

The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

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Hayneville Baptist Church sees move of God, changed lives, continued baptisms

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Chanku Waste Ranch is a Send Relief ministry center, serving the Oglala Lakota people group living on Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Pine Ridge is home to more than 46,000 members of the Oglala Sioux Tribe.

Demonstrating

Photo courtesy of Ric Camp

A TRUE LOVE

Living the gospel, building trust guide ministry efforts in South Dakota

By Lanell Downs Smith
TAB Media

In 2015, Ric Camp, then senior pastor of Ridgecrest Baptist Church in Trussville, took six volunteers to Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota — a place some call the poorest spot in the nation.

Compelled by the needs they encountered and the work of Send Relief missionary Matt

Hadden, the group resolved to partner in the work.

‘A great need’

Pine Ridge is home to more than 46,000 members of the Oglala Sioux Tribe. According to Camp, joblessness and poverty plague the people and contribute to issues like diabetes, obesity, alcoholism, suicide and hopelessness. Access to medical care is limited, he added, and sometimes completely unavailable.

“About 1.5% of the Lakota people are evangelized,” Camp said. “There is a great need for the gospel to be shared, not just verbally, but personally, and lived out.”

Because of past hurts, Camp said, the people are reluctant to accept new people into their community.

“Trust is [built] only when you demonstrate a true love,” Camp said.

As executive director of Chanku Waste Ranch, Hadden offers the Oglala Lakota people free summer day camps for children and a ministry center focused on physical well-being.

During the first week-long missions trip, Camp said he witnessed a great need for medical care. In 2017, a team from Ridgecrest Baptist used the North American Mission Board Send Relief medical

truck to help volunteers conduct health screenings for Pine Ridge residents. The need for ongoing dental care and medical aid — more than just one week per year — became evident.

Vision screenings

While the team prepared to return with the NAMB dental truck in 2018, optometrist Gussie Branch of Eyes on Albertville and Eyes on Gunterville volunteered to perform vision screenings. She also enlisted the help of VSP Vision Care, an insurance company that provided volunteers, eye-glass frames and services (See ‘Partnerships,’ page 15)



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YouTube

TAB Media

youtube.com/tabmediagroup

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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Below: Mark Wakefield, SBOM disaster relief strategist, shares "caps" and coffee with TAB Media's Debbie Campbell (left) and Amy Hacker.



Photo by Don Campbell/The Alabama Baptist



Photo by Debbie Campbell/The Alabama Baptist

Above: TAB Media's Susan Stevens (left) and Hannah Muñoz pack up TAB's display in the exhibit hall at Whitesburg Baptist Church.

Life at convention

Below: The 2022 Pastors Conference officers try out a few poses for their official photo before beginning the preparations for next year's conference in Birmingham.

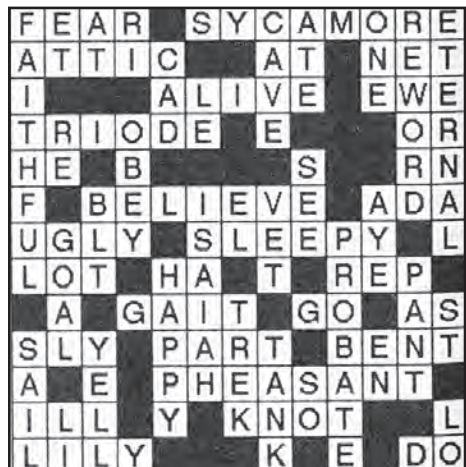


Photo by Maggie Evans/The Alabama Baptist



Photo by Tracy Riggs/The Alabama Baptist

Above: SBOM Executive Director Rick Lance checks out Tim Cox's socks, which feature Lance's photo.



The crossword puzzle can be found on page 14.

Right: Retired IMB photographer Van Payne enjoys a ride from the airport with TAB Media's Maggie and Sam Evans. Payne helped the TAB team cover the 2021 state convention from start to finish.



Photo by Maggie Evans/The Alabama Baptist

To check out our photo gallery, visit tabonline.org/absc2021.



RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

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

✉ jrash@thealabamabaptist.org 🐦 @RashionalThts

Learning to move past those moments we disappoint ourselves

Have you ever cringed after seeing a photo or video of yourself? Or wish you could take back something you shared publicly?

How about those questions you were asking a co-worker because you were trying to understand but the tone came across as scolding or accusatory? And he or she got offended in the process.

Or maybe you didn't account for how exhausted you were and took something personally another person said innocently in passing.

And then there are the moments we aren't as prepared for a presentation or report as we should be because we overcommitted to other activities and stretched our time too thin.

Any or all of these situations can be embarrassing, frustrating and discouraging. I've even noticed how experiencing an off day — a time when I'm less than my best — can change my personality.

I might seem sad, down or even hurt and it's likely because I'm disappointed in myself. I'll play the scene over and over again, kicking myself for the one or two obvious tweaks that would have changed the outcome for the positive.

And sometimes I can shift from disappointment to being angry with myself — knowing I know better and can definitely do better. Why didn't I?

In most cases, I did know better and should have put my best self forward, but for whatever reason, I didn't.

What I've learned over the years of making these kinds of mistakes is that sitting too long in a pity party or depressed state only creates difficulties for us and those around us.

You know what I mean, right? A family member, friend or co-worker loses that normal spark of joy and seems upset about something, but we don't know

what it is and we start thinking through our recent interactions to see if we might have said or done something to upset him or her.

We spend emotional energy trying to read the situation, make right what we might have caused and/or encourage the person in hopes of cheering him or her up.

So beating up on ourselves too long ends up taking down others around us and quite possibly leads them to start avoiding us because we can't seem to move past the incident.

For me, I typically need about two days to grieve the mistake, failed attempt or embarrassing

moment, and then I work hard to accept what has happened and learn from it.

A mentor helped me understand “what's done is done” and we can't change the outcome no matter how hard we wish we could. However, we can grow from the situation, specify the areas that need improvement and get to work toward a better outcome next time.

Those who know us well should know when we look, act or sound out of character — and whether they mention it or simply move on, their decision to show grace, love and kindness is what will help us demonstrate the same action toward ourselves.

Share your stories of holding tight to the hope found in Jesus Christ, how God is working in your life

How are you doing with the start of the Christmas season? Is it the one you've dreaded because someone is missing this year? Is it hard because of the circumstances surrounding you right now?

Know we care and would love to chat if you feel up to sharing. Our number is 800-803-5201, and we are around the phones Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

We also have various resources

to recommend if you need ideas for how to adapt traditions or start new ones.

If the holidays this year happen to be among the best ever for you, we'd love to hear about those as well. It brings us all joy to sense those sparkles of excitement.

Along with personal stories, share how you are seeing God move in your family, your community and your church.

And as you spend time in reflection during this Advent season,

look for how God is working in your life and how the Holy Spirit is conforming you more and more into the image of Christ.

No matter the range of emotions we encounter right now and how those most certainly will change from year to year, we all can hold tightly to the promise of hope found in Jesus Christ.

He is with us through every season, and we know He has come and He will come again.

—Jennifer Davis Rash

Your Voice



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

Tips for cherishing holiday time with family

By **Hannah Muñoz**
TAB Media digital editor

We're officially in the holiday season! For a lot of reasons, I hope this brings you joy. But that joy usually is closely followed (or preceded) by some stress. And unfortunately, family can be a big part of that stress.

I am thankful for my parents and grandparents and brothers. And I really enjoy spending time with them. But this introvert also has gotten used to living with an introverted roommate.

So when I visit home, I'm excited to see all my family, but then I need space. I know it can come across as me being annoyed or pushing away, even though I usually don't have that intention.

I recognize that for some of you, family is much more of a stressor

due to differing beliefs or struggling relationships, and when you're with a larger group of family, as is usually the case around the holidays, you can feel ganged up on.

So, I thought of some ideas to help alleviate some family stress and strengthen relationships during this time.

Check-in and catch up

Usually the holidays are focused around big family gatherings. Even if it's just you, your parents and your siblings, everyone who is there is present for every moment. Try to take some individual time with each family member. It doesn't have to be a day, it can just be a morning or afternoon. Or even just a meal.

Use that one-on-one time to catch up on the small things.

Since I don't live super close to my parents and brothers, I almost

always am caught up on the big things happening in our lives, but the smaller things are happening all the time without me telling my family or my family telling me. So get to know what's been happening in their lives.

Next, go into the family gatherings with positive emotions. If you go in feeling angry, jealous, hurt or upset, it likely isn't going to get better. You'll probably stay feeling that way throughout the entire meal or gathering. If you need to, ask that some conversation topics be avoided to prevent big disagreements. Try to keep conversations personal, about each person's job, life, etc.

Take some individual time for yourself. I'm a morning person, so I naturally wake up earlier than my brothers.

When I wake up, I go downstairs and spend some time with the dogs. Meanwhile, my mom drinks her coffee and watches TV in the living room, and my dad watches TV in the bedroom. My brothers take their individual times at night, usually playing video games or watching TV.

We all just created this habit while we were home, and it helps us to take some time for ourselves since we're spending the rest of each day together. You might need to let your family know you just need a time to relax or reflect.

I hope you all have a great upcoming holiday season and that you enjoy the company of whomever you are spending it with.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Read more posts on contemporary issues at the-scroll.com.

One of the things I love about Alabama Baptists is you're not just restricted to the boundaries of your great state; you have a desire to see the gospel go beyond your borders ... and to help us in reaching our state for Jesus Christ.

Randy Covington
Executive director
Alaska Baptist Resource
Network

In my first year as [International Mission Board] president, I met a Mississippi pastor who told me this: "Mr. President, everything the IMB needs — more missionaries and more money — is in our churches. But you're going to have to ask for it." Well, I'm asking for it.

Paul Chitwood
IMB president

In the South, everybody loves football. As an athlete, it's an easy way to talk to people and find a way to share the gospel message in a conversation.

Nathan East
Samford University
football player

When we were looking at where to go, ... we were just convicted that we needed to be in a place like this that didn't have as many gospel opportunities.

Missionary Abby Rudd
Asian Pacific Rim

Plan ahead to reduce stress

Planning ahead can be vital for a lot of things. When it comes to the holidays, that's especially true. ...

While you might have some time off work, you still might not have enough time in the day to get everything done.

Between visiting other people and people visiting you, alongside all of the other activities you'll have, there's a lot of juggling to do.

You can, thankfully, plan ahead for most of this.

Figuring out meeting up with

friends and family can be quite easy and only needs a few minutes of conversation. That's also the case for any parties or other events that might happen over the holiday season.

You could also create a gift list to overcome the last-minute stress of present buying. Being able to check people off as you get your gifts could be more relaxing than you'd think.

"Need to Get Your Home Christmas-Ready? Keep These in Mind"
allthingschristmas.com

“ I’m just a backwoods preacher;
I don’t know much, but I love Jesus. ”

JUNIOR HILL
Alabama Baptist evangelist

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.”

Pastor Will Faulkenberry
Mosaic City Church
Huntsville, Ala.

When others see He is at the center of your life, they are more likely to place Him at the center of theirs.

Zachary Beasley
Baptist campus minister
Alabama State University
and Tuskegee University

There are still people being

saved. There are still marriages being healed. There are still lives being transformed. And don’t get me wrong, it’s hard to see it. But it’s there.

Pastor Jeff Meyers
First Baptist Church
Opelika, Ala.

We don’t need to let our feelings guide our life. True contentment is when we continue on faithfully and joyfully from the heart independent of the circumstance by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Kathy Litton
Director of planter spouse
development for the North
American Mission Board’s
Send Network

Sexual abuse is an issue that our churches should be passionate about because it destroys faith and separates people from God.

Melissa Bowen
Retired attorney and member
of FBC Prattville

The university campus is the greatest and most strategic missions field in the world.

Where else in the world has God brought together so many so they can hear and respond to the gospel?

Mike Nuss
Director of the office of
collegiate and student
ministries
Alabama Baptist State Board
of Missions

From the *Twitterverse*

@shane_pruitt78

The other 11 disciples didn’t stop believing in Jesus because of the actions of Judas. If the actions of others wreck your faith, then you have to ask yourself, “was my faith in Jesus or people?”

@macbrunson

Expository sermons speak to the hunger for authority in a culture that rejects all authority but the errant, corrupted heart. Deep down we hunger for an authoritative Word ... deep down we know our heart cannot provide it.

(Much needed correction!)

@ricklance

Thank you, Alabama Baptists, for one of the very best convention meetings we have ever experienced.

In these days of challenge, I am proud to be an Alabama Baptist.

@zvangieson28

I remarked to someone that it was a “boring” meeting in the best sense of the word. Testimonies, theme, reports all uplifting and encouraging. Grateful for your leadership (Rick Lance)!

@DL_Staples

A great gathering ... I left encouraged, refreshed and with a renewed passion for the mission to be a Christ-centered pastor serving a Christ-centered church.

@LongHollow

Before you can experience all of Jesus, Jesus needs to have all of you. —@Rgallaty

@philipnation

I love this statement from G. Campbell Morgan:

“The supreme work of the Christian minister is the work of preaching. This is a day in which one of our greatest perils is that of doing a thousand little things to the neglect of the one thing, which is preaching.”

@micahfries

Every congregation is a congregation of sinners. As if that weren’t bad enough, they all have sinners for pastors. —Eugene Peterson

@DianeLangberg

To evade those who are suffering is to evade Him. To sit with those who are suffering is to sit with Him.

How to speak ‘truth in love’

Spiritual leaders especially need to find effective ways to speak truth to others within a gospel context, in accordance with Ephesians 4:15, “... speaking the truth in love.”

This verse is couched in Ephesians 4, a chapter devoted to promoting unity within the body of Christ. It is significant that these two virtues, truth and love, are linked together.

Speaking truth is the easy part — doing it with authentic grace and honesty takes it to another level.

These three considerations may help you to “speak truth in love”:

1. Check your motivation. What is driving you? Has this person offended you? If so, are you pursuing a confrontation for your own purposes? Or, do you genuinely seek what is best for the other person? Take some time to think, pray and ask the Holy Spirit to cleanse your heart of any self-serving attitudes.

2. Consider your timing. ... If the opportunity presents itself, don’t hesitate. On the other hand, don’t force it if you sense the time isn’t right. Pray God will open the door to a conversation, if He so wills.

3. Come up with a “word picture,” a metaphorical story or scenario used to express a truth. In 2 Samuel 12, the prophet Nathan confronted David regarding his adultery with Bathsheba. ... Nathan skillfully wove [a] word picture in order that David might see his actions from God’s perspective. ... [Nathan] illustrates an extremely effective way to communicate truth with someone in authority over you or someone who is resisting truth.

May we each have the wisdom to speak truth with love, waiting on God’s timing and doing so with a gracious spirit.

Susie Hawkins
Author and speaker
Bible.org blog

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

Sexual Abuse Task Force named

By **Jennifer Davis Rash**

TAB Media

Alabama Baptist State Convention president Buddy Champion has selected eight members to serve on the new Sexual Abuse Task Force charged with reviewing policies and practices of Cooperative Program-funded entities and the State Board of Missions. And he will serve as an ex-officio member.

The task force was established following a motion approved by convention messengers Nov. 16 during the annual meeting at Whitesburg Baptist Church in Huntsville.

‘Passion to serve’

“This team represents a cross section of Alabama Baptist life,” Champion shared with The Alabama Baptist. “Each member of the team has expressed a passion to serve so that the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, the entities and our churches are prepared to respond and protect the victims of sexual abuse.

“We appreciate the entities embracing this process and look forward to partnering with each one to accomplish the task at hand,” he said. “We are confident that after a thorough and exhaustive review that our processes will be improved and we will all be better equipped.”

Task force members include:

▶ **Craig Carlisle**, director of missions for Etowah Baptist Association, who will serve as chair.

▶ **Daniel Atkins**, pastor of Taylor Road Baptist Church in Montgomery.

▶ **Melissa Bowen**, retired attorney and



Photo by Sam Evans/The Alabama Baptist

Members of the Sexual Abuse Task Force represent a “cross section of Alabama Baptist life,” said state convention president Buddy Champion.

author of the motion. Bowen is a member of First Baptist Church Prattville.

▶ **Kaye Farrow**, retired Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT) and member of Westwood Baptist Church in Alabaster.

▶ **Abigail Jackson**, 2019 graduate of Samford University, attends First Baptist Church Birmingham and is account manager for The Lollar Group in Birmingham.

▶ **D’Linell Finley**, pastor of Southlawn

Baptist Church in Montgomery and professor at Alabama State University.

▶ **Blake Kersey**, pastor of First Baptist Church Decatur and immediate past president of the Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference.

▶ **Daven Watkins**, pastor of First Baptist Church Pelham.

“The task force will spend the weeks between now and the end of the year getting organized and preparing for the reviews starting in January,” Champion said, noting regular updates will be provided by the group as it works through the review process.

With the executive director’s office of the State Board of Missions serving as a resource for the task force, Champion asks that any media or other inquiries be directed there during the organizational period these next few weeks.

Motion’s wording

The motion reads that “the newly elected president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention name a Sexual Abuse Task Force of at least seven members with the newly elected president being an ex-officio member. The purpose of this task force would be to review the policies and practices of our Cooperative Program-funded state convention entities and auxiliaries, including the State Board of Missions, related to sex abuse. Reviewing members of the task force will not include paid staff of the entities, auxiliaries or State Board and will report back to the 2022 Convention. The executive director of the State Board of Missions will serve as a resource for the task force. Expenses of the task force will be covered by the State Board of Missions.”

The CP-funded entities and auxiliaries which partner with the State Board of Missions include: Alabama Baptist Children’s Homes & Family Ministries, Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers, Alabama Citizens Action Program, Alabama WMU, Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center, The Alabama Baptist, The Baptist Foundation of Alabama and University of Mobile.

Support for the review

Leaders of each of the groups mentioned indicated to The Alabama Baptist they support the proposal for a review. Read their responses at tabonline.org/review.

To read responses from leaders of CP-funded entities and auxiliaries which partner with the State Board of Missions in support of the proposal for a review, visit tabonline.org/review.

Persecuted church

One pastor killed, one beaten; mom, son held captive for faith

KAMPALA, Uganda — One pastor was killed, another beaten and a mom and her son held captive and starved in Eastern Uganda for their faith, according to Morning Star News.

Two men are charged in Pastor Barnabas Musana’s murder Sept. 12 in Namwenda village, the report says.

Because some Muslims became Christians through his ministry, Musana and his family received threats. After Musana failed to return from his fishing business, he was found strangled to death at the river. In response, young Christian men damaged a mosque before police stopped them, the report states.

In Tororo District, Muslim relatives beat Pas-

tor Mustafa Obbo when he visited his ailing mother, Morning Star News states.

In Kakoro village Oct. 18, Jafalan Muduwa and her 8-year-old son escaped the bedroom where her Muslim husband kept them locked and starving.



Photo courtesy of Morning Star News

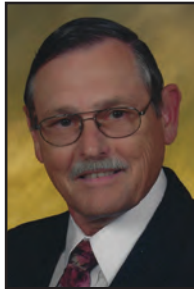
The report says her husband beat her and the boy and held them captive 13 days after finding two Bibles in her bag.

Uganda’s constitution and laws provide for religious freedom. About 12% of the population is Muslim.

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

► **Martin Eugene Elder**, former pastor and Southern Baptist missionary, died Nov. 4. He was 85. Raised in Kentucky, Elder earned a bachelor's degree from Howard College (now Samford University) and a master of divinity degree from New Orleans Seminary. He accepted his first pastorate, Pheba Baptist Church in Mississippi, and two years later he became a home missionary for the Home Mission Board (now North American Mission Board) in New Mexico.



ELDER

He led Laguna and Acoma Native Americans in Cubero before serving as pastor of the Baptist Indian Mission in Santa Fe. From 1968 to 1987, he ministered on the pastoral staff of First Baptist Church Grants and as pastor of White Rock Baptist Church and FBC Aztec.

Commissioned by the International Mission Board in 1987, Elder first served in East London as a church planter/developer for nine years, and later in Cape Town, South Africa, where he directed theological education by extension for three years.

After retirement to Alabama in 2001, Elder taught Sunday School for several years before becoming pastor of Sardis Baptist Church, Greenville, for eight years. He preached his farewell sermon September 2019 at age 83. Survivors include his wife, Ellamae; children David, Joy and Timothy; 12 grandchildren; and 14 great-grandchildren.

AUTAUGA ASSOCIATION

► **Winston Brooks** told the congregation of Calvary Baptist Church, Prattville, that he's



BROOKS

been in the ministry a long time and has preached several first sermons and several last sermons.

But this sermon was different — it was the day he retired from the pastorate, a ministry he calls “a good journey.” He served in ministry for 57 years and said he's thankful for all the people who have served faithfully beside him and his wife, Betty, along the way. Brooks — a graduate of Samford University and Southern Seminary — served several churches as pastor while he was a student.

Then as a full-time pastor, Brooks served at several Alabama Baptist churches in addition to Calvary, including Wayside Baptist Church, Ashford. He led a second Calvary Baptist — this one in Vincent — in building a new sanctuary. He has also served as a hospice chaplain.

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

► **Canaan Baptist Church, Bessemer**, will host a walk-thru live nativity Dec. 11–12, 6–8 p.m. Mitch Grissett is pastor.

CAREY ASSOCIATION

► **Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Linville**, had a “great turnout with great fun and fellowship” Oct. 24 celebrating its 150th anniversary.

“The Lord really blessed us that day,” said church member James Harris, who sang in the bluegrass gospel trio 3 County Line along with Molly Byard and Tommy Crowe.

During the special service, guest speaker L.C. Harris read the history of the church, and Nathan Calhoun, music minister, led in congregational singing.

Calvin Milford of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and Bruce Willis, director of missions for Carey Baptist Association, presented certificates to the church, which is led by David Holcombe, interim pastor.

COFFEE ASSOCIATION

► **The Church on Boll Weevil Circle, Enterprise**, is dedicating its building Dec. 5 at 9:30 a.m. John Granger Sr. is pastor.

FAYETTE COUNTY ASSOCIATION

► **Fayette County Baptist Association** churches gathered Oct. 25 to celebrate the association's 150th anniversary during the evening session of its annual meeting.

“The celebration built unity,” said John Killian (left), director of missions. “It showed that God is at work all over the county and each church is part of that work.”

During the event, Sherry Grey from Berry Baptist Church presented the history of the association. Stella Wallace, pianist at First Baptist Church Fayette, played hymns from the different time periods as background music. The Fayette County Baptist Association choir also sang “We Will Remember.” Congregational singing was led by Kevin Beck, worship and education pastor for Southside Baptist Church, Fayette, who serves as associational music director. Lonette Berg (right), executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, and Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, presented the association with certificates.

FRANKLIN ASSOCIATION

► It “was a good day for all” Oct. 17 as

Orange Baptist Church, Russellville, celebrated its 125th anniversary.

“We had a great time reminiscing and encouraging each other,” Pastor Corey Nicholson (right) said.

During the special service, Larry Dover — director of missions for Franklin Baptist Association — shared memories of Orange Baptist, which is his home church.

He also presented a plaque to the church, and Jimmy Austin (left) of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented a certificate.

Other guest speakers were Loyd Griffus and Jerry Hester, the church's only former pastors who are still living.

The church's original altar table was on display during the celebration, and the order of service included a timeline of important events, starting with the constituting of the church in 1896. It is believed its name came from the wild orange trees that grew in the area.

► Churches in **Franklin Association** are joining together to present “A Christmas Moment,” Dec. 5, 7 p.m., Russellville City Schools Auditorium.

The joint choir of 100 singers will spotlight multiple groups, including a children's choir, a men's quartet and a solo ensemble, accompanied by a live orchestra.

MORGAN ASSOCIATION

► **Central Baptist Church in Decatur** will hold its 2021 Christmas Drive-Thru Experience Dec. 3–4, 6:30–8:30 p.m. at its campus. Guests will enter via the Cedar Lake Road entrance.

RUSSELL ASSOCIATION

► **Steve Langley** has been called as pastor of **Zion Baptist Church, Woodland**. He previously served at Johnson Chapel, Valley; Sunset Heights, Lanett; and Bethel Baptist Church, Roanoke. He is a graduate of Southern Union State College and LaGrange College. Langley and his wife, Teresa, have two children and three grandchildren.



LANGLEY

SHELBY ASSOCIATION

► **Southcrest Baptist Church, Bessemer**, will host the FBC Pickers from Guntersville, Dec. 10, 7 p.m. for a night of “Christmas pick-in.” Dinner will be served at 6 p.m. Scott Bush is pastor.



Photo courtesy of Jimmy Austin



Photo courtesy of Lonette Berg

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 he affirms and welcomes the establishment of the task force.

FLORIDA

The 970 messengers attending the Florida Baptist Convention annual meeting Nov. 8–9 at Lakes Church in Lakeland, overwhelmingly approved a recommendation to create a nine-



Photo courtesy of FBC

person special committee to examine policies and procedures governing sexual abuse allegation reporting, survivor care and prevention within all cooperating min-

istries of the Florida Baptist State Convention. Messengers also approved a 2022 Cooperative Program goal of \$29,150,000 to be distributed 51% to Southern Baptist Convention causes and 49% for Florida Baptist Convention causes. The 51/49 split is the same distribution Florida Baptists have approved since 2016, the first budget recommendation after Tommy Green became executive director-treasurer in 2015. Florida's 2022 budget is a \$650,000 increase over the 2021 budget of \$28,500,000. The theme for the 2021 meeting was "The Tie That Binds."

GEORGIA

Nearly 1,000 messengers who gathered in Jonesboro Nov. 8–9 for the Georgia Baptist Mission Board annual meeting approved a 2022 budget of \$36,699,980 — allocating \$7.2 million to strengthen in-state churches and pastors, \$7,400,178 to the International Mission Board and \$3,345,567 to the North American Mission Board. The budget represents a 3% decrease

from the 2021 budget because the GBMB is "projecting slightly lower receipts" in 2022, said David Melber, GBMB chief operating officer, The Christian Index reported. The GBMB executive committee voted to create a Special Committee on the Prevention of Sexual Abuse "to make recommendations for developing programs, best practices and policy guidelines for preventing sexual abuse," The Christian Index also reported.



Photo courtesy of The Christian Index

NORTH CAROLINA

Emphasizing the gospel and the Great Commission, 1,150 messengers and 215 guests gathered in Greensboro Nov. 8–9 for the 191st annual meeting of North Carolina Baptists. During a report to messengers, Baptist State Convention of North Carolina board of directors president Matt Capps announced the executive committee voted unanimously Nov. 8 to conduct a comprehensive review, the Biblical Recorder reported. That review would examine existing policies and procedures related to sexual abuse, awareness, prevention and response. Findings of the review, along with any recommendations or actions taken, will be presented to the state convention's board of directors in September 2022 and to messengers at next year's annual meeting.



Photo courtesy of BSC

Messengers approved a \$28 million Cooperative Program budget for 2022, which reflects a \$1 million increase over the 2021 budget. The budget also increases the state convention's allocation to Great Commission ministry partners by 3%, moving from 42% to 45% of the total budget.

SOUTH CAROLINA

More than 750 messengers to the 201st annual meeting of the South Carolina Baptist Convention Nov. 8–9 celebrated the convention's bicentennial year and approved the creation of a task force to review the convention's sexual abuse policies and procedures.

Messengers also elected the convention's first African American president, adopted a 2022 budget and participated in an International

Mission Board commissioning service, the Baptist Courier reported.

The motion to create a task force was presented by D.J. Horton, pastor of Church at the Mill in Moore. Its review of sexual abuse reporting and prevention will include assessing information shared at the SBC annual meeting in June. The approved \$26.5 million Cooperative Program budget is unchanged from 2021. Of the total amount, 54.5% is allocated to in-state missions, ministries and budgets and 45.5% is allocated for Southern Baptist missions and ministry causes.



Photo courtesy of Baptist Courier

The theme for the 2021 meeting was "Advance Together."

VIRGINIA

More than 1,200 people gathered at Liberty Live Church in Hampton Nov. 7–9 for the Southern Baptist Convention of Virginia's annual homecoming to celebrate 25 years of ministry, the SBCV reported. Brian Autry, SBCV executive director, announced he will work with the SBCV executive board chairman and president to create a special task force and care well team for sexual abuse survivors. Nineteen churches also were unanimously approved for SBCV partnership, bringing the total affiliations of the SBCV to 808 churches.

As part of an annual missions outreach project, SBCV churches collected more than 1,600 Christmas backpacks filled with school supplies and the gospel message.

Backpacks will be distributed to 25 churches and ethnic church plants throughout the state.

Messengers approved the proposed ministry investment plan of \$10.1 million for the 2022 fiscal year, with \$9.8 million coming from SBCV churches giving related to Cooperative Program contributions. The adopted plan will be distributed with 51% going to national Southern Baptist Convention CP ministries and 49% distributed to state level SBCV CP ministries, the same percentage of allocation as last year. The theme for the 2021 homecoming was "Pressing On."



Photo courtesy of SBCV

ONE MISSION: The Great Commission ONE PROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANY MINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS

and Lottie Moon Christmas Offering

November 28-December 5

alsbom.org/lottiemoon

As you continue to pray for international missionaries this week, here are some specific requests from six of the more than 250 international missionaries who call Alabama home.



Sub-Saharan Africa

The Robinsons
Brian, Karen, Corrie Beth,
Charis and Boaz

PRAYER REQUESTS:

- For wisdom as we coordinate the operations of our IMB mission efforts across Sub-Saharan Africa
- For open doors and hearts to the Gospel as we teach English to Refugees in Nairobi
- For the Lord to provide opportunities for us to access our 55 in 5 People Groups with the Gospel

(Visit www.imb.org/sub-saharan-africa/55-in-5 for more info)

Northern Africa & Middle East

Luther and Rachel

PRAYER REQUESTS:

- For God to work in a mighty way among this people group

Asia

MM

PRAYER REQUESTS:

- For continued healing for physical injuries
- For Journeyman coming first of the year to be able to obtain visa
- For team to maximize opportunities for evangelism, discipleship and unity



Europe

Lexie Black

PRAYER REQUESTS:

- For efforts to reach local college students through gospel conversations, Bible studies and English classes
- For Christmas to be a time for people here to realize that Jesus came for them
- For the local Baptist church to be encouraged and bold in sharing
- For me as I continue to learn Italian and for my family as we spend the upcoming holiday seasons apart



Central Asia

Will and Kelly Conway

PRAYER REQUESTS:

- For the local fellowship to grow in holiness and number
- That many of our local friends will come into the Light very soon

SE Asia

JF and CF

PRAYER REQUESTS:

- For visas to be approved quickly so we can return to the field, and for our family as we make the transition from being in Alabama back to SE Asia
- For unity of the local church, development of leaders in the church, and for false teachers and influencers to be silenced
- For the mental and emotional, physical and spiritual well-being of the people as continued lockdowns and restrictions have greatly impacted life over the last year and a half

To learn how your church can connect personally with international field personnel, contact Scotty Goldman, sgoldman@alsbom.org, (334) 613-2387.

For more information about field personnel from Alabama serving around the world, please visit a18c.org.

This resource is made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.



Be authentic

Pastors Conference encourages attendees to find their identity in Christ

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
TAB Media

More than 500 pastors and ministry leaders gathered at First Baptist Church Decatur Nov. 15 for the 2021 Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference.

"Pastors are the heartbeat of this convention," said Blake Kersey, pastor of FBC Decatur and president of this year's Pastors Conference, during the lunchtime opening session sponsored by New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Kersey said he wants all pastors, regardless of their ministry size and context, to know "they matter." That vision guided the planning of this year's conference, which featured sermons, panels and table discus-

sions geared toward practical help for pastors under the umbrella of this year's theme, Authentic: Finding Your Identity in Christ.

The conference began with a conversation between Kersey and Danny Wood, pastor emeritus of Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Vestavia Hills. In a wide-ranging Q&A session, Wood shared several lessons he learned in ministry.



KERSEY

On priorities

Wood emphasized the importance of establishing priorities in ministry and family.

"The thing about ministry is that everything is important. Everything has significance," Wood said.

The pastor and his family are often under a microscope. The church can overwhelm you to the point where your wife and kids are

secondary, but if you lose your family, you lose your ministry. "Of all the balls you're juggling, the one you can't drop is your family."

On wisdom

Pastors also can make the big ask of time and commitment, but church members have a lot of things pulling at them. Sometimes pastors have the unrealistic view that laypeople have unlimited time to give. Respect the work and the time of church members.

Learn to discern the motives of those speaking into your life, Wood added. Everyone who wants to speak into your life doesn't have the purest motives. "Looking back, I would want the wisdom to know who to listen to and who not (to listen to)."

On conflict

Your church is God's church, and it is bigger than one or two people or families. Don't fret about those who leave, but focus on leading and ministering to those who stay. Don't fret. Focus. God has put you there for that group.



WOOD

When conflict arises, "You deal with it. You don't duck it." Whenever there is conflict, whether with a church member or staff member, you need to address it. When you talk about it, make sure you

agree what the conflict is. Verbalize it. See if there is a direction to take to make it right. You're going to feel so much better. If you're nervous the conversation will be toxic, bring in a third person to talk with you. Let the other person know, "I just want to make sure we're all hearing the same thing."

For more tips, visit tabonline.org/2021-PC.

Serve, lead out of God's perfect love, Watson says

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
TAB Media

The role of the pastor is complex and unique, and pastors who successfully serve through difficult times only do so by leading out of God's love.

"You're a prophet. You're a project manager. You're a janitor. You're a counselor. You walk through tragedy with people. You lead deacons meetings and elders meetings and volunteer meetings. ... You do all these things," Jay Watson, lead pastor of Life Community Church in Nolensville, Tennessee, told those gathered Nov. 15 for the afternoon session of the 2021 Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference.

"You walk with people

through the worst moments of their lives. They're hurting, they're in pain and sometimes they attack you. And most of the time you can't tell anybody about all that's being put on your shoulders.



Photo by Tracy Riggs/The Alabama Baptist
Jay Watson is lead pastor of Life Community Church in Nolensville, Tennessee.

"You have to ask yourself the question sometimes, 'Why am I doing this?'" Don't forget the "why," Watson urged. "Jesus Christ has changed you forever. You have been saved, you have been changed, you have been redeemed ... by His perfect love. The grace, mercy and forgiveness He's showed you, you're called to do that. I'm not talking about preaching; I'm talking about actually living it out. Abilities alone is just noise."

Speaking from 1 Corinthians, Watson noted how some early

church members were boasting of the spiritual gifts they had been given and corrupting worship. They had lost their way, Watson said, and Paul was reminding them of a more perfect way.

Putting aside pride

Pastors today can fall into the same trap, boasting of numbers and spending more time on social media posts than sermon preparation. Watson confessed his own pride during the early years of his pastoral ministry. Five years in, "I was just somebody trying to keep it on the rails," he said.

After nearly 15 years at the church where he almost burned out, he's learned the pastor cannot carry the entire load.

"[God's] not interested in your success," Watson said. "He wants

you to be faithful to what He is calling you to do. He loves you. God's love is the more perfect way. It's not pastor love. It's not people love. It's unfailing, unwavering, always faithful love of God."

The poetic words of 1 Corinthians 13, often used in weddings to describe an ideal human love, instead perfectly defines God's love, he said. Read them again in the context of all the things happening around us, Watson urged — that's how pastors face the difficult times.

"Living out of God's love is how you make it through the weeks, it's how you endure," Watson said. "If you lead out of God's love, the Holy Spirit will empower and equip you for God's glory."

"[God's] not interested in your success. He wants you to be faithful to what He is calling you to do."

Jay Watson
lead pastor, Life Community Church in Nolensville, Tennessee



ALABAMA BAPTIST
PASTORS CONFERENCE

Evangelist Junior Hill speaks during the evening session of the 2021 Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference. Before preaching, Hill was honored with the inaugural Fred Wolfe Lifetime Pastoral Ministry Award. To read the full story, see last week's issue or visit tabonline.org/Junior-Hill.

Photo by Sam Evans/The Alabama Baptist

To check out our photo gallery, visit tabonline.org/2021-pc.

**ALABAMA BAPTIST
PASTORS CONFERENCE**



Photo by Tracy Riggs/The Alabama Baptist

Intentionality

Protect your family, Ezell encourages audience at Pastors Conference

By Grace Thornton
TAB Media

If you lose your family, you do lose.”

That’s what Kevin Ezell, president of the North American Mission Board, told those present at the 2021 Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference on Nov. 15.

Preaching from Colossians 3, he shared about how to protect your family and serve your church, noting that “protecting your family is serving your church.”

Ezell encouraged pastors to block out focused time to spend with their family and eliminate distractions.

“If you’re not intentional with how you handle your time, someone else will do it for you,” he said.

One way to invest in your family is to put away electronics when you get home and “be all there in the moment,” Ezell said. “Make sure you show value and not just say value.”

Intentionality with time management matters because a pastor’s family deserves his time, but it also matters so pastors don’t become overextended, worn down and tempted to make poor moral decisions, he said.

Time and boundaries

“I haven’t met one pastor who had an affair who intended to do it at the start,” Ezell said, explaining that pastors need to be intentional with both their time and their boundaries.

During a Q&A time moderated

by Blake Kersey, this year’s Pastors Conference president, Ezell was asked how he might encourage a pastor whose wife or family wasn’t helpful.

‘Focus on your family’

“I’d encourage you to take some time away to focus on your family,” Ezell said. “Whether your church will let you take a break or you need to transition out for a while, the worst thing you can do is kick the can down the road and hope it gets better.”

He recommended some resources offered by NAMB and the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, such as life coaches or conferences. Kersey also recommended pastors take advantage of the resource offered by Pathways Professional Counseling, a ministry of Alabama Baptist Children’s Homes & Family Ministries.

One way to invest in your family is to put away electronics when you get home and “be all there in the moment. Make sure you show value and not just say value.”

Kevin Ezell
president, North American Mission Board

New Pastors Conference officers elected



Photo by Maggie Evans/The Alabama Baptist

Officers for the 2022 Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference are (l to r): vice president Matt Haines, pastor of Central Park Baptist Church in Decatur; president-elect Daniel Atkins, senior pastor of Taylor Road Baptist Church in Montgomery; president Robert Mullins, lead pastor of Crossroads Community Church in Elmore; secretary/treasurer Richard Richie, pastor of Blue Springs Baptist Church in Somerville.



Photo by Sam Evans/The Alabama Baptist

"I've come today to encourage you through the word of the Lord, that when our identity is found on the Caller and not the calling, we will experience life in Christ," says Tyshawn Gardner during the Pastors Conference.

Find identity in 'Caller' not 'calling,' Gardner urges

By Grace Thornton

TAB Media

Tyshawn Gardner said he and his sons and nephew play Monopoly fiercely. But no matter what happens, at the end of the game, all the pieces go back in the box.

The same goes for everything here on earth, the things that can pull a pastor's focus away from his identity in Christ.

"We need to know that when our ministry and life is all over, it's all going back in the box," said Gardner, senior pastor of Plum Grove Baptist Church in Tuscaloosa and vice president for student affairs at Stillman College. "Nobody takes anything beyond this life."

Preaching from Matthew 6:25-34, Gardner told those present at the Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference in Decatur on Nov. 15 that a pastor's identity in Christ is the antidote for anxiety.

"A quest to make God proud sometimes turns into activities that drain the soul," he said. "I've come today to encourage you through the word of the Lord, that when our identity is found on the Caller and not the calling, we will experience life in Christ."

Most of a pastor's worries come from having the wrong perspective, Gardner said.

"Many times as pastors our lives can be defined not in our values

but in our valuables," he said.

"You are valuable, pastor, not because of where you pastor or the size of your church or the letters behind or in front of your name. You are valuable in Christ and because of the Person who lives inside of you."

In a Q&A time after his message, Blake Kersey — 2021 Pastors Conference president and pastor of the host church, First Baptist Church Decatur — asked Gardner additional questions submitted by the audience.

Expectations

One addressed why pastors struggle with keeping their identity in Christ. Gardner said he feels like pastors may feel pressure to keep up with expectations and that effort pulls them away from Christ.

"The world around us is a world where people expect not only results but they want it fast," he said. "I think sometimes we get caught up in the values of the world that are not bad values. ... But the more we get into those things, we find ourselves gradually pulling away from Christ, and Christ is no longer at the center."

A strong personal devotional life can help with that, Gardner said.

"Staying in the Word reminds me of who Christ called me to be," he said, noting that purpose is different than productivity.

Associational leaders receive encouragement, resources

By Dianna L. Cagle

TAB Media

Associational leaders gathered Nov. 15 to "Re-Engage" with each other and the churches they serve.

Meeting at Hillwood Baptist Church in Huntsville, the Alabama Baptist Conference of Associational Leaders elected new officers and heard from Chuck Kelley, president emeritus of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, who now lives in Fairhope.

Calling himself an optimistic pessimist, Kelley had praise for the associational leaders.

Concerns like COVID-19, social and political tensions, declining baptisms and Sunday School attendance and struggling churches are reasons to be pessimistic, he said.

"What you are doing in your work in the churches in your association is deadly serious," he said. "We are not talking about greatness. ... We're talking about survival and getting our churches back in gear."

"You are the logistical support that binds our churches together," he said.

But clear reasons for optimism exist, Kelley stressed.

"We can do something. God can do anything. This is not a slogan. This is not a tagline for a great, exciting, inspiring sermon."

Kelley emphasized that the Southern Baptist Convention has a self-esteem problem. Many have taken Baptist out of the church name, and members look like the lost community instead of standing out from the world around them, he said.

He also called for repentance.

"The judgment of God is not a future event on the horizon. ... It has already started," he said.

Next, he called on Baptists to refocus on the Great Commission and rebuilding.

Church leaders figured out how to keep meeting during COVID-19 utilizing online options.

"We have multiplied the access to the worship service and the gospel," he said. "It was a glorious chapter of church leadership."

Unexpected gifts

Rick Barnhart, director of the office of associational missions and church planting for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, told the leaders the SBOM is paying their dues for the Southern Baptist Conference of Associational Leaders starting Jan. 1 and encouraged them to go to the national meeting in Anaheim, California, in June.

Kevin Blackwell, director of the Ministry Training Institute at Samford University, thanked the leaders for their partnership with the university and gifted them \$500 to offset the costs of the meeting.

Samford will launch the 39th extension site of its Ministry Training Institute in 2022. The new site will be called the Russell Chatt Valley extension and will offer classes in connection with MTI for church staff and lay leaders.

Jim Hill, director of missions for Dale Baptist Association, made a motion to study moving the annual associational leaders meeting to a different date so as not to conflict with the annual Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference.



KELLEY



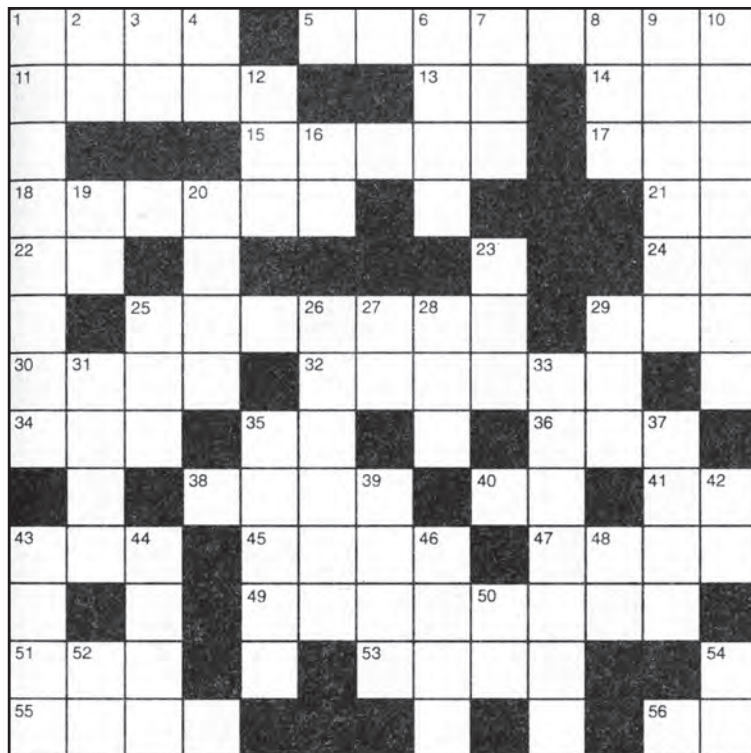
Photo by Van Payne/The Alabama Baptist

New officers for the Alabama Baptist Conference of Associational Leaders are (l to r): treasurer Tyler Eiland, director of missions for Chilton Baptist Association; president Ray McKenzie, director of missions for Elmore Baptist Association; and vice president Stan Albright, director of missions for Coosa River Baptist Association.

CHRISTIAN crossword

Across

1. ___ not. (Gen. 15:1)
5. Climbed up into a ___ tree. (Luke 19:4)
11. Storage under roof of a house.
13. ___ the right hand of God. (Rom. 8:34)
14. Cast the ___ on the right side. (John 21:6)
15. ___ unto God. (Rom. 6:11)
17. One little ___ lamb. (2 Sam. 12:3)
18. Three electrodes in an electron tube.
21. Good ___ bad. (2 Cor. 5:10)
22. ___ answered. (John 9:36)
24. Registered nurse. (abbr.)
25. Shalt ___ in thine heart. (Rom. 10:9)
29. A woman's name.
30. Repulsive.
32. Drowsy.
34. Thou maintainest my ___. (Ps. 16:5)
35. He saith among the trumpets, ___.
36. Ribbed dress fabric.
38. Way of walking.
40. ___ in peace. (Acts 16:36)
41. As many ___ received him. (John 1:12)
43. Clever, cunning.
45. Mary hath chosen that good ___. (Luke 10:42)
47. My people are ___ to backsliding. (Hosea 11:7)
49. Bird providing sport and food.
51. Love worketh no ___. (Rom. 13:10)
53. One way to tie



By Arlene Walker Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

- shoes.
55. The ___ of the valleys. (Song of Sol. 2:1)
56. ___ good unto all. (Gal. 6:10)

DOWN

1. ___ in that which is least. (Luke 16:10)
2. Suffix meaning "little."
3. Many shall rejoice ___ his birth. (Luke 1:14)
4. Rhode Island. (abbr.)
6. Buried him in the ___. (Gen. 50:13)
7. Past tense of "eat."
8. Love ___ another. (1 John 4:7)
9. Put in other words.
10. Words of ___ life. (John 6:68)
12. Ungentlemanly.
16. Last Entry. (abbr.)
19. In the case of.
20. My son, ___ my voice. (Gen. 27:8)
23. They shall ___ God. (Matt. 5:8)
25. Bacon, lettuce and

- tomato. (abbr.)
26. O.T. prophet who wrote about the Messiah.
27. Short for "elevated railway."
28. Short for "veterinarian."
29. Yes.
31. Purpose.
33. Prove validity of a will.
35. ___ are ye if ye do them. (John 13:17)
37. So ___ eth my soul after thee, O God. (Ps. 42:1)
39. Journey.
42. Street. (abbr.)
43. That we should ___ into Italy. (Acts 27:1)
44. They shall ___ as lions' whelps. (Jer. 51:38)
46. Large container for liquid.
48. Prefix.
50. ___ much the more. (Heb. 10:25)
52. Long Island. (abbr.)
54. ___, I am with you always. (Matt. 28:20)

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

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.

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.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Northside Baptist Church, Selma, Ala., seeks bivocational pastor. Email resumés to: NorthsideBaptist2021@gmail.com.

WORSHIP PASTOR

Second Baptist Union City, Tenn., is prayerfully seeking our next worship pastor. We average 700-800 (post-Covid) in Sunday morning worship and our musical style is intentionally blended in all services, with a large choir. A detailed job description/qualifications can be found at secondbaptist-uc.com. Competitive salary based upon experience, health, dental, vision and retirement benefits. Submit resumé to: apply@secondbaptistuc.com.

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 contempo-

rary music. Interested persons send resumés 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.

BIVOCATIONAL CHILDREN'S MINISTER

East Highland Baptist Church, Hartselle, Ala., is prayerfully seeking God's choice for a bivocational children's minister who will lead the children's ministry program. Applicants should subscribe to the doctrinal statement of the Baptist Faith & Message. See additional information under the announcements tab at ehbc.church. Please send resumé to: cmsc@ehbc.church.

OTHER POSITIONS

ASSOCIATIONAL MISSIONARY

The Randolph Baptist Association is seeking an associational missionary. The candidate must be an ordained Southern Baptist minister with a heart for missions and a true desire to work with our local pastors and churches. If interested, please submit a resumé to: Randolph Baptist Association, ATTN: Search Committee, P.O. Box 287, Wedowee, AL 36278. All resumés must be submitted by Dec. 13.

SIGNS

CHURCH SIGNS

Signs are your first impression. What kind of impression is your church sign making? Call us to replace/update yours with either digital or traditional. Statewide since 1994. 1-800-729-6844 or 205-664-0955. www.reliablesigns.com.

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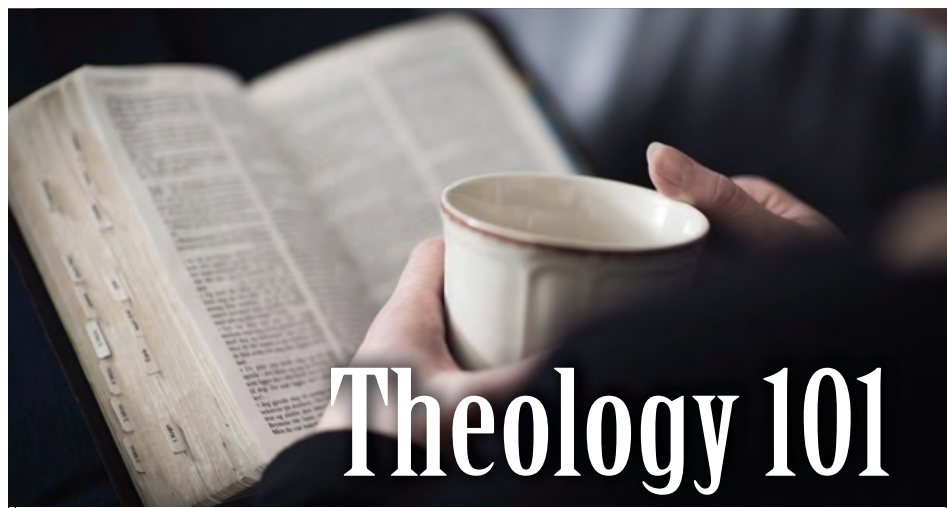
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Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Songs of Christmas

Mary's Song

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
TAB Media

Mary's "song" was voiced during a visit with her kinswoman Elizabeth, who in her advanced age was to give birth to John the Baptist. That visit had a significant impact on Elizabeth, who pronounced blessings on Mary. The visit also occasioned Mary's response.

"Magnificat," the first word of Mary's song in the Latin Vulgate, serves as its title. From there, as recorded in Luke 1:46–55, we can discern several theological truths.

In its strictest sense, theology has to do with the person and work of God. The very term "theology" has as its root the Greek term for God (theos).

Several truths about God shine forth from Mary's magnificent song, which has sometimes been termed a hymn of messianic rejoicing. From it, we are reminded that the promised Messiah was sent into the world to be the Savior of sinners as expressed in verse 47 ("God my Savior").

From the Magnificat, we are reminded of the truth that God is both mighty and holy (v. 49). To be mighty without being holy would be potentially dangerous in someone other than God. To be holy without being mighty would be to encase God in His holy place without the ability to accomplish His designs for His creation.

That God is mighty and holy gives sinners the potential of being forgiven and transformed.

Hence, He is the doer of great things (v. 49); He is merciful to those who fear Him (v. 50). He resists those who are proud (v. 51). God also is faithful to His promises (vv. 54–55).

Not only does Mary's song say much about God's nature and actions, it also provides insight into the magnificence of praise.

Our praise is magnificent when it comes from deep within our hearts and is filled with genuine feeling (v. 47). It is magnificent when it flows out of a saving relationship with God and is offered from a submissive and humble heart (vv. 48–49). Praise is magnificent when it extols and exalts the Lord rather than being a melodious "selfie" inviting others to admire and applaud us.

Magnifying God

As with Mary, praise that magnifies God is that which rejoices the heart while uplifting and blessing others.

In summary, we might say true praise is more than a matter of words or songs, though these are appropriate to genuine praise. At its heart, praise is a matter of our hearts. Heartfelt rejoicing is the core of true praise.

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.



Partnerships and volunteers needed in South Dakota

(continued from page 1)

to build eyeglasses free of charge.

"God was just putting it all together," Camp said.

NAMB joined the partnership and Chanku Waste Ranch became a Send Relief Center, where missionaries meet real, tangible needs, modeling Christ's love and the gospel message to those they serve who, in turn, multiply the ministry.

"It was a great partnership between all of us," recalled Send Relief missionary Jason Tipton. "Needs were truly being met, but the demand for these services was still incredibly high. We were happy to come alongside of [Hadden] to increase his capacity to serve his neighbors."

The clinics revealed the need for a more permanent way to provide health care and serve the Oglala Lakota people. Hadden recalled praying and believing God would lead those efforts. In September 2019, work began on a permanent wellness center.

"We had just enough funds to do the foundation and so that is what we did," Hadden remembered. "God has provided all along the way."

Camp now serves as associational mission strategist with Shelby Baptist Association. Other Shelby churches have joined the partnership along with several from Birmingham Metro and Limestone associations.

Ridgecrest Baptist continues to support the partnership with volunteer teams and through prayer, love offerings, specific gifts for the missionaries, donations of nonperishable food items and giving through the Cooperative Program.

"This summer [our team] put together a children's playground outside of church plant Creator's Fellowship," said David Surratt, Ridgecrest associate pastor/student

ministries. "The mission complex received a deep cleaning and minor maintenance and reorganization of supplies and storage areas."

"With the use of the medical truck we [served] over 200 patients who received professional eye care exams and free glasses. Most ... heard the good news and over 30 made a public declaration of their faith in

Jesus Christ for the very first time. It is not enough simply to meet their physical need."

First Baptist Church Oneonta joined the partnership four years ago, working in dental and vision clinics and sports camps, helping with construction projects and sending nonperishable food, handcrafted items and monetary support.

Larry Gipson, FBC Oneonta senior pastor, has seen the

impact of the partnership on the congregation.

"People who never have gone anywhere have actually gone to the reservation to help," he said.

The medical clinic is now about 90% complete, Hadden noted, though dental and optometry equipment still is needed.

"We are looking for optometry and dental professionals who love the Lord and would desire to come serve alongside of us in this field for a short missions trip," he said. "We are also looking for financial partners to help us get the needed medical devices and supplies to get the building stocked and ready to go."

But the greatest need is for strengthening of local believers, Hadden asserted.

"Pray for the churches here on the reservation. There is a great push-back and resistance to young people going to church and following the Lord that adjoins all the many other things that put a strain on the growth of believers here."



Photo courtesy of Ric Camp
Alabama optometrist Gussie Branch from Eyes on Albertville and Eyes on Guntersville gives an eye exam at a vision clinic on Pine Ridge Reservation.

For opportunities to give or go to the Pine Ridge Reservation, visit sendrelief.org/projects/south-dakota-ministry-center.



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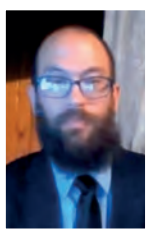


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David Stewart, pastor



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Spencer Sandlin, pastor



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Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Birmingham

Birmingham Metro Baptist Association

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George Wright, pastor

Danny Wood, pastor in 2020, retired
August 15, 2021



Congratulations to these churches for setting the pace and thank you to all Alabama Baptists who give so faithfully through the Cooperative Program.

Data and calculations are based on actual receipts of Cooperative Program giving through the State Board of Missions, which are compared with resident membership and undesignated giving reported through the Annual Church Profile. If your Annual Church Profile was not received with these numbers included, it was not possible to calculate your church's numbers.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Event and location are followed by SBOM contact person and extension. For more information on these events, call

1-800-264-1225 or (334) 613 plus the listed extension, or visit alsbom.org/events. To register for virtual events, visit PinnacleAlabama.org.

DECEMBER

- 5 Night of Encouragement and Evangelism**, West End, Valley, Lori McGough, ext. 2245
- 9 Early Bird Tax Conference**, SBOM, Prattville, Linda Hicks, ext. 2263 (and online)

JANUARY 2022

- 2-9 January Bible Study**, Daniel Edmonds, ext. 2285
- 10 Church Tax Conference**, Tennessee River Association Office, Scottsboro, Lee Wright, ext. 2241
- 11 Church Tax Conference**, CrossPoint, Trussville, Lee Wright, ext. 2241
- 11 Ministers Wives' Connection**, Amanda Armstrong, ext. 2223
- 16 Sanctity of Human Life Sunday**, Keith Hinson, ext. 2289
- 18 Great Commission Conversations-Morning**, Amanda Armstrong, ext. 2223
- 18 Great Commission Conversations-Evening**, Amanda Armstrong, ext. 2223
- 20-22 Southeast Youth Conclave**, Chattanooga Convention Center, Tennessee, Scotter Kellum, ext. 2280
- 24 Church Tax Conference**, Mobile Association Office, Mobile, Lee Wright, ext. 2241
- 25 Church Tax Conference**, SBOM, Prattville, Lee Wright, ext. 2241
- 27-28 Discipleship Network of Alabama**, First, Athens, Steve Layton, ext. 2221
- 28-29 Living and Leading on God's Agenda**, Heritage, Montgomery, Ken Allen, ext. 2210
- 28-29 Alabama Bible Skills and Drills Retreat**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Belinda Stroud, ext. 2271
- 30-31 Sharing Hope Conference**, Dauphin Way, Mobile, Lori McGough, ext. 2245

FEBRUARY 2022

- 6-7 Sharing Hope Conference**, Taylor Road, Montgomery, Lori McGough, ext. 2245
- 7 Ministers Tax Conference**, Tennessee River Association Office, Scottsboro, Lee Wright, ext. 2241
- 8 Ministers Tax Conference**, CrossPoint, Trussville, Lee Wright, ext. 2241
- 13 Racial Reconciliation Sunday**, Keith Hinson, ext. 2289
- 18-19 Bivocational Minister/Spouse Retreat**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Ken Allen, ext. 2210
- 20 World Hunger Sunday**, Jim Swedenburg, ext. 2283
- 21 Ministers Tax Conference**, Mobile Association Office, Mobile, Lee Wright, ext. 2241
- 22 Ministers Tax Conference**, Southeast Alabama Association, Dothan, Lee Wright, ext. 2241
- 24 Child Safety Workshop**, First, Decatur, Lee Wright, ext. 2241
- 25-26 Pursue**, First, Opelika, Mike Nuss, ext. 2276
- 27-28 Sharing Hope Conference**, First, Pelham, Lori McGough, ext. 2245

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‘Flow of the Holy Spirit’

Hayneville Baptist sees move of God, changed lives, continued baptisms

By Grace Thornton
TAB Media

Tonya Meck says she used to love to turn people’s faces red.

“I lived a very ungodly life and boasted about the things I did,” she explained. “I loved the shock and awe.”

Meck grew up in and out of church, and when she was nine her sister and cousins were getting baptized, and she wanted to do the same.

“I learned all the right answers,” she said.

But Meck didn’t really understand what she had done, and as she grew up, didn’t make Christ part of her life. But one day a few years back her whole life fell apart.

“I ended up having a stroke in both of my eyes, and I’m visually impaired now,” she said. Other health problems and family issues piled up.

Open eyes

“God was bringing me to my knees,” Meck acknowledged. “I felt this overwhelming sadness and emptiness, and I cried. It was like God opened my eyes for the first time to the Holy Spirit.”

And He began to transform her life. She moved from Michigan to Alabama to be closer to her son’s family and started attending church. She was “starving”

for information about how to help her relationship with Jesus grow, and “could not get enough.”

God began moving

God began moving in Meck’s heart to love Him more and love others, too. She started a feeding ministry out of her apartment.

Sometime later, Meck bought a house in the area of Hayneville Baptist Church and started attending there.

“I felt this calling that this is home and this is where I’m going to be baptized,” she said. “I had only attended the church for a month and asked if I could be baptized and join the church. It’s just been a blessing, a complete blessing.”

Meck’s story is amazing, and Neal Hughes, director of missions for Montgomery Baptist Association, said it’s part of the fabric of something even bigger God is doing at Hayneville Baptist.

“The church is having an unusual flow of the Holy Spirit upon their congregation,” he said. “Attendance records are soaring, with baptisms and recommitments among every generation.”

Pastor Andy Hepburn noted the church has had baptisms almost every Sunday, many of whom professed faith during Vacation Bible School.

“We’ve already baptized



Photo by Grace Thornton/The Alabama Baptist

Bradfield Evans (standing, left) takes a photo as Andy Hepburn, pastor of Hayneville Baptist Church, baptizes Evans’ son, Shep, on Oct. 3. Shep was one of three baptized that day.

eight of the nine children who made professions of faith at VBS, plus ... some [others in] their families,” Hepburn said. “VBS was a huge success this year. We missed it last year — it was all online — and people were ready to come back.”

New excitement

That describes a lot of what’s happening at Hayneville Baptist right now, he noted. When in-person meetings paused for a while because of COVID-19 and the congregation tried other ways to meet, they had a “slow start” getting back to normal. But it was soon clear that even though their numbers were smaller, God was building a new excitement among the people.

“We had some high (attendance) days and some really low days,” Hepburn said. “But it was good. Even with smaller numbers, it seemed like God was doing more stuff in our lives when

we got together, even though the numbers were varying back and forth. Then sometime after July 4, it started this climb and it hasn’t stopped yet.”

Hepburn said something about the pandemic pause made people feel a different kind of freedom when they came back to worship, almost like their normal routine had been broken in a good way.

“The openness of our people to God first and to others has just supernaturally unfolded,” he said.

And people have been coming to church and coming to faith.

One man — Gene Wheeler — was baptized recently after Hepburn visited him

and shared the gospel.

“I considered myself a Christian all my life,” said Wheeler, 69. “I was in and out of churches. I just never made the commitment. But as I talked with Andy, I felt

“The openness of our people to God first and to others has just supernaturally unfolded.”

**Pastor Andy Hepburn
Hayneville Baptist Church**

it was time I did something. I know that’s all through the grace of God.”

He was “sitting on the edge of his seat ready to give his heart to Christ,” Hepburn said.

Hepburn feels like God is doing a “great thing”

at the church, and that made the congregation’s 175th anniversary celebration Oct. 10 even sweeter.

“I asked God for one more revival in my lifetime, and it looks like it’s coming,” he said. “It’s on the verge of it; it’s happening.”

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For December 5

Explore the Bible

By Douglas K. Wilson, Ph.D.
Dean of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



COMMISSIONED Ezekiel 3:8–21

Like his prophetic predecessors, Ezekiel was called to an overwhelming task. His role was to serve as a herald for the living God, warning people of impending judgment and calling them to repentance.

Others before him were called to travel to other countries — Jonah went to Nineveh, and Amos prophesied in Israel. God did not call Ezekiel to prophesy to strangers but to his fellow citizens of Judah. And like other prophets before him, the message he proclaimed for God would not be well received.

This is a timely message for Christians today. We are called to make disciples of all the nations, whether we live internationally, in our own hometown or somewhere in between. We have a commission to communicate the gospel message we believed, regardless of whether listeners receive or reject the message.

Prepared (8–11)

The people of Judah would not listen to Ezekiel's messages. Jeremiah was preaching impending destruction and 70 years of exile, while prophets on the king's payroll were pronouncing that God had given them a message of peace and prosperity.

Who were people going to believe? If they had to choose between a message of repentance or a message of prosperity, repentance would be quickly rejected. They were "hardheaded and hardhearted" (v. 7).

God prepared Ezekiel for this challenging task. He had hardened the prophet for this difficult calling: "I have made your forehead like a diamond, harder than flint. Don't be afraid of them or discouraged by the look on their faces, though they are a rebellious house."

These words are reminiscent of God's words to Joshua (1:6) — "be strong and courageous" — and to Moses (Deut. 9:13) — "they are a stiff-necked people."

God instructed the prophet to take the message to heart. The task and message were clear; the outcome was dependent on the listener,

whether they "listen or refuse to listen." God prepares people for their callings. At the same time, He wills and works in us to accomplish His purposes (Phil. 2:13). Apart from Him, we can do nothing (John 15:5).

Overwhelmed (12–15)

Ezekiel did nothing during his first week back among the exiles. He was overwhelmed with the thought of this calling, burdened with the weight of responsibility and angry that God's chosen people were unwilling to listen.

John makes it clear Jesus also was rejected by those who should have embraced His message: "He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, He gave them the right to be called children of God" (John 1:11–12).

A call to vocational ministry is a lonely task. Communicating the whole counsel of God faithfully takes real effort. Realizing that many who hear the message will not receive it leads ministry workers to question whether God has truly called them to Christian service.

Assigned (16–21)

In chapters 3 and 33, God utilizes the metaphor of a city watchman to describe Ezekiel's calling. A watchman's role is to announce groups approaching the walled city, whether emissaries or invaders. He is to shout aloud any arrivals, and he is to blow the ram's horn to sound an alarm in the event of danger.

In chapter 33, the calling is to serve as a public watchman where the whole city receives a warning.

In this passage, the watchman role is more personal. God is calling Ezekiel to warn individuals and call them to repentance. The prophet is to speak God's words — period.

If the offender repents, then praise God! If the offender does not, then he will be accountable for the judgment. If the watchman fails to sound the alarm, then the offender will still face judgment, but the prophet will account for his own disobedience.

Bible Studies for Life

By Jeffery M. Leonard, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Biblical & Religious Studies, Samford University



GOD WITH US Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18–25

Few kings have found themselves so securely caught between the proverbial "rock and a hard place" as did Judah's King Ahaz.

Looming to the east in the eighth century B.C. was the menacing Assyrian Empire. This was the nation famous for wiping out whole nations. Ahaz dared not pick a fight with the Assyrians.

And yet, closer to home were two kingdoms who insisted Ahaz do just that. Israel had banded together with the neighboring kingdom of Aram with the intention of launching a war against Assyria. They were threatening to kill the Judean king and replace him with someone more to their liking if he didn't join their coalition. Ahaz found himself in a desperate position.

The book of Isaiah tells us the approach of Aram's forces caused Ahaz's heart to tremble "like trees of a forest shaking in the wind" (Isa. 7:2). While Ahaz was in this pitiful condition, the prophet Isaiah found the Judean king and gave him some quite famous words of comfort.

The virgin birth was foretold hundreds of years before Jesus' birth. (Isa. 7:14)

Isaiah first reassured King Ahaz that he had no need to fear Damascus (the capital of Aram), Samaria (the capital of Israel) or the kings who ruled over them. Though these kings had banded together to depose Ahaz, their time would soon be at an end (Isa. 7:7). As further assurance, the Lord also gave King Ahaz a sign; through Isaiah He declared, "The virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel."

In its original context, the sign given to Ahaz was that his wife (the "virgin" or "young woman" in the prophecy) would bear a son who would succeed him on the throne and continue the king's line of royal descendants.

That son (the "Immanuel" in the prophecy) was none other than Ahaz's famous son Hezekiah, the same Hezekiah the prophet calls "Immanuel" in Isaiah 8:8. All that

Ahaz needed to do was trust in the Lord, and the Lord would protect the nation and bring to an end the threat that had come to its doorstep.

God fulfilled His promise through Mary's pregnancy. (Matt. 1:18–19)

A consistent feature of the Old Testament is the fact that the words of each author tend to outlive their original context. A number of psalms, for example, were originally tied to the lives of particular Israelite kings (see Pss. 2, 18, 72, 89). But Israel continued to sing these "royal" psalms long after the monarchy had ceased to exist because the nation continued to look (and hope) for an ideal king who would come to lead the nation.

What was true for the psalms was true for the prophets as well. Words spoken by prophets like Isaiah took on new and unexpected meanings in light of the life of Jesus the Messiah.

Nowhere is this more evident than in Matthew's teaching on the birth of Jesus. When it was first discovered that Mary was pregnant prior to her marriage to Joseph, a scandal was in the making; it would take an angelic intervention to convince Joseph otherwise.

Our faith, like Joseph's, must be grounded in the truth that God is with us. (Matt. 1:20–25)

Though it may have been hard to believe, Mary's pregnancy was not the result of infidelity.

On the contrary, much as He had done in Ahaz's day, God had once again broken through into the life of His people and provided a sign of His continuing commitment to their salvation.

Just as the wife of Ahaz had given birth to a son who signaled God's enduring presence with His people, so now He had given an even greater sign to the nation. This time a true virgin, Mary, would bear the true Immanuel, Jesus the Messiah, and that Immanuel — truly, "God with us" — would once and for all provide salvation for His people.

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Tracy Riggs
TAB Media

Zach Williams releases Christmas album, announces tour

Christian music artist Zach Williams had no idea what was happening when he experienced his first COVID-related concert cancellation in 2020.

His team didn't even take the equipment off the bus because they assumed it would be only a week before they were on tour again. Then after about eight weeks of the stay-at-home order, Williams went to the grocery store and saw everyone in masks.

"It started to sink in ... what if this is year one of quarantine and it doesn't get any better. [I experienced] all these emotions that you can't really put into words," Williams remembered. "I think that through that whole season, it really allowed me to rely on my faith and trust that God will provide and make a way."

God did make a way. Williams was fortunate to play about 25 shows at drive-in movie theaters in the fall. Not only did it help him and his team stay afloat financially, it was a morale booster.

"With the drive-ins, we just felt like, 'Here's an opportunity to go

out and play. We can't wait! Let's do this!' It felt so good," Williams said.

Overall, he played about 60 shows throughout the fall and spring of 2020–21.

'So blessed'

"I think we were one of the very few artists across the country who got to play that many shows," he noted. "I just feel so blessed that it's all working out."

It's easy to think of performers such as Williams as "just" artists. But they also are business owners and carry the responsibility of making sure their team members maintain an income during rough times like COVID.

"That was the worst part of it as a business owner — trying to put aside the artist and think about it in terms of how we do this, not lose our business and

keep things afloat." Williams said he felt he continually had to work on ways to provide for the team. A friend had been through a similar situation and told him, "I remember God very clearly saying, 'So, now you're the one providing for everybody? Isn't that My job?'"

Knowing he didn't have to provide — God would — took the pressure off Williams.

That said, he has friends and family who lost their businesses. This put his work in perspective, and Williams now is trying to focus more on being a father whenever he's home.

Having always loved old Christmas standards, Williams decided to create a Christmas album with that same feel during his forced break



Photo courtesy of Just Management

Williams' mom sent him to college with a cookbook and the hunger to learn. Between those books and watching many cooking shows, he and his roommates gained skills while Williams fell in love with cooking.

"I quickly realized that, for me, when I write a song, [I love] the first time I play it for somebody and get a reaction. ... I love to cook a meal and get a reaction," Williams said. "[Both food and music] bring people together in a way a lot of things can't. There's an emotion, a memory related to both food and music."

Williams hosts a VIP "meet-and-greet" before his regular shows that includes a dinner by Paul Fields, chef/owner of Twenty Below in Napa Valley, California. This partnership led Williams and Fields to develop a cookbook that will be released in 2022.

Though the last year has been difficult for Williams, like the rest of his past he wouldn't change it. His past helped make him who he is as a person and artist, he said.

"It's given me the story that I have. I'm grateful to be here and grateful God can take somebody who's messed up and broken and still use them.

"Even through last season, as bad as it was, there's so much good that's going to come out of it."

from touring. He and his team went to the historic FAME Studios in Muscle Shoals, where many of the songs were originally recorded. The album was released in October and a Christmas tour will run Dec. 2–18.

Trusting God

As difficult as COVID has been, Williams believes everything happens for a reason. When he was a child his parents prayed Jeremiah 29:11 over him before he went to sleep. Only in the past four or five years has Williams started to really understand what that verse says: Jesus had an even bigger plan for his life than his parents dreamed.

"I believe what God wants for us is better than we could ever imagine," Williams said.

Another aspect of Williams' life outside of being a husband, father, singer, songwriter, musician and business owner is that he loves to cook.

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.

To learn more about Zach Williams and his new Christmas album, visit zachwilliamsmusic.com.



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