a weekly state Baptist paper and only one of two remaining with a printed publication of any type that provides timely news and information more than once a month.

It's because of you that we have not only survived these nearly 179 years but also thrived — and why we have the tremendous honor of reaching out across our state lines to make sure all Baptists stay informed, inspired and connected.

Alabama Baptists will always be our primary focus, and within that ministry assignment we now get to serve all Baptists.

A little bit of this and that to keep you updated

A few housekeeping notes ...

▶ The TAB Media team will be returning from the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting in Huntsville around the same time you receive this issue of The Alabama Baptist. We are working hard to put the final touches on the next issue, which will provide full coverage of the meeting.

▶ Your gift copy of the annual Fruitful magazine should have



made it to you by now, but do let us know if you haven't received yours yet so we can check on it. Call us at 800-803-5201.

▶ While all team members had a hand in producing the magazine, Carrie McWhorter and Lauren Grim are to be commended for shepherding the project. We worked in partnership with our friends at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and sister entities and auxiliaries to

provide this beautiful and inviting annual report.

▶ A special thanks to all of you who advertised in Fruitful as well as The Alabama Baptist and our digital products this year. You make it possible for us to continue producing high quality publications and building our digital platforms.

▶ Know how much all of you mean to us and keep us posted on how we can better serve you.
—Jennifer Davis Rash

Your Voice



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

Reinforcements needed on missions field, Chitwood says

By Paul Chitwood
President, International Mission Board

For 176 years, Southern Baptists have sent missionaries to proclaim the gospel of hope among the nations through the International Mission Board.

While we have work in nearly every country of the world, we prioritize getting the gospel to those who have yet to hear — 91% of our IMB missionary teams are engaging the unreached and the overwhelming majority of IMB financial resources are spent among the unreached.

We live in a world with more lost people alive today than at any time in human history. More lost people will die today and enter hell than on any day in human history.

People born in the past 100 years have had the advantage of air travel, meaning there are few peoples and places in the world we cannot reach in a handful of days at most.

Unreached, unengaged

Yet of the 11,946 people groups that have been numbered around the world, 7,317 remain unreached by the common definition, meaning less than 2% of the people group are evangelical Christian.

And 3,179 of the world's people groups remain unengaged with the gospel, meaning there was likely no church where a lost person could have gone this past week to hear the gospel preached and no missionary that person might meet in the village.

When John, from his prison cell, was given a vision from God and al-

lowed to peer into heaven, he wrote in Rev. 7:9, "After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands ..."

No nation, tribe, people or language will be unrepresented before the throne. Those 3,179 people groups unreached and unengaged? They will be there. But in order for them to get there, we must get to them.

We are ... here in this broken and sinful world where cancer robs our cradles and COVID-19 robs our church roles, where abortion robs the womb, communism robs churches of their pastors as they are imprisoned or simply disappear, racism robs human dignity and drug addiction robs children of their mommies and daddies.

We are ... here because the great multitude is not yet there, standing before the throne and before the lamb. Until every nation, all tribes, peoples and languages are represented in that great multitude, the vision of heaven is yet unfulfilled and the mission of the church on earth remains.

"How are they to believe in Him

of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?"

Why are we still here? John's vision and Paul's letter to the church at Rome echo that our purpose for remaining on earth is to preach the gospel. And preach the gospel we must for, as Paul makes clear, the gospel is an exclusive message for an exclusive Kingdom.

While every nation, tribe, people and language will be represented in the great multitude of heaven, every person from every nation, tribe, people and language will not be there. Only those who have heard and believed the gospel.

The beautiful feet of our missionaries walk in a women's prison in Central Asia to serve women and children through a medical clinic and a preschool.

The beautiful feet of our sent ones walk through refugee camps and crowded city streets. They wade through open sewers in the slums.

Those same feet wade into the rivers and the ocean surf to baptize those who have heard and believed the gospel they preach. Those feet trek through the mountains to isolated villages and walk hundreds of jetways as they go where the lost are to be found.



IMB photo
IMB President Paul Chitwood says 500 new missionaries are needed in the next 5 years.

Between 2008 and 2018, Southern Baptists cut our frontline missionary force by 40%. Those of us who have been in a Southern Baptist church since at least 2008 should be sobered by the fact that gospel troops have been cut by nearly half on our watch.

Unlike at any time in human history, we have the capacity to reach almost anyone anywhere in a matter of days. Yet on our watch, 40% of our troops have been discharged.

More work to do

Thanks to the growing generosity of Southern Baptists, and a great year in the financial markets, we just had the best financial year in the history of the IMB. We are still digging out of three decades of financial decline, but, thankfully, the IMB is growing again.

We aren't discharging soldiers; we're calling up reinforcements.

We have a target of seeing the number of frontline missionaries grow by 500 over the next 5 years, and I'm asking Southern Baptists for more money — the money it will take to support those 500 more missionaries.

We are asking churches that don't give to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering to start giving. We are asking those who do give to give more. We are building relationships with individual donors and looking for more.

With so many yet to hear, we still have work to do. God bless you as you do that work today. Thank you for your partnership ... as we, together, send beautiful feet to preach the good news to every nation, tribe, people and language!

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“Nothing is going to overcome the cross of Jesus Christ.”

MARK BETHEA

Pastor, First Baptist Church Montgomery

I believe and pray this could truly be the time we could see some of the most fruitful days of ministry.

Tim Cox
Immediate past president
Alabama Baptist Convention

It's not often that I cry when reading an article, but the recent front-page article about the Eagles boys baseball team coming to Christ brought the tears.

Josh Watford
Siloam Baptist Church
Marion, Ala.

Testimony time: a couple of weeks ago, a lady came forward to inquire about church membership. I met with her and asked how she discovered our church. She said

that in the early 90s she was a single mom with three kids and living in a women's shelter.

Folks from our church visited the shelter and took care of her kids while she went job searching. Now, 30 years later, God led her back. I'm baptizing her in a couple of weeks and with tears she said, "Last week at church, an older man said something to me that I've waited so long to hear. He said, 'Welcome home.'" I might or might not have joined her in crying.

Pastor Daniel Atkins
Taylor Road Baptist Church
Montgomery

Healthy churches are positive forces in culture and communities. They serve and love others. They

unite families. They communicate the gospel, where one finds true hope and peace.

But when church members begin to lessen their commitment to their churches, those congregations become weaker. They become unhealthy. And unhealthy churches are bad for the communities they serve and the culture in which they live.

Thom Rainer
"The Quarter-Time Church
Member: Five Observations"
churchanswers.com

When you're called to what you do, they say you don't work a day in your life.

Duncan Phillips
Drummer for Newsboys

From the *Twitterverse*

@sambunnell

"Have we tricked ourselves into believing that we aren't loving people unless we publicly call them out on every theological flaw?" —@EdwardUpton

@DrTJPennington

Challenged by this wise observation from @jenniferwilkin — "It is the great liability of a teaching ministry: knowing you will likely out-teach your own ability to obey, knowing there will be days when you will not practice what you have preached."

@PaulTripp

God never forgets, ignores, denies or fails to deliver what He's promised to those who have put their trust in Him.

@MusingsOnChrist

On Christian Priorities
 1. The glory of God is our ulti-

mate goal; 2. The people of God are our penultimate goal; 3. Human institutions are not even close

@shane_pruitt78

You're created for Jesus:
 Your mind was created to think about how awesome Jesus is. Your heart was created to love Jesus. Your hands were created to serve others in the name of Jesus. Your feet were created to follow Jesus. Your mouth was created to tell others about Jesus!

@nathanafinn

If you're breathing, you're religious. It's just a matter of where your devotion is directed.

@DustinBenge

"I will build My church" (Mt. 16:18).
 "I" — the supremacy of Christ.
 "will" — the plan of Christ.
 "build" — the work of Christ.

"My" — the possession of Christ.

"church" — the bride of Christ.

The next time you think it's all up to you, remind yourself, she belongs to Christ.

@revandyfrazier

We need fewer Christians who want to be glorified hall monitors, pointing out everything that is wrong. We need more compassionate ambassadors of grace, pointing people to the good news of Jesus.

@mhenslee

Sure, pastor, you could've said something differently or landed the plane better. You could've been clearer or more concise. But if you were faithful to #preachtheWord, stop second guessing. You can always improve, but tonight, know God is still working through your faithfulness.

Calming a cluttered mind

One of my favorite things about church is praise and worship time. I love to sing and look across the sanctuary to see everyone celebrate the goodness of God in unison.

But for several weeks, my mind hasn't been on it. The harder I try to focus on the music, the more my mind wanders. It starts with the many things I need to do at home or what's waiting for me at work the next day.

So last Sunday I decided to ask God to help me get my thoughts together and show me how to organize my mind.

Interestingly, the answer He gave was not what I expected at all. It came in the form of the next song the worship team played called, "What a Beautiful Name."

If you've never heard this song, it simply says that Jesus' name is beautiful, wonderful and powerful. It says He brought heaven down to us, and even though my sin is great, His love is far greater.

The entire song is about how Jesus loves me so much that He died for me and invites me to be with Him for eternity.

It's the gospel, and the answer to my question reminded me to put things in perspective.

Tears fell down my cheeks as I heard God say through a song that no matter what happens, His love for me is everlasting and unconditional — and nothing will take that away.

As I was leaving church, I had a renewed spirit, a renewed heart and a renewed mind.

Most of all, I knew that allowing worry and anxiety to interfere with my worship time with God wouldn't solve any problems, but focusing on His love for me would give me the peace to be able to tackle those things that seem constant in my mind.

Amy Hacker
the-scroll.com

3 stories you should know



Photo courtesy of International Mission Board

Friends, family and South Carolina Baptist Convention messengers and attendees surround Jeff and Lainey Johnson, two of 39 new International Mission Board missionaries who participated in a Nov. 8 Sending Celebration at First Baptist Church Columbia, South Carolina. IMB President Paul Chitwood thanked Southern Baptists for sending missionaries “so that the lost can hear, believe, call upon the name of the Lord and be saved.” (IMB)

Oregon city grants post-abortion leave

Prolife advocates are speaking out on a decision by the Portland, Oregon, city council to grant paid time off to employees following an abortion.

The city council voted unanimously in October to allow city workers to take up to three days of paid bereavement leave if they have endured a miscarriage, stillbirth or loss of pregnancy, “irrespective of whether deemed medically necessary,” according to the council.

Advocates for the new policy believe Portland is the first city in the nation to explicitly enact such a policy.

“What they are acknowledging is that abortion is a tragic loss — that somebody dies in an abortion,” said Gabriel Vance, director of external affairs for Created Equal, a prolife advocacy group. (TAB Media)

October Cooperative Program giving strong

Cooperative Program giving in the first month of the 2021–22 fiscal year exceeded budget expectations by nearly 6%, according to a report from the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee.

Gifts received in October by the EC for distribution through the national CP allocation budget totaled \$16,755,627.47. This is \$922,294.13 above the \$15,833,333.34 projection and 4.42% more than last year’s contribution during the same month.

Messengers to the 2021 SBC annual meeting adopted a \$190 million CP allocation budget — an increase of \$9.625 million over the 2020–2021 budget but \$3.125 million less than the 2019–2020 budget.

Full CP giving reports are available at sbc.net/cp. (TAB Media)

Persecuted **church**

Christian couple’s acquittal sparks calls for beheadings

LAHORE, Pakistan — After a Pakistani court overturned the blasphemy conviction of a Christian couple June 3, Islamic extremists called for the pair, an attorney and two judges to be beheaded.

Lahore High Court overturned the 2014 conviction of Shagufta Kausar, mother of four, and her husband Shafqat Emmanuel, a paraplegic. The couple was accused of sending text messages allegedly disrespectful of Islam’s Prophet Muhammad. Supreme Court attorney Saif Ul Malook said extremists are calling for the beheading of him, the couple and the two judges who ordered the couple’s release from prison.

For six years, the high court had repeatedly adjourned the couple’s appeal of their death sen-

tences. The European Union Parliament passed a resolution in April to review Pakistan’s GSP+ status and mentioned the couple’s case.

The U.S. Department of State’s 2020 International Religious Freedom Report reveals at least 35 people received death sentences last year under Pakistan’s blasphemy laws. Pakistan is No. 5 on Open Doors’ 2021 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian.

Iranian Christian told to begin prison term on ‘propaganda’ charge

FARDIS, Iran — An Iranian Christian convert

received notice to begin his 10-month prison sentence after a court June 26 rejected his appeal of a charge of “propaganda against the Islamic Republic.”

Hamed Ashoori, 31, was arrested Feb. 23, 2019, and his home raided. Bibles, Christian literature and computer hard drives were confiscated. After his arrest, Ashoori was kept 12 days in a prison in Karaj, spending 10 days in solitary confinement, according to a report by international Christian aid agency Barnabas Fund. Ashoori was put into a “reeducation” program with an Islamic cleric. Ashoori went to four sessions, and when he refused more, court proceedings initiated. At least 20 Christians are in prison or in enforced internal exile in Iran, Barnabas Fund reported.

Iran is No. 8 on Open Doors’ 2021 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian.



Photo courtesy of Morning Star News

Alabama news

COFFEE COUNTY ASSOCIATION

► **Zion Chapel Baptist Church, Elba**, will hold a Community Thanksgiving Service Nov. 21, 5 p.m. Guest speaker will be Chris Tidwell, pastor of New Life Church of Perdue. Special music will be provided by New Life Church worship team. Cary Maulden is pastor.

MARSHALL ASSOCIATION

► Pastor Rick Douglas said God “has richly blessed” **Creek Path Baptist Church, Guntersville**, which celebrated its 50th anniversary Oct. 10.

“This church is loving, missions-minded and dedicated to investing in children,” he said. “It was wonderful to see all of those characteristics come together in our celebration.”



Facebook photo

The guest speaker for the morning was Ted Traylor — pastor of Olive Baptist Church, Pensacola, Florida — whose in-laws helped start the church. Traylor preached a revival there when the church started in 1971.

Frank Jones — who also led music at the church during revival services in 1971 — provided the special music for the celebration, along with the church’s worship team and David Bearden, minister of music.

Mike Foreman, associational mission strategist for Marshall Baptist Association, brought greetings and presented the church with a certificate on behalf of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission.

Throughout the day, photos were on display, and those present received a copy of the church history and an anniversary coffee cup. Children received candy bags. The church has more anniversary celebration activities planned for 2022.

SHELBY ASSOCIATION

► **Montevallo First Baptist Church** is celebrating its sanctuary renovation Nov. 21 with its regular service at 10:30 a.m. and reception from 2 to 4 p.m. Terry Sutton is pastor.

TUSKEGEE LEE ASSOCIATION

► When Adam W. Greenway, president of Southwestern Seminary, talks about the seminary’s graduates, he loves to tell the story of **Al Jackson**.



Screenshot

“Let me tell you about the miracle of Lakeview and what God has done through a pastor who didn’t rely on gimmicks, who wasn’t always looking for something that was innovative or new,

but who ... decade after decade stood in the pulpit of the living God and preached the text and God gave the increase,” Greenway told those present for a special service honoring Jackson and his wife, Kem, on Oct. 31 at Lakeview Baptist Church, Auburn. Jackson retired that day from Lakeview after serving as its pastor since 1979.

During Jackson’s time as pastor, the church has sent out more people to do international missions work than “any other church I know of,” Greenway said.

Greenway was one of many who spoke at the service, as was Cliff Knight, Lakeview’s associate pastor and minister to families, who through tears thanked the Jacksons on behalf of the church. Knight has served alongside Jackson for 40 of the 42 years Jackson has been at Lakeview.

“Thank you. You’ve led us well, you’ve preached faithfully from this Book, you’ve lived a holy and godly life, you’ve sacrificed,” Knight said.

WEST CENTRAL ASSOCIATION

► **Lee Tate**, pastor of Benton Baptist Church, a little south-east of Selma, will succeed Tom Stacey as leader of the newly formed **West Central Baptist Association**.

Stacey has served 25 years in the director of missions role for Selma Baptist Association — which recently joined with Cahaba Baptist Association to become West Central Association. He plans a Jan. 11 retirement, and Tate begins his service Jan. 1 under the adapted title of associational mission strategist.

West Central Association’s executive committee voted unanimously Oct. 28 to call Tate.

Search committee chairman Tim Mathis, pastor of Westwood Baptist Church, Selma, said, “Our committee could not be more delighted to have Lee Tate accept the call to be our associational mission strategist. He is a man who loves and lives the great commandment and the Great Commission. Not only that, but he has led each church he has pastored to [do the same]. When it came down to it, Lee was the man we wanted leading our association to greater cooperation around the great commandment and Great Commission. We’re eternally thankful for the foundation Tom Stacey has laid over these last 25 years and cannot wait to see how the Lord uses Lee to build on top of that.”

Born and raised in Selma, Tate came to Christ as a sophomore in college at Troy University. He and his wife, Sondra, were married in 1983 and he served in the Air Force from 1985 to

1990. They have three children and five grandchildren.

After attending Southeastern Seminary from 1997 to 2000, Tate served as associate pastor at First Baptist Church Selma (2001–2004) before becoming a senior pastor. He served as pastor of Uniontown Baptist Church for three years (2004–2007) and has spent the last 18 years as pastor of Benton.

Tate led Benton to be an extremely generous missions-giving and missions-going church, according to Mathis. In 2020, the 46-resident member church gave \$46,000 to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering and through the years at least 29 of the 46 members have participated in international missions trips. The church also recently commissioned four of its members to be church planters in Whitehall at Imago Dei Church at the 45.

“I’m grateful to the Lord for this opportunity to serve the pastors and local churches of the WCBA,” Tate said. “We are looking forward to God doing great things in and through us during our time together.”

WEST CULLMAN ASSOCIATION

► Oct. 19 was a big day for **West Cullman Baptist Association**. The association celebrated its 75th anniversary and a new leader.

Justin Olvey (right) was approved as the association’s new director of missions. For the event, the association’s churches assembled exhibits displaying important historical events in their churches.

During the meeting, a brief history of the association was distributed that had been compiled by the historical committee — Larry Duke, Laura Harris, Tommy Hutchins, Iva Rodgers and Kathy Waddell.

The men’s quartet and vocal ensemble from First Baptist Church Cullman provided special music, and congregational singing was led by Randy Shark and Chuck Johnston.

Steve Brown, pastor at West Point Baptist Church, Cullman, brought the message, and Lonette Berg (left), executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented the association with a plaque commemorating the occasion.



Photo courtesy of Lonette Berg

Submit Alabama news such as staff changes, events, anniversaries and other items to news@thealabamabaptist.org.

Headline news

from around the Southeast

ARKANSAS

Messengers to the Arkansas Baptist State Convention's 168th annual meeting, held Oct. 26–27, at First Baptist Church Cabot approved a 2022 budget of \$21 million, with 48.4% of the budget going to out-of-state missions, including 45.82% to Southern Baptists' Cooperative Program, Arkansas Baptist News reported. Messengers also approved the formation of a Sexual Abuse Task Force "to ensure the policies and procedures of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention are above reproach in handling sexual abuse allegations." ABSC Executive Director J.D. "Sonny" Tucker, said, "I fully affirm and welcome the establishment of a task force with the intention to ensure the ABSC operates by the highest standards possible in regards to sexual abuse and allegations related to this matter. We will continue to utilize resources to serve churches in order to prevent sexual abuse from ever occurring. Also, we will continue to seek ways to bring help, comfort and healing for those who have suffered sexual abuse." The motion stipulates that the task force is to "report back best practices and steps taken within the ABSC to the messengers at the 2022 annual meeting."



FLORIDA

Pastor Cliff Smith of Community Baptist Church in Bunnell, believes the job of a church is to "mirror the book of Acts — be strong in doctrine and in the community." Community Baptist was founded 32 years ago in an area south of St. Augustine that needed the presence of a church, reported the Florida Baptist Witness. Smith began as an interim pastor in 2016, becoming the lead pastor in 2018. When Smith arrived, he discovered the church needed revival. Starting with a trunk or treat event, Smith helped members rediscover a passion for their community. "As I've seen our people reach out in the community in ways they've never done, the blessing was seeing how God transformed their lives even as they were seeking to transform the lives of others," Smith said.



Photo courtesy of Florida Baptist Witness

GEORGIA

Almost every day the average American pulls up to a local drive-thru — to order fast food, pick up laundry or even to deposit a check. Now a church in metro Atlanta is asking, "Why not a drive-thru for prayer? Last year when the pandemic restricted Johnson Ferry Baptist Church in Marietta from holding in-person community prayer services, church leaders decided to try something new — drive-thru prayer. "Drive-thru prayer is 'stay in your car, come as you are.' The process is very simple and unthreatening," said Dolores Elliott, prayer ministry coordinator for the church. Drive-thru prayer is held in the church parking lot from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month. Even as pandemic restrictions have eased, drive-thru prayer continues. "Drive-thru prayer is an easy way to reach out to the community surrounding you, letting people know your church is a place where they will find people to listen, love and pray for them," Elliott explained.

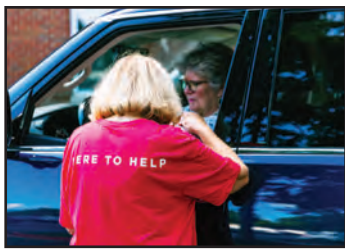


Photo courtesy of Johnson Ferry Baptist Church

KENTUCKY

The beginning of the pandemic offered churches with two options, panic or pray. Pastor Ed Amundson of High Street Baptist Church in Somerset, chose to pray and find ways to continue to minister to his community, reported Kentucky Today. Amundson and his staff came up with a food program to provide hot meals to people in need during the first four months of the pandemic, thinking they would feed 20 or 30 people, but God's plans were bigger. Suddenly, the church found itself providing meals for more than 1,000 families every Wednesday. As the numbers grew, donations to help purchase food poured in, and local restaurants also helped. High Street began to share the gospel with people while they sat in their cars in the church parking lot, waiting for their meals. Over the past 18 months, the church has not stopped ministering to its com-



Photo courtesy of Kentucky Today

munity, planning event after event. By Sept. 30, the church, which typically would baptize about 12 people annually, celebrated 37 salvations and baptisms. "I've heard a lot of other churches experienced some really incredible things [during the pandemic]," Amundson said. "This was my loaves and fishes story."

LOUISIANA

Louisiana College, in existence since 1906, has officially earned university status by expanding its academic offerings and has updated its name to Louisiana Christian University. The announcement was made Nov. 16 during the Louisiana Baptist Convention annual meeting. "When I became president in 2015," said the school's president Rick Brewer, "I told the Board I came to lead a great Christian college to become an even greater Christian university." Enrollment currently stands at about 1,250, and the Christian institution has graduated more than 15,000 students over the years, LCU reported. The school offers dozens of bachelor's degrees and four graduate programs, with a fifth graduate program in business administration to be added in fall 2022. Additionally, the school's Vision 2025 strategic plan calls for its first doctoral program in education. In celebrating the news, Steve Horn, executive director of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, said, "LCU is a Louisiana school, which is unapologetically Christian, whose expanded academic offerings raise it to a university level."

MISSISSIPPI

Jerry Rankin, president emeritus of the Southern Baptist Convention International Mission Board, has been named 2021 alumnus of the year by Mississippi College. Rankin served 17 years as IMB president, retiring in 2010. Prior to serving in that role, Rankin and his wife, Bobbie, were international missionaries for 23 years. Rankin first was appointed as missionary to Indonesia. He also served as an associate to the area director for South and Southeast Asia, administrator for Southern Baptist missions work in India and area director for Southern Asia and Pacific. He currently works as an adjunct professor of missions in MC's department of Christian studies. He is designing and developing six new courses for a missions minor, MC reported.



RANKIN

Establishing 'care communities'

Widows ministries provide tangible evidence of God's love to grieving

By Lanell Downs Smith

TAB Media

After her husband Stephen died of COVID-19 complications, Daria Wilson felt devastated and missed sharing life with him.

"We have 19-year-old triplets and it is hard to [not] be able to share experiences, like Parents Weekend at Troy University with our daughter," Wilson said. "We have talked every day for the last 25 years, and I find myself reaching for the phone just to tell him about my day."

Wilson's Sunday School class at Crawford Baptist Church in Mobile offered support during her grief, providing meals, visits and prayer. In the days and weeks following her husband's death, she described feeling as if she was being "carried on a cloud by the prayers of so many."

Some describe grief after the death of a spouse as a feeling of having lost something irreplaceable — a piece of themselves.

Knowing from experience

Jackie Kelley knows that feeling well. She and her husband, Mike, were childhood sweethearts who married during college. When he died four years ago, Jackie said she missed the closeness they shared, knowing so much about each other.

Mike had a heart for widows and orphans, and after his death Jackie, a member of First Baptist Church Montgomery, wanted to do something to honor him. She understood the pain of losing her soulmate and the challenges of learning to cope with everyday life without "that person."

'Very lonely'

"I realized that nobody understands what being a widow is like until you are a widow," she reflected. "And people have the best intentions in the world. They surround you, but you can be in a room of 100 people and still be very lonely because that one person's not there."

Kelley approached Jay Wolf, then-pastor of FBC Montgomery, with her desire to serve other widows within the church. After much prayer and with Wolf's support, she began a WE CARE ministry, working with Kenny Hoomes, associate pastor for spiritual maturity/senior adults, to develop it and to enlist deacon support.

Now when Kelley is notified of a death, she sends the widow a note, indicating she is praying. A couple of months later she visits and offers information and support.

"Having been there, I realized that you don't retain anything those first



Photo courtesy of Beauty by Fire Ministries

A Beauty by Fire Ministries volunteer helps with construction at a home where a fatal fire took the life of a husband and destroyed the residence. Beauty by Fire offered construction help and support after the devastating loss.

few months," Kelley recalled. "And you don't want to meet new people, you just want to settle in."

During the visits, Kelley delivers a bag with a prayer card and soup. She also alerts the widow to the avail-

ability of the deacons to meet physical needs and provide support.

"It's our mission to be tangible evidence that God is love, because He has commanded us to walk with Him," Kelley said.

As part of WE CARE's efforts, Kelley partners with Beauty by Fire Ministries — a nonprofit that works with central Alabama's River Region churches, like FBC Montgomery, providing training for care of widows. It also provides monthly Bible studies, luncheons and "supper clubs" for fellowship and encouragement, along with biblical grief counseling for widows and their minor children.

"Beauty by Fire Ministries is committed to helping meet the ongoing emotional and material needs of widows in our community, while pointing her to Jesus for the spiritual nourishment she needs," said Brooke Freeman, founder and president.

"We have cultivated a culture of discipleship among the ladies through established 'care communities' in which they are able to serve the Lord and one another, to be a source of comfort, encouragement and hope in their most difficult of days."

Churches can partner with Beauty by Fire by coordinating volunteers to help on "serve days," facilitating "caring for widows" awareness events or training for church members,

providing financial gifts to assist with ongoing costs and praying for the ministry and the widows and children they serve.

SUGGESTED READING



"Struggling Toward Hope: Life After the Death of a Spouse"
by Bob Terry

Practical tips for serving widows after the death of a spouse

▶ What to say in a card or on the phone: I'm praying for you; I'm so sorry; I'm here for you.

▶ What to say during a visit: What can I do for you? Do you need to talk? What errands can I run for you?

▶ What tangible gifts can I offer? Consider fresh fruit (many will bring heavy meals), sodas, water; disposable containers for leftovers; restaurant gift cards; paper products like trash bags,

plates, cold and hot cups, tissues, napkins, paper towels.

▶ Loan tables and chairs for extra guests.

▶ Offer to help clean the house or babysit.

▶ Express concern and let the conversation remain about the deceased. Avoid sharing personal experiences.

▶ Just be present. Words may not be necessary. (Cynthia Walker Watts-Barrineau)

**November is National
Adoption Awareness month.**

Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries foster parents Alan and Katie Bond officially adopted Javontez, now 2, into their family this year.



Photo courtesy of Katie Bond

Influencing lives

Couple faces infertility, grieving process before choosing adoption

Aaron Jaillet still remembers the awkward conversation he had many years ago with his future wife, Abby, when he asked if she'd be willing to move up their plans and get married before she graduated from college.

"It didn't go well," recalled Aaron in an episode of the TAB Media podcast Amplify. Their plan involved finishing college, getting jobs, getting married, buying their first home, then having children.

Grief of infertility

"We kind of had this plan from the beginning, of what this would look like," said Jaillet, who married Abby in 2015. They are now members of Iron City Church in Birmingham. "We'll wait three to five years and we'll have a kid and wait a couple years and have another kid. We've always talked about having three kids. That was kind of our plan."

But after getting settled in their

home and married life, the timeline began to take an unexpected route. The initial talk of "give it time" and "it will happen when the time is right" eventually turned into doubt, doctor visits, failed fertility treatments, frustration and heartache.

Now six years into their marriage, the Jaillets are seeking adoption. And while both are excited about the future and what God has in store, getting to that point has involved a lot of prayer and time to process the grief involved with infertility.

Part of it for Jaillet was realizing how he and his wife process grief differently.

"I did have that wall up because I was trying to deal with my pain without showing it to her," he said. "I was afraid it would cause even more pain for her, when in actuality putting that wall up caused more pain than it otherwise would have."

For Jaillet, finding other believers he and his wife could share their infertility struggles with helped them through the grief and moving forward with adoption.

"It is a very heavy burden to carry," he said, "and the more we can share [with other believers], the more we can learn about each other and be in real community with one another."

"It's been this strange moment of understanding that we are still grieving, but also understanding that we will have children of our own through adoption someday."

With more than 6,000 children in foster care in Alabama, Alabama Baptist families like the Jaillets can make a lasting impact in the lives of hurting children and families in the name of Jesus Christ, says Rod Marshall, president and CEO of Alabama Baptist Children's Homes

& Family Ministries. In this year's issue of Fruitful, TAB Media's annual publication produced for the Alabama Baptist State Convention, Marshall shares the story of Javontez, who was adopted this year after spending two years in foster care.

Serious health issues

"As a preemie, Javontez came to [ABCH care] straight from the hospital after spending a long time in the NICU," Marshall writes. "Born at only 27 weeks and weighing only two pounds, two ounces, he was facing very serious health issues."

"After a two-month stay in the hospital, Alan and Katie Bond, one of our incredible foster families, took over his daily care. Shortly after coming into their care, he had some other serious health setbacks."

Marshall said the support given to ABCH made sure the Bond family was able to provide the necessary care Javontez so desperately needed to overcome the medical hurdles he faced.

"Two years later, Javontez is a different child," Marshall said. "He runs, plays and engages in typical 2-year-old behaviors. It is truly a miracle that Javontez is alive today." The Bonds officially adopted Javontez in June, and they give credit to the Lord, he added.

Despite the sometimes heavy nature of caring for children from hard places, Marshall said there are also "many bright spots we are blessed to be a part. Every day in our ministry, lives are being influenced and impacted for the Kingdom." (TAB Media)

**Read more
about coping
with infertility
and find a list
of resources
at tabonline.org/infertility.**

3 practical ways to engage your church

Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries offers several free resources for pastors, church leaders and others interested in making a difference in the lives of children and families like Javontez and the Bonds.

The challenge is often in knowing what gospel-centered orphan and foster care ministry looks like and where to begin, ABCH President Rod Marshall

said. Begin with these three ideas and resources:

1. Pray. Prayer support — ABCH online or call to request free bookmarks or magnets with daily prayer requests. You can also sign up to become a monthly Prayer Partner via email. Visit alabama-child.org/pray to learn more.

2. Serve. Foster care — Multiple ways to serve abound, and ABCH is on track to see more than 1,000 volunteers engaging with its min-

istry this year. Download a free foster care resource to help guide your next steps to understanding and helping children at www.alabamachild.org/support.

3. Give. Financial support — When you share financially, you provide children with food, clothing, a safe and Christ-centered foster home and more, Marshall said.

Find out more more at www.alabamachild.org. (TAB Media)

Week of Prayer for International Missions

DAY 1

International Mission Board missionaries Sean and Shelley Blacksten serve with Tim and Tina Louderback, leaders of the Americas Connect program. Both couples are passionate about equipping and connecting churches with opportunities to serve in Central America and the Caribbean.

DAY 2

The missions strategy of Henderson Hills Baptist Church in Oklahoma was forever changed when their missions pastor read a startling statistic: “5% of missions work is done in North Africa and Middle East.” Now the church is actively engaged with IMB workers in that area.

DAY 3

Skip and Kim Meyer* moved to South Asia in 2004, but their lives on the missions field started in South America where they grew up as missionary kids. God is using their knowledge of the Spanish language and Latino culture to train and mobilize Hispanics and Latinos to serve in South Asia.

DAY 4

IMB worker Katee Sheppard* has seen firsthand the impact Bible stories in Africans’ heart languages can have. Now African orality trainers are traveling the continent and leading workshops for thousands of believers representing dozens of languages.

DAY 5

To find a way to support their families, many people from Turkmenistan, one of the most repressive countries in the world, move to places like Turkey, Cyprus and Russia. Some who move abroad are able hear the gospel for the first time, but that comes with persecution.



Photo courtesy of International Mission Board

Day 6 — An elderly woman watches her grandson in a village in Southeast Asia. A local believer named ‘Momma’ boldly shares the gospel in villages like this one, and many have committed their lives to Christ.



Photo courtesy of International Mission Board

Day 3 — Skip and Kim Meyer* walk with their family to research ways to gain entry to a remote area for ministry among South Asians.

DAY 6

Stephen and Erin Spencer* minister in a region of Southeast Asia where tribal warfare is ongoing, civil unrest is on the rise and foreigners are blacklisted from entering certain regions. However, the good news is entering homes and the hearts of people like Momma, a believer who boldly witnesses to others.

DAY 7

When IMB missionary Jeremiah Farmer* moved to Taiwan, he recognized a need in the churches — no one was being sent out as missionaries. Jeremiah and other IMB missionaries focused on training Taiwanese believers, encouraging and equipping them to send.

DAY 8

When Larry and Melissa Lewis moved to Czechia as IMB church planters, they began a Bible study in their home. That Bible study outgrew their home and is now a vibrant Czech-speaking church that is planting other churches. (IMB)

*EDITOR’S NOTE — *Names changed for security reasons.*

You can help missionaries share hope of Jesus

(continued from page 1)

gospel presence among their people group.

That support comes in large part through Southern Baptists’ gifts through the Cooperative Program and to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions.

One hundred percent of the LMCO goes straight to missionaries who are making disciples and multiplying churches among unreached people groups.

The national offering goal this year is \$185 million, and the Alabama goal is \$12.25 million.

The Rudds are among the more than 3,600 IMB workers living and working around the world to take the hope of Jesus to people who haven’t heard it. As they go, lives are changed, and churches are planted, thanks to the generosity of Southern Baptists.

Season of giving

This LMCO season of giving begins with the Week of Prayer for International Missions, set this year for Nov. 28–Dec. 5. The week will highlight stories of missionaries who, like the Rudds, are supported by the LMCO (see descriptions at left). All of them benefit from the offering, and all of them need prayer support to stay strong in the work God has called them to do.

The Rudds say they definitely appreciate prayer as they adjust to a new city, that they would be able to connect with other young families. They also ask for prayer for God to “unblind our people so they would see the gospel as good news for them,” Samuel Rudd said.

Prayer guides and videos with these stories and more are available for individuals, groups and churches to download or order for free. For more information visit alabamawmu.org/offerings.

**The Week of Prayer
for International
Missions is
Nov. 28–Dec. 5.**

imb

**LOTTIE MOON
CHRISTMAS
OFFERING®**

**National goal: \$185 million
Alabama goal: \$12.25 million**

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Church plant in Huntsville hosts outreach to connect with community

By Tracy Riggs
TAB Media

When Mosaic City Church in Huntsville held its first Trunk-or-Treat, they prayed for 150 to show up. More than triple that number came. For their second effort this year they prayed for at least 500, and some 1,000 community members attended.

“Huntsville’s now the largest city in Alabama,” noted Will Faulkenberry, lead pastor, “and right now, it’s estimated that it’s 60% unchurched. That number is only going to go up as the population increases.”

So Mosaic City hosts events like Trunk-or-Treat to reach out to its part of the city.

Mosaic City Church began in September 2019. They celebrated their six-month anniversary and before the next service, COVID-19 struck. They switched to online-only services until Easter, when they began “drive-in” meetings.

Initially, they met at the Baptist Campus Ministries building at the University of Alabama in Huntsville.

They prayed for a partnership with Woodland Hill Baptist

Church, an older congregation in a culturally and economically diverse area, and when in June 2020 it was getting too hot to continue outdoor services, Woodland Hill agreed to share space.

“Many churches are a lot like Woodland Hill,” Faulkenberry noted. “They are an older congregation. They have the resources, but they don’t have the energy to do an outreach event. We have the people and manpower but don’t have the resources they have.”

Helpful partnership

“Together, we’re able to do some amazing things that neither of us would have been able to do without the other.

“It’s a partnership that is helping us by providing space,” Faulkenberry added, “but also, it’s renewing their legacy to be a light in that community.”

Though they ran out of hot dogs and parking spaces, everyone was patient and had a good time, Faulkenberry said, and the Lord supplied what was needed.

“The candy kept coming,” he recalled. “The Lord continued to provide, like fish and loaves. We never ran out of candy.”



Photo courtesy of Jordan Milar

About 1,000 people attend a Trunk-or-Treat at Mosaic City Church in Huntsville. The church hosts events like this to reach out to its part of the city.

Along with other efforts, a prayer tent was available and drew a lot of interest, Faulkenberry noted. Guests were open and seemed surprised that someone was willing to talk about their problems and pray for them.

The tent provided prayer request slips in both English and Spanish. One of Mosaic City’s vision statements is, “Mosaic City Church is to be known as a community that is made up of all kinds of people who love one another,” so they are developing a Spanish-language ministry.

Beautiful from broken

Mosaic City’s name came from the qualities of a mosaic artwork.

“A mosaic picture is made up of broken pieces from various sources that come together,” Faulkenberry explained.

“A lot of times people [in church] look around and have the feeling that everyone has it together. They think there must be something wrong with them because all of these other people are perfect.

“A lot of times church people put on this church face, this façade, and pretend everything is fine, when the

truth is that all of us are struggling, all of us are broken.

“Our invitation is ‘Come struggle with us toward Christ.’”

God’s power

Faulkenberry admitted that if the church had tried to carry out Trunk-or-Treat in its own power, “we could put together an event, but that wouldn’t mean anything for eternity. We needed God’s power, and He blessed and honored our prayers. He blessed above and beyond what we anticipated.”

“Our goal for this event was not just to share the gospel but to make connections that will lead to future gospel conversations,” Faulkenberry added.

“We wanted this community in a forgotten area of Huntsville to know there is a church here that loves them and, more importantly, that God loves them.

“[O]ur folks having smiling faces and interacting with them showed a place where people can feel like they’re at home, like they belong.

“God can use even a small church to do something amazing for His kingdom,” Faulkenberry declared.



Photo courtesy of Jordan Milar

People from the community enjoy a hayride at Mosaic City Church’s Trunk-or-Treat. The church shares space with Woodland Hill Baptist Church.

THROUGH YOUR SUPPORT,
YOU WERE *there*

TO HELP FOSTER CHILDREN ENTERING ALABAMA BAPTIST CHILDREN'S HOMES & FAMILY MINISTRIES FROM DIFFICULT SITUATIONS BE WELCOMED INTO A LOVING PLACE TO CALL HOME.



On **TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 30**, for #GivingTuesday, our goal is \$500,000 (including up to \$250,000 in matching gifts from a group of generous donors) to help even more children from hard places.

This amount will provide **TWO MONTHS** of support for the hundreds of children in our foster care ministry. That's two months of three warm meals a day . . . two months in a safe space to just be a kid . . . *two months of them encountering the love of Christ through our foster and house parents.*

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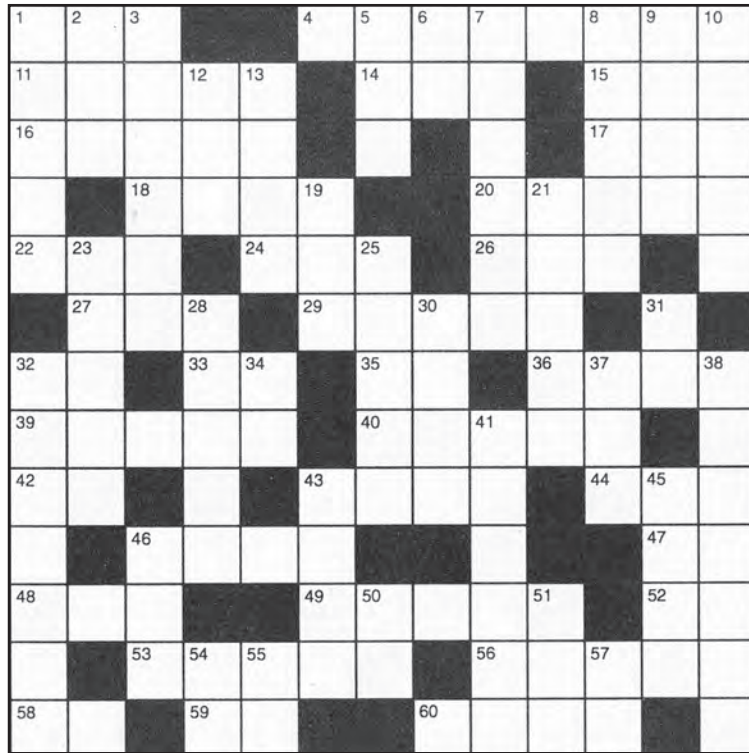


Alabama Baptist
CHILDREN'S HOMES
& Family Ministries

CHRISTIAN crossword

ACROSS

1. Thy master's son shall ___ bread. (2 Sam. 9:10)
4. Be ___ to do my commandments. (1 Chron. 28:7)
11. Is not this a ___ plucked out of the fire? (Zech. 3:2)
14. Be ye ___ as your fathers. (Zech. 1:4)
15. Stretch out thine hand over the ___. (Ex. 14:26)
16. Let us go and serve ___ gods. (Deut. 13:6)
17. Streets. (abbr.)
18. And Jacob stole ___ unawares. (Gen. 31:20)
20. The first ___ was like a lion. (Rev. 4:7)
22. ___ gleaning grapes shall be left in it. (Isa. 17:6)
24. ___ you into your tents again. (Deut. 5:30)
26. I will ___ mine hand upon my mouth. (Job 40:4)
27. ___ the son of Abdiel. (1 Chron. 5:15)
29. As with the ___ of usury. (Isa. 24:2)
32. He shall eat ___ my table. (2 Sam. 9:11)
33. ___, enquire of Baalzebub. (2 Kings 1:2)
35. His offering shall ___ of fine flour. (Lev. 2:1)
36. He moveth his ___ like a cedar. (Job 40:17)
39. And ___ went out and wept bitterly. (Luke 22:62)
40. Zilpah ___ maid bore Jacob a son. (Gen. 30:10)
42. Have ye a father, ___ a brother? (Gen. 44:19)
43. I have ___ the ways of the Lord. (2 Sam. 22:22)
44. They took a ___ and opened them. (Judg. 3:25)
46. ___ the Ahohite. (1 Chron. 11:29)
47. I turned to see the voice that spake with ___. (Rev. 1:12)
48. Then I came to them of the captivity at ___abib. (Ezek. 3:15)
49. The Egyptian had a ___ in his hand. (2 Sam. 23:21)
52. The children of Gad called the altar ___.



By Janice A. Buhl Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

53. ___ him and let him go. (John 11:44)
 56. To be ___ and to be bakers. (1 Sam. 8:13)
 58. The inhabitants of ___dor and her towns. (Josh. 17:11)
 59. French. (abbr.)
 60. Related.
- DOWN**
1. Horns of ivory and ___. (Ezek. 27:15)
 2. Thou ___ a virtuous woman. (Ruth 3:11)
 3. They departed from ___. (Num. 33:27)
 5. Harken unto me every ___ of you. (Mark 7:14)
 6. There had been ___ rain in the land. (1 Kings 17:7)
 7. The world also shall be ___. (1 Chron. 16:30)
 8. If we ___ to commune with thee. (Job 4:2)
 9. The wicked fall into their own ___. (Ps. 141:10)
 10. He shall never ___ of death. (John 8:52)
 12. Behold, all things are become ___. (2 Cor. 5:17)
 13. Gather them in their ___. (Hab. 1:15)
 19. Mine hour is not ___ come. (John 2:4)
 21. The merchants of the ___ shall weep. (Rev. 18:11)
 23. Out of the ___ came forth meat.
- (Judg. 14:14)
 25. He asked for a writing ___. (Luke 1:63)
 28. A son of Shemaiah. (1 Chron. 3:22)
 30. They shall ___ the way of the Lord. (Gen. 18:19)
 31. Joshua burnt ___. (Josh. 8:28)
 32. I am appointed a preacher and an ___. (2 Tim. 1:11)
 34. Two ___ three witnesses. (Heb. 10:28)
 37. ___ and it shall be given you. (Luke 11:9)
 38. Thou takest up that thou ___ not down. (Luke 19:21)
 41. To begin a fight.
 43. Salute one another with a holy ___. (Rom. 16:16)
 45. To the valley of Jiphthahel toward the north side of Beth___. (Josh. 19:27)
 46. Love worketh no ___ to his neighbor. (Rom. 13:10)
 50. Gym class.
 51. And Isaac dwelt by the well Lahai___. (Gen. 25:11)
 54. Love is the fulfilling ___ the law. (Rom. 13:10)
 55. To his own master he standeth ___ falleth. (Rom. 14:4)
 57. Do ye look ___ things after the outward appearance? (2 Cor. 10:7)

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

Place a classified ad for \$1 per word.
For more information call 205-870-4720, ext. 102,
or email ads@thealabamabaptist.org.

CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR
Immanuel Baptist Church in Benton, Ill., with an average attendance of 400 is seeking a senior pastor. Details for the position are available at jobs.sbc.net and pastorsearch.ibsa.org.

SENIOR PASTOR
East Heights Baptist Church, Tupelo, Miss., (a Southern Baptist church that adheres to the Baptist Faith & Message) is seeking a senior pastor who will provide leadership for the church and pastoral staff. Send resumé to: ehbtupelopastorsearch@gmail.com or mail to: Randy D. McCoy, 290 Tyler Willis Lane, Tupelo, MS 38804.

PASTOR
Pathway Baptist Church in Dothan is seeking a full-time pastor. For qualifications, email questions or forward resumé to: avpbcdothan@gmail.com ATTN: Pastor Search Committee, or mail to: Pathway Baptist Church, ATTN: Pastor Search Committee, 3551 Flowers Chapel Road, Dothan, AL 36305.

MINISTER OF MUSIC
FBC Dadeville, Ala., seeks full-time minister of music. Competitive salary commensurate to training, education and experience. For more information, go to www.fbcdadeville.com.

BIVOCATIONAL WORSHIP LEADER
New Hope Baptist Church, Talladega, is seeking a bivocational worship leader. We enjoy a blend of hymns and contemporary music. Interested persons send resumé to: Search Committee, P.O. Box 493, Talladega, AL 35161-0493.

BIVOCATIONAL WORSHIP LEADER
Purpose Baptist Church, Opelika, Ala., is looking for a bivocational worship leader. Please send resumé to: PurposeBaptist@gmail.com.

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Samford linebacker blends football and Christ

By Bill Sorrell

TAB Media

Samford University linebacker Nathan East has a nickname. “We like to call him ‘Captain America,’” fellow linebacker Noah Martin said. “He is a sure tackler, as well as pass rusher. He can lock down a lot of people in open space. He is one of the fastest players on the team. He literally can do it all. He can fly.”

“Nathan is a fantastic leader for our defense, and he plays the game full speed all the time,” said defensive tackle Seth Simmer. “He has no ‘quit’ in him. Nathan brings an energy to the field and to the locker room that is unmatched.”

East, 22, also is a spiritual leader for the Bulldogs.

When he was 10 he thought he had accepted Christ during Vacation Bible School at Loveless Park (now Grace Life) Baptist Church in McCalla, but toward the end of 2019 he began to have doubts about his salvation.

As East prayed and studied the Bible he said it was revealed “more and more that I wasn’t saved,” he recalled, “that maybe I didn’t truly know Jesus.”

He told his fiancé, Raeley Vaughn

— who he plans to marry next spring — that he did not have affirmation of salvation.

“We were sitting outside looking at stars and at nature and having some godly conversations, asking each other questions,” East remembered.

The next day, March 1, 2020, the sermon from Pastor Joel Frederick revolved around some of the questions they discussed the night before.

“I knew it was God talking to me. I went to the altar. That is when I became a Christian officially,” East said.

“I was thinking that I was a Christian by the things I was doing as far as helping out at church, attending church [but realized] it is not about what I’m doing, that it is about having a relationship with Jesus, letting His light shine through me day to day.

“I was checking off all the boxes, going on youth trips, going to church Sundays and Wednesdays, but I still had the empty heart,” said East, who was baptized at Shadow Lake, on the church property, later that month.

He grew up in a single-parent Christian home. His parents divorced before he was born, and his

“As an athlete it’s an easy way to talk to people and find a way to share the gospel message in a conversation that is related to football.”

**Nathan East
football player
Samford University**



Photo by Chase Cochran/Samford Athletics

Nathan East (22), linebacker for the Samford University football team, communicates with his fellow teammates before a play during the Bulldogs’ first game of the season against the Tennessee Tech Golden Eagles.

father died when he was a senior in high school. But East met godly men at church who were positive spiritual influences, he said.

Emulating Christ

His desire is to emulate the character of Jesus in the classroom, with teammates and through the way he treats and loves others, East said.

“I want to be that friend that is there to listen, to care, to love.”

He tries to surround himself with the “right people” and talk with others about the Bible, and he wants to be intentional about Bible study.

“It’s easy to say as an athlete that you are too busy,” East admitted. “The same challenges and temptations are there every day, but I know the power of Christ I have within me allows me to make better decisions.”

What has enabled East to get through Samford opponents has been his instincts and speed. He runs the 40-yard dash in 4.5 seconds, among the fastest on the team.

He was second team All-Southern Conference during the Spring 2021 season and has been named to the Southern Conference All-Academic team.

“I like to think that I am a good teammate,” East emphasized, “and I feel I have developed into a leadership role.”

He was team captain during the Spring 2021 season. “It meant a

lot,” he said of the honor.

East graduated from Samford in December 2020 with a 3.7 GPA and a major in exercise science, and he started physical therapy school there this summer, with plans to graduate in 2024.

“Off the field, East successfully shows the players how to balance grad school, football and life,” said Coach Nick Benedetto.

But football is one of his best conversation-starters.

“In the South everybody loves football,” East said. “As an athlete it’s an easy way to talk to people and find a way to share the gospel message in a conversation that is related to football.”

He has goals both on the field and in his faith.

‘Mission of Christ’

He wants Samford to win a conference football championship, but his “goal as a Christian is to put myself second every day and be an advocate for the mission of Christ, [to] go and share the good news,” East said.

“I feel like I have been able to do a lot of things that maybe people wouldn’t think I would be able to, growing up without a father in the house. The opportunities God has placed in my life, being able to attend Samford and play football — I think it is unbelievable how everything has come about in my life and shaped me into who I am.”



Photo by Chase Cochran/Samford Athletics

East (22), who is known as a spiritual leader off the field for the Bulldogs, uses his instincts and speed on the field. He is among the fastest players on the team and was named to the 2021 All-Southern Conference second team.



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BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Giving Thanks

A Personal Thing to Do

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.

TAB Media

Today we offer a three-part approach to enlarging our hearts of gratitude.

The first has to do with an inward sentiment. We might call this a “heart feeling” of deep gratitude to God and others for how they continue to bless our lives. The starting point, of course, is within us.

We cultivate in our spirits a desire to be more grateful. This calls for times of reflection and counting our blessings, a requirement often difficult to meet in the busyness of everyday life. Do we not find that thanksgiving takes its starting point with an inward feeling? We could call this inward sentiment the “want to” in the experience of becoming a consistently grateful person.

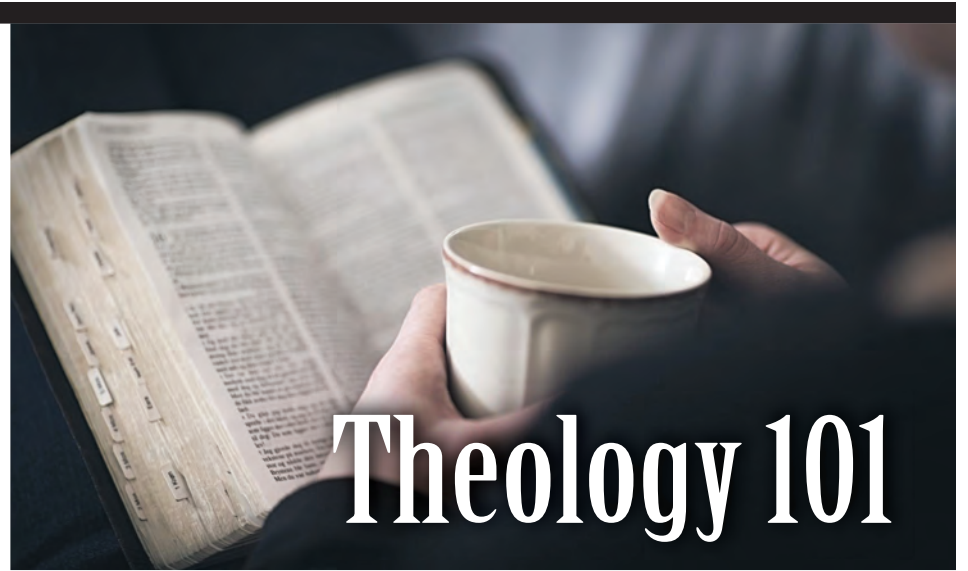
A second stage might be termed a “Godward” expression. The writer prayed in Psalm 51:10, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew

a right spirit within me.” The second part of the prayer speaks to having a renewed spirit that sees God behind every good and perfect gift.

Given a renewed heart, the pathway for expressing thanksgiving to God is made up of two primary lanes that often are intermingled — prayer and praise. We choose to include expressions of grateful dependence on our generous Heavenly Father in private and public times of prayer. We also make sure to give thoughtful attention to expressions of praise to Him, both for who He is and what He does. In doing so, we are obeying the admonition of Psalm 100:4: “Enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him and bless His name.”

Songs of praise

Much praise takes the form of verbal expression set to music. Songs of praise give Godward expression to inward gratitude. This takes se-



Theology 101

riously the truth of Psalm 145:3: “Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised.”

In addition to the practice of prayer and praise, we should maintain a thankful spirit that burns brightly throughout the year, which might be expressed as “outward conduct.” People have sometimes coined the word “thanks-living” to capture the idea. Living out daily gratitude involves an upright life that pleases God and reflects Him consistently in our words and deeds.

Words are among indispensable expressions of gratitude, but how we choose to live also is a way

of expressing a grateful heart.

A thanksgiving afterglow that extends far beyond Thanksgiving Day may well depend on how well we do with inward sentiment, Godward expression and outward conduct.

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.



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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For November 21

Explore the Bible

By Robert Olsen, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



THE GOSPEL AND RELATIONSHIPS Colossians 3:18–4:6

In Our Families (3:18–21)

Chapter 3 in Colossians is a transition from arguments against false teachers to how Christians should live in light of Christ's resurrection. In this section, Paul explains to the Colossians the dynamics of Christian family relationships.

The role of the husband and wife is a touchy subject in today's society for a variety of reasons. First of all, historically, men have often used this verse (and Ephesians 5) as a license to be tyrannical toward their wives. This is not how God intends the relationship to work.

In Ephesians 5, Paul says wives are to submit to their husbands as the husbands submit to Christ. Christ is the example for how husbands are to love their wives. If Christian men would love their wives in this regard, then the family would operate well and set an example of how the Christian family looks in opposition to the modern Western idea of the family, where personal, selfish interests often take the fore, leading to a high divorce rate.

Secondly, the modern idea of feminism has contributed to this touchy subject. While many aspects of feminism have been helpful, some aspects have undermined the family. Women need to discover their identity and understanding of what it means to be a wife from the Bible.

Continuing in the line of submission, children are to obey their parents, who are not to exasperate them. Obedience to parents is for the child's benefit.

As parents are called to love their children, children need to understand God has appointed their parents over them to help them grow in the knowledge of who Christ is and what God expects of them. The home is the parents primary missions field.

Fathers are not to belittle their children or shame them to try to get them to behave.

Fathers are not to tell their chil-

dren they will never be good enough or demoralize them. Instead, fathers are to love their children in a Christ-pleasing way. This does not mean the absence of discipline; after all, discipline is a form of love (Heb. 12:7). The key is to discipline in a way that displays love, yet teaches them what acceptable behavior is.

In Our Work (3:22–4:1)

Paul also applies teachings about acceptable behavior to the slave and master, which in Paul's day would have been an aspect of familiar living.

However, for us today, the lessons here works in an employer-employee relationship.

Business owners and managers need to treat workers with respect, not looking to exploit them or overwork them. God will judge Christian employers for how they treat their employees. As for Christian employees, they are to work to the best of their ability for the glory of God.

We work as if we are working for the Lord, and so others may see the good works we do and our love for God.

In Our Interactions (4:2–6)

Transitioning to the last chapter of Colossians, Paul emphasizes the importance of prayer.

We are to be thankful for what God has done for us, and we are to pray for other Christians to be bold in their lives, living for Christ.

Lastly, Paul tells us how to act with outsiders, being wise and speaking graciously. Paul says we are to live in the world without becoming like the world. This admonition is becoming more important as Western world culture continues to move away from basic Christian principles.

Christians need to treat others with grace, forgiving others when they sin against us. When people observe this type of countercultural behavior, it points to the fact we find hope and meaning from God, not from society.

Bible Studies for Life

By James Riley Strange, Ph.D.

Professor of New Testament, Samford University



GIVE THANKS TO GOD Psalm 100

Today we interrupt our series on Abraham and Sarah for a Thanksgiving lesson.

The Psalms express the full range of human responses to God for the contingencies of life. We learn our ancestors in the faith thought both sweet thanksgiving and bitter grief are acceptable to God in their seasons. As the pandemic appears to wane, we remember the trials of 2020 and 2021, yet we acknowledge God is worthy of thanksgiving and praise.

Although it does not mention God as King, Psalm 100 shares much with the kingship of Psalms 93 and 95–99, including the royal shepherd reference and the city and palace/temple references. Hence, it may have concluded the kingship collection.

Serve the Lord with gladness. (1–2)

The superscription "A psalm of thanksgiving" suggests this psalm was read in conjunction with the thanksgiving sacrifice, one type of well-being sacrifice (Lev. 7:12–15).

The psalmist begins by enjoining "all the earth" to "make a joyful noise to Yahweh." The whole creation is called to praise God (see Pss. 98 and 148).

The first word of verse 2 is the imperative "serve" (CSB, KJV, ESV), but it can be understood as "worship" (NIV), because in the Bible, right worship is service to God. "Liturgy" comes from a Greek verb that means to serve, and we still say "worship service."

The psalmist and the prophets also will remind us that right worship is empty if our deeds are unjust (Ps. 99). Doing justice, then, becomes our right worship.

Acknowledge that the Lord is God. (3)

Verse 3 opens with the central Israelite (and Jewish) profession of faith: Yahweh alone is God (Deut. 6:4).

The imperative "Know" ("Acknowledgment" in the NIV; compare

"Hear" in Deuteronomy) makes this imperative a reminder. We have resolved the issue of monotheism, but we easily slip into idolatry, don't we? After all, anything, not just a false god, can take primary place in our lives.

Yahweh, the only God, made us, says the psalmist. We neither created ourselves nor made ourselves into God's people.

Both our existence and our adoption are God's doing.

The allusion to God's flock recalls Psalm 23 with its assurance that God supplies our needs.

Give thanks to Him and bless His name. (4–5)

Verse 4 opens with the image of entering God's temple in Jerusalem.

The psalmist writes as if thanksgiving springs of its own accord from God's people. In a way, the congregation is singing to itself, taking joy in its spontaneous praise of the Creator.

Verse 5 is important for the Israelites and for us for two reasons. First, the final sentence recalls what we have been seeing in the saga of Abraham and Sarah: It is God who is faithful, even when their trust fails, and God's faithfulness extends beyond them to their promised descendants.

Second, God's love does not wax and wane with our circumstances.

God was with us before the pandemic, God has been with us through the darkness of isolation and loss and God is still with us as we emerge cautiously yet gladly into the light.

This Thanksgiving, as many extended families and friends sit around tables shoulder-to-shoulder for the first time in months, let us remember, as the psalmist said in Psalm 30, "Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes in the morning."

Weeping will return and the day will come again. In both night and the light of dawn, God will be with us.

Enter His gates with thanksgiving indeed.

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Tracy Riggs
TAB Media

‘Joy in everyday stuff’ inspires Birmingham author

Having worked as director of student activities at Briarwood Christian School in Birmingham, Sophie Hudson has a heart for teenage girls. A byproduct of that passion is the “Grace Upon Grace Journaling Devotional,” an undated, 100-day devotional directed toward women and teens.

“Teenage girls right now battle perfectionism. They place a lot of expectations upon themselves. They are smart and they are driven and they’re involved. Their time is really precious,” Hudson said. “I thought, ‘Maybe that would be a relief to somebody, just to have a little moment every day where they remember to rest in the grace of God — that it’s not what we do for Him but what by His grace He does in and through us.’”

When parents started asking for recommendations of a devotional, Hudson said she decided to write one of her own, patterning it after Chuck Swindoll’s, “Growing Strong Through the Seasons of Life.”

Asking questions

“At the end of every day’s devotion there was a place to answer questions. When I was that age, the devotional was great, but I really liked the processing that hap-



SOPHIE HUDSON

Photo courtesy of Sophie Hudson

pened from the questions,” Hudson recalled. “One day, when I was working on ‘Giddy Up, Eunice,’ I thought, ‘I may want to write a devotional, but for teenage girls.’”

After publishing several other books, the idea led to “All in All,” Hudson’s first guided journal.

She tries not to be too topical, though she does include some thought-provoking issues ranging from broken hearts to thoughts about racism in “Grace Upon Grace.”

“I think there are times where we have to remember we can get so wrapped up in our little bubbles — whatever our little bubbles happen to be — that sometimes we don’t realize when something that’s not so great has crept into that bubble or into our hearts,” Hudson explained.

Though she has loved to write since she was young, she was ada-

mant about never writing a book. She couldn’t imagine being a professional writer but always loved writing about “real life.” She has

journalled since she was young and majored in English in college.

When God impressed upon her His desire for her to write a book, she dismissed the thought since she didn’t have any ideas.

But one day, while folding clothes, a phrase her grandfather used to say popped into her head: “A little salty to cut the sweet.” She immediately knew the book’s subject and stories to include.

Surprise offer

Not knowing how to find a publisher, Hudson started writing with the idea of possibly self-publishing. Then out of the blue she received an email from a publishing house.

This led to a book proposal, a

contract and eventually publishing her first two books, “A Little Salty to Cut the Sweet: Southern Stories of Faith, Family, and Fifteen Pounds of Bacon” and “Home Is Where My People Are: The Roads that Lead Us to Where We Belong.”

Both of the book covers credit Hudson as the “Author of the BooMama Blog,” which she began as a young mom as a creative outlet.

“I was an English teacher so I was busy teaching other people how to write,” Hudson said. “I started to write frequently and was updating the blog all of the time. This led to [writing] magazine articles.”

Throughout her books she discusses experiences she feels God wants her to share.

“The Lord teaches me a lot just through real life, everyday stuff,” Hudson said. “There’s something sweet about having a chance to sit down and put what you’ve experienced or what you’ve learned into words. That’s probably my favorite thing.

“Like when I’m on a walk or having a conversation with a friend, there’s an epiphany in my head that lines up with the truth of who I know God to be.”

Hudson has six published books, as well as the blog and podcasts.

“I think more than anything, I hope I am a voice that’s encouraging, that finds joy in everyday stuff,” Hudson said. “I’m not a theologian. I’m not an intense Bible teacher. But I am a person who loves to see the Lord at work in just our regular old everyday life.

“I also love to laugh. I think the Lord gives us opportunities to experience a lot of joy day to day.

“The world’s heavy. I always say, I’m not going to change the world, but maybe I can lighten the load a little bit.”

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