

The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

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Pray for Ukraine

Citizens unite to display their national pride during a rally in Kramatorsk, Ukraine, on Feb. 23. AP photo/Andriy Andriyenko

People under attack are 'dear to the heart of Alabama Baptists'

By **Carrie B. McWhorter**
The Alabama Baptist

As Russia continued a full-scale attack on Ukraine at press time, Baptist leaders in Alabama called for prayer for Ukrainian Christians and the ongoing conflict.

The Russian invasion began shortly before dawn Feb. 24. Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Feb. 25 that 137 Ukrainian troops and civilians were killed in the first day of fighting, with

hundreds more injured.

"Russia has embarked on a path of evil, but Ukraine is defending itself and won't give up its freedom," Zelenskyy said.

Long history

Baptists in Alabama expressed their concern for and solidarity with fellow believers in Ukraine, noting the long history of cooperation between Alabama Baptists and Ukrainian Baptists.

"Alabama Baptists are praying for the people of Ukraine and especially our brothers and sisters in Christ," said Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

"Alabama Baptists have made many missions trips to

Ukraine. I am one of them," he said. "Because the people of Ukraine are dear to the heart of Alabama Baptists, we are appealing to the Alabama Baptist family to have a general call to prayer for the situation the Ukrainians are facing.

"I would encourage all Alabama Baptists to pray for the country and the entire region. Many people may well become refugees in surrounding

nations. Those countries need our prayer support as well," Lance said. "Our nation's leaders certainly need wisdom from above during this time. They should be high on our prayer list too. In the days to come we may well know more as the tensions mount and the responses are made by the governments of Ukraine and other nations. In the meantime we should

(See 'Ukrainian,' page 14)



A convoy of Russian armored vehicles moves along a highway in Crimea on Jan. 18.

AP photo

TAB
MEDIA GROUP
PODCASTS

CHECK OUT OUR PODCASTS!

Find the TAB Media podcasts at tabonline.org/podcasts or anywhere you get your podcasts.

Missions & ministry

TAB staff members serve alongside fellow church members

TAB Media encourages employees to be involved in missions and provides time off for volunteering. Two editorial team members recently served with their fellow church members.

Shawn Hendricks, TAB Media's director of product management, traveled to New York in December with a team of college students from First Baptist Church Hendersonville, Tennessee.

The team helped with church plant One Community Church in Hell's Kitchen.

During the trip, the team did everything from prayer walking and picking up trash to serving alongside other nonprofit ministries providing food for the poor. The team also stuffed gift bags for those in need and helped set up and tear down for Sunday worship.

"New York City is not an easy place at all to start a church," Hendricks said. "But it was great to see how our church is all in on helping One Community make a difference in Hell's Kitchen."



Photo by Sammy Brinkley

Above: Carrie McWhorter measures a spot for vinyl siding. **Left:** Tristan Bell, a member of Beulah Baptist Church, completes a row of siding.



Photo by Sammy Brinkley

Carrie McWhorter, TAB's content editor, served in Huntsville with a team from Beulah Baptist Church in Muscadine, through a public-private partnership with the city. Team members put vinyl siding on the home of a low-income resident.

"While we were working, we

learned YM Link on Mission will bring students to Huntsville this summer to do similar projects during an entire week devoted to missions service," McWhorter said.

"I'd advise student ministers to sign their high schoolers up now."

YM Link on Mission, which is a ministry of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, will be in Huntsville from May 31 to June 4. Learn more about the program and student missions opportunities at ymlink.org. (TAB Media)



Photo courtesy of Shawn Hendricks

Shawn Hendricks (second from right) explores Times Square with college students from First Baptist Church Hendersonville, Tennessee, in December. The student group served the church plant One Community Church in Hell's Kitchen.



Photo courtesy of Shawn Hendricks

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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The crossword puzzle can be found on page 15.



RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

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



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@RashionalThts

Navigating ever-increasing worldwide conflict, life stress

The people of Ukraine need our prayers; the fragility of the world in general needs our attention. Our U.S. elected officials and military leaders have had and continue to have to make serious decisions related to global and national events.

Our fellow believers around the world — as well as people of other faiths — face horrifying levels of persecution every day.

The once-thought “American dream” life in the United States seems to be shifting into a culture struggling to find its way.

And then the conversations taking place within our denomination (see story, page 8) ebb and flow between reasonable discussions and decisions — similar to what took place Feb. 21–22 — and mean-spirited attacks and attempts at sabotage, which are found primarily on social media platforms.

Pressure intensifying

If these were the only issues weighing on us, we would still have a generous helping of difficulties to research, evaluate and offer prayers.

However, most of us also experience various stressful situations swirling around home, work, community or church life.

Some days it’s just plain hard, and the emotional intensity of it all is just as debilitating as a difficult physical or situational journey might be.

No wonder tempers are short and patience levels are thin.

About the time we think the pressures can’t squeeze any harder, they find a way.

At the same time, I stand amazed at the countless number of people I see shouldering mind-numbing degrees of pain and yet fighting their way through the next step.

Sure, tears come and sometimes even outbursts of anger, but consistently they push forward and manage to even encourage or lend a hand to the rest of us in the process.

How do they do it? The only reasonable answer is through the strength of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We know this to be true, but I wonder how often we forget to tap into the Resource.

Do we truly give Him all our pain and worries like Matthew 11:28–30 suggests?

“Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

Have you ever experienced one of those moments where you knew you should be crushed into little pieces and lying in a clump of leftover body parts (figuratively speaking, of course), but you were still standing?

Have you ever finally dozed off to a restorative sleep and woke up realizing you will survive what’s in front of you that day?

Have you ever wanted to give up, give in or walk away, but didn’t?

Confident in Christ

If you have, then I’m confident you’ve experienced the power of God in your life — and the power of people praying for you — even if the situation seemed far away from Him.

There are multitudes of ways to experience God, and I’m so grateful He provides such rich examples each and every day.

But today, I’m thinking about how important it is for us to pray for one another and love one another — no matter how much we are consumed with the global, national and personal stresses of life.

Do you realize how many individual items bombard us every

day and how often we sense the pressure to immediately have an in-depth opinion — even if we don’t have all the facts.

I don’t know about you, but I prefer understanding the full context of any situation before determining my definite, no-question opinion, and even then I hope I’m humble enough to change my opinion if new information surfaces that proves my initial response inaccurate.

That means I often can’t articulate exactly what I think about this or that in the moment because I’ve not spent enough time reading on the topic to make sure I fully understand.

It also means my social media posts stay lighter in nature and could be described as “boring.”

Maybe “boring” will one day become the new fad, and those of us who prefer a calmer, more compassionate and thorough style of discussion and decision-making will be on the cutting edge.

In the meantime, let’s continue to lovingly encourage each other to keep our eyes on Jesus and endlessly pray for God to draw us closer to Him.

“Love suffers long and is kind ... does not behave rudely ... is not provoked ... rejoices in the truth” (1 Cor. 13).

Your Voice



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

'Encanto' movie inspires gospel reflections

Pastor: "We Don't Talk About Bruno" from #Encanto gets the hype, but we know the real song is "Surface Pressure" with lyrics like:

▶ "Pressure like a drip, drip, drip that will never stop."

▶ "Who am I if I can't carry it all?"

▶ "If I could shake the crushing weight of expectations."

I know many of you are walking through deep waters, emotional turmoil and unrealistic expectations (from others and that you put on yourself). I'm praying for you and would be happy to pray with you.

Philip Nation

Vice president & Thomas Nelson Bible publisher at HarperCollins Christian Publishing, via Facebook

I want to thank my friend Philip Nation for posting this (see "Pastor" above). He is a pastor to pastors.

I didn't think about the truth of this the first time I watched the movie, but this morning I listened to it again, and oh my gosh. If you

substitute "pastor" every time it says "sister," you'll feel like the songwriter crawled up inside your soul.

**Pastor James Jackson
Glynwood Baptist Church,
Prattville, via Facebook**

Parents/grandparents: Advice for having meaningful and spiritual conversations with your kids this week — Disney's newest movie "Encanto" peeks into the life of a family in Columbia and their striving to find worth. The movie is filled with gospel threads, like:

1. People are made in the image of God.

2. Worth is not tied to their production or work, but being made in the image of God.

3. Strive for unity through reconciliation, repentance and forgiveness.

Sit down and watch it as a family and listen to your children. Ask them if they ever feel their worth is tied to your approval of their performance, grades, etc. Assure them your love

for them is not tied to their "gifts."

My experience right now is that most kids and college students are fighting the lie in their heads that their worth is coming from what they do rather than who they are.

Use this opportunity to reassure them of your love and point them to their immeasurable value in God's eyes as His creation.

Will Spivey

**College pastor
First Baptist Church Opelika
via Facebook**

Luisa [the character in the film "Encanto" who sings "Surface Pressure"] learns the biggest lesson of all: Your identity and purpose should not be tied to your own strength and performance.

She asks "who am I if I can't carry it all?"

And while the song itself doesn't reach that point of understanding, those who've seen the movie will get the message.

That's profound. And as an oldest child, I've often asked myself the very same question.

But the good news of the gospel, which isn't mentioned in this song, is that we were never meant to carry the weight of the world on our shoulders. And by the film's end, Luisa learns that very lesson.

Kristin Smith

**Reprinted with permission from Plugged In Media
pluggedin.com/track-reviews/
jessica-darrow-surface-pressure/**

Sabbatical is over. (Here are mine and my wife's) major takeaways:

1. We choose to come back and enter into the highs and lows of people's lives. To carry the weights and burdens that accompany this role.

To go to war with the forces of darkness that seek to destroy the hope of the gospel. To embrace the hurt and wounds we receive because hurting people, hurt people.

To roll up our sleeves next to the men and women who are willing to stay in the trenches with us, allowing progress to be made that could never be made alone.

To celebrate all the wins that Jesus will undoubtedly secure for His own glory.

Because, after six weeks away, we recognize ... we are still called by God to all of it. What a joy and privilege.

2. And most importantly — Jesus is the sabbatical.

Every time we intentionally spend time with Him, we return to that sabbatical rest. His yoke is easy. His burden is light. Let's get it!

**Pastor Terrence Jones
Strong Tower at
Washington Park,
Montgomery,
via Facebook**

"Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).

Encouraging ministers

"Most people don't understand that being a pastor can be a lonely road to walk," said **Randy Nelson, pastor of Westside Baptist Church in DeFuniak Springs, Florida**, and member of the **Walton County Baptist**

Association's Minister Encouragement Team. "This [team] gives us close relationships to share our concerns and burdens. I find myself encouraged as I strive to encourage another. It is an iron-sharpening-iron relationship."

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“Evangelism and discipleship are two wings on the same airplane.”

SAMMY GILBREATH

Event evangelism strategist, Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

Now, perhaps more than ever, people are open to conversations about faith, yet few Christians actually take the opportunity to engage with them.

John B. Sorensen
President and CEO
Evangelism Explosion
International

[Most] people aren't atheists and agnostics. They believe in god. And that's the problem. They believe in a 'lowercase g' god. Very vague, very generic. Anywhere from a divine Santa Claus to a Yoda-type figure from "Star Wars" to a good luck charm ... you appeal to when something bad happens.

Pastor Dean Inserra
City Church
Tallahassee, Florida

God has blessed my willingness to lean on Him. He has encouraged me through moments of despair. He has lifted my spirits with opportunities and awards. I am no prolific or great writer, but all I do, I do for the glory of God, the One who continues to bless me over and over again.

Karen O. Allen
Author of "Confronting Cancer with Faith"

"We want to meet people in that unplanned pregnancy situation, but we want to go beyond that," said **Julie McLendon, director of North Jefferson Women's Center/Sav-A-Life in Fultondale, Alabama.** "Jesus wants us to have abundant life, and we want to walk that journey with our families."

"He said, 'I want you to feed 1,000 people a hot plate,'" said **Amos Crews, who serves as pastor of Christ First Community Church in Birmingham.** "We're a church of 20, and I knew we wouldn't be able to do that on our own. I said, 'You're going to have to be our Provider.'"

The biggest thing that influences people's willingness to talk about faith is the presence of a relationship with that person or faith being tied to their life story. If your relationship with God isn't impacting your life, why would someone else want to hear about it?

Scott McConnell
Executive director
Lifeway Research

From the *Twitterverse*

@JonTyson

I'm often amazed at how the people throwing the strongest critiques at others are often so fragile and defensive when critiqued themselves.

Lord grant us a non-defensive spirit.

@jbwester

Today was a really tough day in ministry. But I saw the grace of God shine through men and women who love Him and sacrifice so much in order for others to know and experience Jesus.

Sometimes hard days make Jesus appear even more beautiful.

@GaryFenton07

Moral cowardice is not only a failure to act, but also refusing to accept responsibility for our actions.

Many bitter conflicts could be avoided by saying, "I was wrong,"

rather than attempting to justify our unjustifiable words or deeds through argument.

@pastorjaycbc

Jesus proclaimed the truth and practiced the truth.

He wasn't worried about being invited back.

@BillyGraham

"We have not yet learned that we are more powerful on our knees than behind the most powerful weapons that can be developed."

@MattSmethurst

Five ways to love your pastor before church:

1. Pray for his heart.
2. Pray for your heart.
3. Read the passage he will preach.
4. Resolve to come hungry.
5. Resolve to leave full.

@michaelcriner

"Open your mouth and share the gospel with lost people in order to win them to Jesus Christ. You can't serve Jesus with a zipped lip."

Hands down one of my favorite quotes from the late professor of evangelism @DrRoyFish.

@TAndrewBrown

Preachers should be regular students of preaching. Regular exposure to books on preaching and other preachers will carry your ministry of proclamation far down the fruitful path of faithfulness.

@johnnymhunt

Rather than trying to figure out how to make the church more like the world so the world will go to church, we should be trying to figure out how to make the church more like Christ so the church will go to the world. #dwightpentecost

It's all about the Lord

By **Franklin L. Kirksey**
Robertsdale, Ala.

Cooper Kupp, wide receiver with the Los Angeles Rams, completed a Triple Crown season and was voted MVP in this year's Super Bowl.

Upon learning this, my mind went back almost 50 years to a time when Jake Kupp, Cooper's grandfather, a legendary lineman with the New Orleans Saints, spoke in chapel at Greystone Christian School in Mobile in 1973.

Jake was inducted into the New Orleans Saints Hall of Fame in 1991.

For many years, he has used football as a platform to share the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, as did his son, Craig, quarterback with the Phoenix Cardinals and Dallas Cowboys. Now his grandson, Cooper, is following in their footsteps.

This family's godly tradition reveals it's all about the Lord.

Every believer must realize it's all about the Lord. Here are some things to remember:

- ▶ Remember your relationship with the Lord (Col. 3:17).
- ▶ Remember your regard for the Lord (Col. 3:23).
- ▶ Remember your reward from the Lord (Col. 3:24a).
- ▶ Remember your responsibility to the Lord (Col. 3:24b).

Stay the course

Major W. Ian Thomas shares his understanding of the Christian life: "Go where you're sent. Stay where you're put. Give what you've got."

That's what Jesus did. He was sent to earth by the Father, and He stayed on earth until He completed His mission. He gave His life on the cross so we could be forgiven of sin and have eternal life by His death, burial and resurrection.

The greatest tragedy would be to hear the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and fail to heed it. May we never forget it's all about the Lord.

3 stories you should know



Photo by Samford University

Samford University officially dedicates its Racial Reconciliation Memorial during a public worship service Feb. 15. The memorial honors the contributions of African Americans who built and sustained the institution's mission while affirming the university's commitment to reconciliation. The memorial was authorized by the university's board of trustees and originally installed May 5, 2020. The original dedication date was delayed due to COVID-19 restrictions. The monument was crafted in the studios of David Harber, a sculptor based in Oxfordshire, England.

Mississippi Serve Tour invites volunteer teams

Volunteers will descend on Meridian, Mississippi, later this month to help local churches and encourage bivocational pastors by serving low-income residents and organizations in need of assistance.

Serve Tour Meridian, set for March 18–19, is a partnership between local churches, Lauderdale Baptist Association, the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board and Send Relief, the compassion ministries arm of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Projects will include light construction, painting and landscaping, hosting sports camps or block parties and other volunteer-friendly activities.

To register your team, go to sendrelief.org/serve-tour/meridian. For more about the tour, visit sendrelief.org/serve-tour.

Faith devotion intrigues half of Americans

Americans are curious about the religious devotion of others and are willing to discuss the topic, but most say they rarely have conversations about faith with their Christian friends, a new study shows.

An Evangelism Explosion study conducted by Lifeway Research found Americans are widely receptive to spiritual conversations in a variety of settings.

“This study reveals that most Americans are open to talking about faith,” said Scott McConnell, executive director of Lifeway Research, but “Christians are not bringing it up.”

Half of Americans (51%) say they're curious as to why some people are so devoted to their faith.

To learn more about this study, visit tabonline.org/conversations.

Persecuted church

New West African leader promises to deal with Islamic extremism

OUAGADOUGOU, Burkina Faso — The new president of Burkina Faso is pledging to deal with the country's growing insecurity, due in part to the previous regime's inability to contain Islamist extremism in the West African nation.

Paul-Henri Damiba was sworn in as Burkina Faso's president Feb. 16. Damiba was promoted in December to the rank of commander in the country's military, with oversight of the region where the country's capital, Ouagadougou, is located, according to Reuters. Damiba was introduced as the country's new leader in January following a military coup.

The coup was announced on state television by Capt. Sidsore Kader Ouedraogo, who said the military had seized power in response to the

“ongoing degradation of the security situation” in the country, CNN reported.

Damiba promised to work toward a return to democratic elections, Reuters reported.

Burkina Faso is among several West African nations dealing with an increase in violence by Islamic extremists over the past five years.

Open Doors ranks Burkina Faso No. 32 on the 2022 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian.

Christians acquitted of charges now forced to take Islamic classes

DEZFUL, Iran — Eight Christian converts acquitted of propaganda charges in 2021 are among a group of Christians being forced to attend Islamic classes.

According to relief group Barnabas Aid, Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps agents sum-

moned several Christians to a Jan. 28 meeting.

On Nov. 30, 2021, the eight were acquitted for charges of “propaganda activities in favor of anti-regime groups.”



Photo courtesy of Mohabat News

The judge of the Civil and Revolutionary Court of Dezful said the men “merely converted to a different religion.” The judge said that is “not

criminalized in laws of Iran,” Barnabas Fund reported. Nonetheless, the eight were told at the Jan. 28 meeting they must attend 10 sessions with Islamic clerics.

Open Doors ranks Iran No. 9 on the 2022 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian.

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

► **Mitchell (Mitch) Carter**, 76, died Feb. 3. He was senior pastor of Macedonia Baptist Church, Sylacauga, for more than four years and church pianist for more than eight years. He also played the guitar and composed 450 gospel songs.

He is survived by his wife, Jannia; one son; and three grandchildren.

► **Scott Sanders**, longtime minister of music for **Greensport Baptist Church, Ashville**, died unexpectedly Feb. 24. He was 60.



SANDERS

Sanders was a lifelong member of Greensport and began serving bivocationally in 2003.

His wife, Teresa, has served as the church secretary since 1990. They have three children and three grandchildren.

Michael Mills, pastor of Greensport, said, "He was a man of devotion to his church, his family and all who knew him."

CLEBURNE ASSOCIATION

► An annual tradition returned Feb. 14 as the **Baptist Active Women of Cleburne County** met to bring a little Valentine's cheer to residents of a local assisted living center.

For more than two decades, the missions group made up of women from multiple churches in the area have met in February for a "Valentine's Serenade," with members visiting homebound community members and singing favorite hymns, along with classic tunes like "Let Me Call You Sweetheart."

Photo by Carrie B. McWhorter/
The Alabama Baptist

Last year's caroling was canceled due to the pandemic. This year, the group met at Carillon Oaks, an assisted living and memory care facility in Heflin, where they enjoyed a meal with residents and sang a few songs.

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

► As members and guests of **Mulga Baptist Church** gathered for the church's 100th anniversary service in November, they had a lot to celebrate.

"We were amazed as we remembered and heard stories of the cumulative effect of a consistent gospel witness," Pastor Crantford Hicks said. "You don't realize the impact a church has until you look back down the path and see the profound difference made by faithful Christians as they affect the lives of others."



Photo courtesy of Johnnie Sentell

Kerry and Teresa Sparks, Jim and Nell Branum and Rick Benefield. The church history was presented by Fran Baggett and Karen Hyde. Johnnie Sentell (right) of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented the church with a plaque.

► **Bob Terry** is the new interim pastor of **Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Pleasant Grove**.

He also serves as the adviser to the president of faith networks at Samford University and has served numerous interim pastorates through the years. Terry holds degrees from Mississippi College and Southern Seminary. He is editor emeritus of The Alabama Baptist and also served state papers in Missouri and Kentucky. His wife, Pat, recently retired as a professor of nutrition and dietetics at Samford.



TERRY

COFFEE ASSOCIATION

► The **Coffee Baptist Association** is hosting "Evangelism Encounter" with evangelist Scott Dawson on March 16-17, 6:30 p.m. Music will be led by Don't Look Back at New Brockton Farm Center. Call 334-894-6411. John Granger is director of missions.

TENNESSEE RIVER ASSOCIATION

► **Tennessee River Association** will host its sixth annual Associational Revival on March 7-9, 6:30 p.m. Wednesday morning service will

begin at 10 a.m. Host church will be Center Point Baptist Church, Scottsboro. Speakers will be: Monday, Josh Reavis; Tuesday, Scott Dawson; Wednesday a.m., Bob Pitman; Wednesday p.m., Jeff LaBorg. Worship leader will be Jeff Hawes. Dwight Everett is director of missions.

ELMORE ASSOCIATION

► **Ricky Kennedy** is the new associate pastor of worship for **Crossroads Community Church, Elmore**. He previously served in similar roles for Broadmoor Baptist Church, Madison, Mississippi, and First Baptist Church Odessa, Texas. He holds a bachelor's degree from University of Mobile and is expected to graduate this year with his master's in pastoral ministry from New Orleans Seminary. He is married to Kaitlin.



KENNEDY

ST. CLAIR ASSOCIATION

► **Dewayne Banks** is the new pastor of **Mount Moriah Baptist Church, Pell City**, where he was serving as interim pastor. He holds a bachelor's degree from Southeastern Bible College, Birmingham. He previously was pastor of St. Clair Cowboy Church, Odenville, and First Baptist Church Odenville, and he's also served as a youth pastor. He and his wife, Laurie, have two children.



BANKS

► Several churches in the association have called new pastors. **Aaron Boley** is the new pastor of **Pinedale Baptist Church, Ashville**. **Billy Church** is the new pastor of **Mineral Springs Baptist Church, Pell City**. **Jeff Phillips** is the new pastor of **Pine Forest Baptist Church, Ashville**.



Photo courtesy of the Alabama House of Representatives

Alabama Baptist State Convention President Buddy Champion (left) opened the Feb. 17 session of the Alabama House of Representatives in prayer. Champion, pastor of FBC Trussville, and fellow ministers Spencer Jones, Matt Dickey, Matt Galloway and Alan Taylor also attended a reception hosted by Rep. Danny Garrett, who is a member of FBC Trussville.

John Yeats (at podium) guides Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee members in a collective prayer.



Photo by Van Payne/The Alabama Baptist

ALL IN FAVOR?

SBC Executive Committee approves slate of recommendations

By Margaret Colson and Jennifer Rash

The Alabama Baptist

Framed with prayers, sermons and renewed relationships, denominational business was the focus for 66 members of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee gathering in Nashville for a regularly scheduled meeting Feb. 21–22. Two of the now 68-member board were not in attendance.

While the opening plenary session showcased interim president and CEO Willie McLaurin, the second day allowed members to see him in action from time to time during the lengthy business sessions.

SBC President Ed Litton shared a challenge to EC members and a brief update on the work of the Sexual Abuse Task Force.

EC members also named a new

presidential search committee.

Members are: Mollie Duddleston of Arkansas, Jeremy Morton of Georgia, Philip Robertson of Louisiana, Adron Robinson of Illinois, Rolland Slade of California (ex officio), David Sons of North Carolina and Mike Keahbone of Oklahoma.

McLaurin will remain in the position as interim until a new president is elected.

The EC's four standing committees presented a long list of recommendations and held a roughly two-hour executive session/working lunch Feb. 22.

Following the executive session, Slade announced the EC had come to a resolution with Jennifer Lyell related to the mishandling of her

sexual abuse claims and issued an official apology to her.

EC members also heard a report from the SBC Credentials Committee while in executive session, but no recommendations were brought to the full board.

Coming from the EC committees were a total of 26 items.

The Committee on Convention Finances and Stewardship Development, led by chairperson Archie Mason of Arkansas, brought 14 reports and recommendations before the EC trustee board. All were approved.

► Six of the items dealt with the Cooperative Program allocation and SBC operating budgets, with four of those focused on the rou-

tine annual review of the previous year's final report and first quarter of the current fiscal year.

Approved budget

Trustees also approved a proposed 2022–2023 SBC CP allocation budget of \$192.27 million, a slight increase over the current year, and a proposed 2022–2023 SBC EC and SBC operating budget of \$8.335 million, a slight decrease from the current year.

► Two items dealt with the 2021 audit of the EC. While auditors issued a clean, unqualified/unmodified opinion on the financial report, they added a note acknowledging possible unknown future financial liabilities related to the sexual abuse investigation.

► Three items dealt with loan status reports from Southern Baptist seminaries. A loan with Southeastern Seminary has been retired. Loans with Southwestern Seminary and Southern Seminary are current and on schedule.



Photo by Van Payne/The Alabama Baptist
Don Currence, SBC registration secretary, discusses voting procedures for selecting the presidential search team.

► One item dealt with the review of non-disclosure agreements, a referral from the 2021 SBC Annual Meeting for all SBC entities to review how they use non-disclosure agreements and report back to messengers at the 2022 SBC Annual Meeting.

The EC does not use non-disclosure agreements, Mason said, adding it has on occasion used confidentiality clauses in severance packages and other personnel matters.

► The final two items from this committee dealt with the need for additional funding (from \$2.1 million to \$4 million) related to the sexual abuse investigation. Joe Knott from North Carolina was the only registered dissenting vote.

The Committee on Convention Missions and Ministry, led by chairperson Andrew Hunt of Indiana, presented eight items for consideration by the full board.

Six of the eight came as referrals from the SBC Annual Meeting in Nashville last June.

► EC members approved the creation of an ad hoc committee to study the resolutions process with a goal of reporting its findings to messengers attending the 2023 SBC Annual Meeting.

The ad hoc committee will address the three SBC referrals focused on the SBC Resolutions Committee — determine if the committee should exist going forward; if it does, then provide early release of resolutions for messengers to review; and address questions related to amendments to resolutions.

► Two referrals dealt with changing the name of the SBC. The committee's recommendation to decline the request was approved by the EC after some debate. A motion from the floor by

Litton to amend the recommendation to delay the decision and appoint a study committee was voted down.

"You cannot change history just by changing the name," Hunt said when presenting the reasoning for the committee's decision. "The only way forward is to not change our name but to change our behavior."

► Another referral dealt with the potential conflict of interest with the same attorneys representing both the EC and the SBC. An outside law firm hired to do the review found no conflict of interest. EC members approved reporting the results of the review to messengers at the 2022 SBC Annual Meeting.

► EC members also approved adding collegiate ministries to the North American Mission Board's ministry assignment as a complement to Lifeway Christian Resource's ministry assignment to provide church resources and discipleship materials for collegians.

Collegiate assignment

A request to move the assignment from Lifeway (which does not receive CP funding and thus has no budget available to host meetings of the national network of collegiate ministers) to NAMB (which does receive CP funding and has resources available for the network) was voted down by messengers to the 2021 SBC Annual Meeting, so the current request is to "add" rather than "move."

Because NAMB has the ministry assignment of evangelism, it "has been involved with collegiate evangelism and mobilization for a number of years," NAMB spokesperson Mike Ebert shared with the EC. "We already have a collegiate church planting strategy ... and what we want to add to that now

is to offer training for collegiate ministers who want it and build a stronger sense of brotherhood. ... We want to give them a home (from a national perspective)."

'Clear on ... our lane'

"We are very clear on where our lane is here," he added in reference to a concern raised about how the move would impact state conventions.

McLaurin also shared during the discussion, "Collegiate ministries are highly supported by our state conventions. ... The work primarily takes place with state conventions. NAMB is coming alongside and undergirding with more support ... not taking away, just adding."

► In other missions and ministry items, Hunt reported his committee did not yet have a candidate to fill a vacancy on the Credentials Committee but did fill a vacancy on the Order of Business, adding Palmer Williams from Tennessee.

The committee also approved the election of two trustees to the Southern Baptist Foundation board and recommended the dissolution of a task force that had been created in recent years to review the process for entity trustee removal prior to their term ending. All of

these were approved by the full board.

The Committee on Convention Events and Strategic Planning, led by chairperson Erik Cummings of Florida, recommended approving contracts with C. Barry McCarty and Al Gage to serve as parliamentarians for the 2022 SBC Annual Meeting as well as providing the traditional \$100,000 meeting hall expense for the Southern Baptist Pastors Conference. Both items were approved.

The Committee on Southern Baptist Relations, led by chairperson Jim Gregory of Idaho, approved recommendations and amendments for the SBC Calendar of Activities as well as a statement concerning best practices for SBC officer nomination speeches. Both items were approved.

Other business

In other business, EC board members approved general administrative matters related to the EC, including a post-employment agreement with former CFO Jeff Pearson; a revised salary structure for existing employees; and updated information related to names and authorization of signatures on corporate accounts.



Photo by Van Payne/The Alabama Baptist
Neal Hughes (left), EC member from Alabama, shares a prayer moment with fellow member Andrew Hunt from Indiana.



Photo by Van Payne/The Alabama Baptist
Willie McLaurin (left), interim president and CEO of the Executive Committee, and Rolland Slade (right), who serves as chair of the EC board of trustees, greet EC member Jeremy Morton of Georgia during the Feb. 21-22 meeting.

“The only way forward is to not change our name but to change our behavior.”

ANDREW HUNT

SBC Executive Committee member from Indiana

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

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR NORTH AMERICAN MISSIONS *and Annie Armstrong Easter Offering*

MARCH 6-13, 2022

(or choose any time that works best for you during the Easter season)

alsbom.org/annie

In addition to the prayer guide provided by the North American Mission Board, here are some missionaries and church planters from Alabama who are serving across our state and nation. Please take a moment and lift each one of these up in prayer!



Sunday

Joe and Brakia Stevens
Redeemer Fellowship of Alabama
Saraland



Monday

Rendell and Teresa Day
Talkeetna, Alaska



Tuesday

Ryan and Michelle Melson
New Orleans, Louisiana



Wednesday

Will and Claire Harbison
Mill City Church
Huntsville



Thursday

**Brittany Hall and
Fiancé Param Yonzon**
Queens, New York



Friday

Tyler and Ashley Gibson
Montana



Saturday

Brad and Jamie Simmons
Wichita, Kansas



Sunday

Ramon and Nayivis Vielza
I-10 Church
Mobile

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FOR NORTH AMERICAN MISSIONS

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 Alabama Baptist
STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS

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

For more information about church planting in Alabama, visit PlantAlabama.org.

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

FINISHING THE RACE ... TESTIFYING TO GOD'S GRACE

Chaplain meets motorcycle racing community members where they are

By Tracy Riggs
The Alabama Baptist

As motorcycle racers came to Talladega Feb. 19–20 for opening weekend of the WERA Sportsman Series, a familiar face greeted and encouraged them.

Raceline Ministry chaplain Mark Merical has spent the last 10 seasons ministering to the club and pro motorcycle riders on the WERA and MotoAmerica pro motorcycle road racing circuit. Chaplains are now part of the fabric of the events, he said.

“I would say a very high percentage of people at least appreciate and are happy that we are there,” Merical said. “We have a very good relationship with the racing community.”

That wasn't necessarily true on his first day as a chaplain 10 years ago. That first race, he didn't know what to expect. Wearing his Raceline shirt with “Chaplain” on it, he introduced himself to the riders.

“They said, ‘So, what are you doing here?’” Merical recalled. “This happened time and time again. I said, ‘I'm the new chaplain for WERA [Motorcycle Road Racing].’ They looked at me, puzzled. They would ask me, ‘Well, what is a chaplain?’”

Merical said he then asked what they thought a chaplain was. Answers ranged from a racing official to someone who removed dead

bodies from the track to having no idea.

Over the next month at races around the country, Merical heard this repeatedly.

He couldn't believe how many racers had no knowledge of God or hadn't been to church.

Quickly Merical realized, “OK. Now I know why God for the last two years has been trying to get me and my wife to go this direction.”

Varied responsibilities

The racing community now expects to see him at the various race-related events, which include practices, qualifying rides and the races themselves — all of which follow tight schedules.

Though race weekends follow a strict routine, Merical's schedule constantly changes.

People come to him with problems, questions and a need for encouragement. It could be a day of horrific crashes or no injuries at all.

He has presided over about 40 weddings and led many people to Christ, baptizing some.

Unless needed elsewhere, Merical is always at the exit point of a race to applaud, hug or high-five the riders.

“I've had several who stopped, full gear, still sitting on their motorcycle, lean over and give

me a hug and start sobbing; grown men that you would not want to see in a back alley, just sobbing on your shoulder, not saying a word. But



Photo by Tracy Riggs/The Alabama Baptist

Motorcycle chaplain Mark Merical leads a chapel service at Barber Motorsports Park in Birmingham during a race weekend last fall. Merical broadcasts weekly chapel services on Facebook and hosts the popular Raceline Podcast.

you know exactly why they're sobbing. It's the coolest thing.”

When Merical tells people he's a motorcycle chaplain, most assume he primarily deals with illness, injury and death. They don't expect him to have a sense of humor, but Merical breaks that stereotype.

“I'm ... a black belt in the martial arts,” he said. “So I will get people to Jesus one way or the other!”

The “stereotypical” portion of a chaplain's role is most difficult — though motorcycle racing is safer than people think, there is still a high chance for injury or death.

Sometimes Merical accompanies an injured or dying rider to the hospital and other times he stays back to help deal with other riders' emotions.

“Unfortunately, that's just part of it and all the riders know,” Merical said. “We don't talk about it unless someone asks me, but everybody

knows. They literally are seconds, inches, away from death.

Their top speeds are 160 to 180 mph; they are going around corners 100 to 120 mph on a tiny piece of tread on the edge of their tires.

Passion for the sport

“They all know it, but they are so passionate about their sport that they do it anyway.”

Merical's hope is for the riders and their families to be as passionate about Jesus, he said, quoting Acts 20:24.

“I have to say, there is no question ... that God gave us this ministry.

“That's what we want people to know — about the love and the grace of

God and what Jesus did for them in dying on the cross for their sins so they might have life eternal. That verse seems to really sum up what our hope and desires are for our track family.”



Photo by Tracy Riggs/The Alabama Baptist
Motorcycle chaplain Mark Merical hugs a rider following a race in Birmingham last October.

For more information visit RacelineMinistry.com.



The Alabama Baptist file photo

State legislators consider alcohol, transgender items

By Carrie B. McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

The Alabama Legislature has been in session six weeks, and so far, no legislative surprises — and no gambling expansion bills — have been introduced.

Bills of interest to the faith-based community include those related to expanded alcohol sales and transgender issues. No gambling or lottery bills had been introduced as of Feb. 25.

Proposals to allow drive-thru alcohol sales and alcohol sales from food trucks in certain municipalities are under consideration.

The drive-thru bill may be “setting the stage for fast food restaurants to ... sell alcohol,” said Joe Godfrey, president and CEO of Alabama Citizens Action Program, in an email to supporters. “If this happens, a person can go through the drive-thru, get a hamburger and a beer. The opportunity for young people to access alcohol will greatly increase.”

The food trucks bill currently applies only in Birmingham.

Two bills related to transgender issues are moving through the Legislature.

The Vulnerable Child

Compassion and Protection Act would prohibit gender change therapy, such as hormone blockers and/or gender change surgical procedures, for minors. The bill passed the Senate during the 2021 session but did not pass the House.

Another bill under consideration would require students in K-12 schools to use multi-person restrooms and locker rooms that match the sex on their original birth certificate. A federal case involving transgender students and school bathrooms

was heard by the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals on Feb. 22.

Godfrey said he still expects gambling legislation to be introduced during this session, but no bills have yet been filed. The delay may indicate supporters of the legislation are having trouble getting support for gambling expansion, Godfrey said.

Contact legislators

Godfrey suggested concerned citizens contact their legislators in the Alabama House and Senate to “assure them of your prayers and ask them to oppose any and all bills that would expand gambling and alcohol in our state.”

To access a list of state lawmakers, visit alcap.com and choose the “find your legislator” link.

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

PASTOR

Pathway Baptist Church in Dothan, Ala., is seeking a full-time pastor. For details and qualifications, please 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.

PASTOR/BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Horseshoe Bend Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking a pastor/bivocational pastor. Located in Dadeville, Ala. Resumés to be mailed to: 17363 Highway 280, Dadeville, AL 36853, or hsbbc36853@gmail.com.

PASTOR

Union Baptist Church is seeking a full-time pastor. Resumés will be received through March 31 by mail at: Pastor Search Committee, Union Baptist Church, 5251 Grand Bay Wilmer Road, Grand Bay, AL 36541, or by email at: admin@ubcgrandbay.org.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Paden Baptist Church, Gadsden, Ala., is prayerfully seeking a bivocational pastor. Please submit resumés to: padenbaptistchurch@yahoo.com or to: Paden Baptist Church, 900 Padenreich Ave., Gadsden, AL 35905.

MINISTER OF MUSIC

First Baptist Church of Birmingham is seeking someone to lead a strong, blended, Christ-centered worship ministry. The individual should have experience working with choral worship and be prepared to lead gifted instrumentalists and orchestra. The minister of music will join the pastor and ministry staff in offering comprehensive ministry to the congregation. Resumés may be sent to: jcooley@fbcbhm.org.

MUSIC & WORSHIP ASSISTANT

North Shelby Baptist is hiring a part-time music and worship assistant. The scope of work includes clerical, filing, music preparation and basic office duties. Music experience is preferred but not required. Interested candidates should email: office@northshelbybaptist.org.

MINISTER OF YOUTH/ EDUCATION

Taylorville Baptist Church is

seeking a full-time minister of youth/education. An ordained minister with a college degree preferred and at least three years of ministry experience required. Please email your resumé and cover letter to: rpate@taylorvillebaptist.org. Resumés will be accepted until March 31.

PART-TIME COLLEGE MINISTER

Parkway Baptist Church, Auburn, is seeking a part-time person called by God to ministry who is highly motivated to teach, disciple and pour into the lives of college-aged individuals. Duties will include: teaching/leading on Sunday mornings and at other appropriate times, planning times of fellowship, offering avenues of opportunities for ministry and missions and equipping students to reach other students. This position would seek to use a team approach to ministry. Some experience preferred. Send resumés/inquiries to: jeff@parkwayauburn.org or call 334-887-3782.

YOUTH MINISTER

First Baptist Church Center Star, youth minister position. Part-time (20 hours estimate). For more information about this job opportunity, contact the FBCCS church office at 256-757-1310.

CHILDREN'S MINISTER

North Shelby Baptist is seeking a full-time children's minister. We are a church that values tradition, is conservative in our theology, while seeking to be liberal in love. For more information, visit northshelbybaptist.org/childrens-minister.

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: cmssc@ehbc.church.

OTHER POSITIONS

EASTSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH DAYCARE DIRECTOR

Eastside Baptist Church is looking for a daycare director who will provide strong Christian leadership and love for our children, ages crib baby to 4 years old. The director requires the

ability to communicate well with all and has a working knowledge of bookkeeping. Send resumés to: Chairperson Personnel Committee, Eastside Baptist Church, 558 Gadsden Hwy., Birmingham, AL 35235.

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.reliableesigns.com.

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PODCAST

STORIES SEASON 5: THE MISSIONS WIDOWS STORY

Valleys can be an excruciating place to be, but for people who spend their life chasing Jesus, they're a place where unexplainable things can happen. This season shares the story of three women — Gloria Sloan-Castellanos, Erica Patrick and Staci Powers — who have experienced just that as they lost their husbands while serving on the missions field and kept going. Listen to the Stories podcast anywhere you get your podcasts or at tabonline.org/stories.

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

Regional State Evangelism Conference



Sharing Hope

On The Road

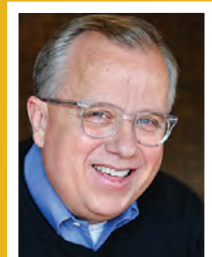
Sunday session begins at 5:30 p.m.
Monday session is 9-11:30 a.m.

MARCH 13-14, 2022

First Baptist Church, Cullman

SUNDAY EVENING

Ronnie Hill & Ed Litton



MONDAY MORNING

Tim Beougher & Tom Richter



Sunday evening session will be livestreamed at live.alsbom.org. If you can't attend in person, consider gathering a group and participating online!



Alabama Baptist STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS

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

Ministers' Wives Gathering is Monday 9-10:30 a.m.
More info at alabamawmu.org/ministerswivesgathering

evangelizeAL.org/sharinghope

Ukrainian Baptists are 'strong, faithful people'

(continued from page 1)
remember the words of George Whitefield who called prayer 'the long artillery' of believers."

Reggie Quimby, who oversaw Alabama Baptists' partnership with Ukraine, said, "The Alabama-Ukraine Partnership, which lasted for almost a decade, strengthened our Alabama Baptist churches and associations, as well as the Baptist churches throughout Ukraine."

'People of ... prayer'

"Ukrainian Baptists are a strong, faithful people who have historically faced difficult, challenging conditions," he said. "I remember them to be a people of great faith and prayer. No doubt they will weather this storm with the help and strength of the Lord during these troubled times. I know they will be confident of and encouraged by the many thoughts and prayers of their Alabama Baptist brothers and sisters in Christ."

Rob Jackson, director of the SBOM office of church health and president of Romanian-American Mission, an organization that works with churches across Europe, said churches in Romania have begun to mobilize to help those in Ukraine and to receive refugees if needed. Romania shares two borders with Ukraine.

"My heart breaks over the suffering of the people of Ukraine," Jackson said. "Alabama Baptists' former partnership with Ukraine has led to deep friendships with these dear

brothers and sisters. Please pray for peace in Ukraine. Ask God to open the eyes of the Ukrainians to their need for the Prince of Peace."

The attack began around 5 a.m. local time Feb. 24, shortly after Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a military action in Ukraine. Ukrainian officials believe Putin plans to overthrow the elected Zelenskyy and install a pro-Kremlin government.

Zelenskyy enacted martial law as the attack got underway. Missiles of various types were launched on at least 18 sites across the country. Russian forces also overtook the decommissioned Chernobyl nuclear power plant, scene of the worst nuclear disaster in world history.

Sanctions

The U.S. and other Western nations condemned Russia's actions, which have followed weeks of denials by Moscow that it was planning any such undertaking.

More than 100,000 troops had been building near Ukraine's border as the world watched and waited to see what Putin had in mind.

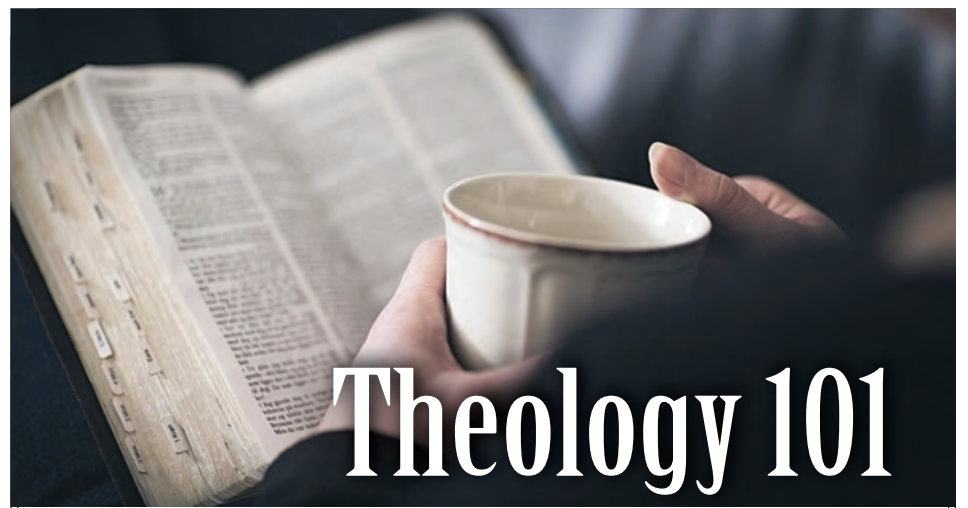
In retaliation, the U.S. and its allies announced sanctions on Russian financial institutions and technology sectors, along with banning exports into the country.

To encourage prayer, the SBOM has been using #pray4ukraine on social media and has created a social media graphic available at tabonline.org/ukraine.



AP photo/Seth Wenig

Pro-Ukraine demonstrators carry signs and Ukrainian flags in New York's Times Square on Feb. 24. World leaders condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine as "barbaric."



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

The People of God

The Bride of Christ

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
The Alabama Baptist

For several weeks Theology 101 has used the imagery of the Church as the body of Christ as a way of thinking about some aspects of ecclesiology or the doctrine of the Church. This week we pick up another of the biblical analogies — the bride of Christ.

This analogy appears in Scripture when the Bible speaks of Christian husbands and wives, and Ephesians 5:22–33 elevates this imagery to the relationship between Christ and the Church: "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (v. 32).

In a similar manner, the Book of Revelation uses imagery of marriage to speak of the eternal relationship of Christ and the Church, saying in 19:7, "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." Additionally, Revelation 21:9 holds the heavenly invitation, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife."

Covenant commitment

Basic to this imagery is the fact that the relationship between Christ and the Church is one of mutual covenant commitment.

Christ's commitment is evidenced by His saving death, as stated in Ephesians 5:25: "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her." His commitment to the Church includes cherishing and nourishing it. The word for "nourishing" not only suggests

feeding it, but also conveys the idea of heating or keeping warm.

We sometimes speak of a local church being cold or a fellowship being warm. Christ's presence by His Spirit is the warming factor.

In return for Christ's ministry to His bride, the Church's response should be one of faithful commitment, which receives various expressions in the New Testament. For example, 2 Corinthians 11:1–3 describes the Church as betrothed to Christ, and as befits a pure bride, the Church must always aspire to offer Him sincere and pure devotion.

Heart desire

In Ephesians 5 we see that like a wife faithful to her husband, the Church should always seek to be fully subject and devoted to Christ, as He gave His ultimate love and sacrifice for it. The heart desire of every congregation should be to aspire to become "holy and without blemish," since that is Christ's goal for His bride.

The Church presently is a bride in the making — readying herself for a wonderful future, making her ambition to reflect something of the future glory that awaits us as the bride of Christ.

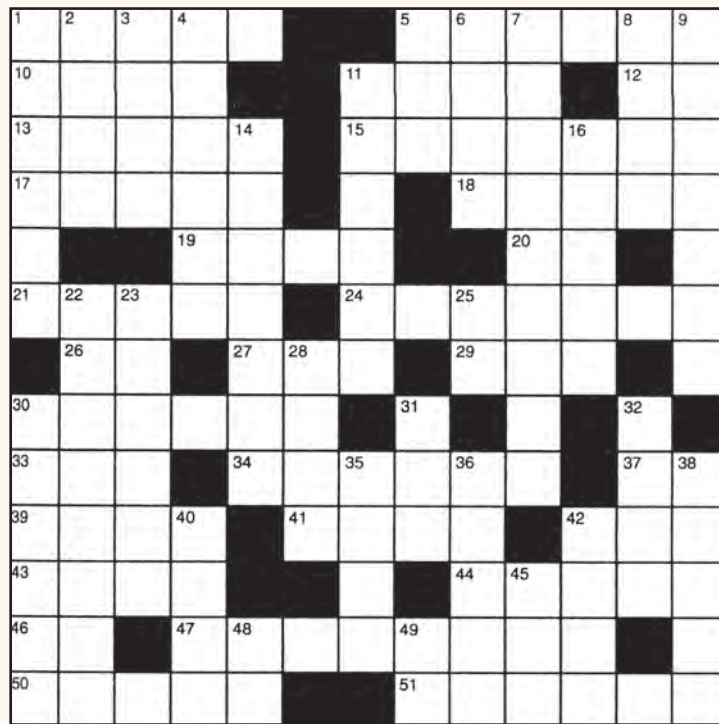
Jerry Batson is a retired Alabama Baptist pastor who also has served as associate dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University and professor of several schools of religion during his career.



CHRISTIAN CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1. Slayer of Goliath. (1 Sam. 17:49)
5. Moses' successor. (Deut. 34:9)
10. Prayer ending.
11. Ark builder. (Gen. 6)
12. Zirconium. (abbr.)
13. Joab heard this in the city. (1 Kings 1:41-45)
15. Husband of Sarah. (Gen. 17:15)
17. Muslim faith.
18. Isaac caught the ___ of his clothes. (Gen. 27:27)
19. Pharaoh of Egypt. (2 Kings 23:29)
20. God.
21. Organ mentioned in preparing offerings. (Lev. 3:4)



By Janet Hopper Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

24. Saul's height compared with others. (1 Sam. 9:2)
26. Spanish affirmative.
27. The Lord lifts the needy from the ___ heap. (1 Sam. 2:8)
29. The priest's robe had bells and pomegranates around its ___. (Ex. 39:26)
30. The ___ of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Jesus. (Luke 4:17)
33. Favorite children's game.
34. King of Persia. (Ezra 4:5)
37. God to Moses: I ___. (Ex. 3:14)
39. The evil spirit goes through ___ places seeking rest. (Matt. 12:43)
41. In the ___ that King Uzziah died. (Isa. 6:1)
42. Spanish for "river."
43. Number who did not give Jesus thanks. (Luke 17:17)
44. Those who cling to worthless ___ forfeit ... grace. (Jon. 2:8)
46. Whatever you ___, work at it with all your heart.

22. Judas ___, betrayer of Jesus. (Matt. 26:14)
23. The ___ will be with child. (Matt. 1:23)
25. Left hand. (abbr.)
28. Abraham took the knife to ___ his son. (Gen. 22:10)
30. The house of the righteous ___ firm. (Prov. 12:7)
31. Central Intelligence Agency. (abbr.)
32. The rich will ___ at the misery coming them. (James 5:1)
35. One must keep a tight ___ on the tongue. (James 1:26)
36. Husband of Bathsheba. (2 Sam. 11:3)
38. Raised by the daughter of Pharaoh. (Ex. 2:10)
40. Herod thought John the Baptist had returned from being this. (Matt. 14:2)
42. Envy ___ the bones. (Prov. 14:30)
45. Genetic material.
48. Beside.
49. Washington, ___.

DOWN

1. His diet consisted of only vegetables and water. (Dan. 1:12)
2. One of the shepherds of Tekoa. (Amos 1:1)
3. Moses put this over his face. (2 Cor. 3:13)
4. David feigned to be this. (1 Sam. 21:13)
5. Old Testament man known for his patience.
6. The disciples were straining at these. (Mark 6:48)
7. Israel had participated in ___ prostitution. (Jer. 13:27)
8. Son of Joktan. (Gen. 10:27)
9. Gold jewelry offered to the Lord. (Num. 31:50)
11. Owned vineyard King Ahab coveted. (1 Kings 21:2)
14. The fourth jewel decorating the foundation of heaven's wall. (Rev. 21:19)
16. Brother of Shomer. (1 Chron. 7:35)

New network available for women in ministry

By Carolyn Tomlin
The Alabama Baptist

When Marisa Taylor joined the Birmingham Metro Baptist Association staff a couple of years ago as church resource specialist, one of the goals was to develop a program to connect women in the association.

The pandemic slowed those plans, but the Women's Ministry Network is now "moving forward," Taylor said.

A Feb. 5 meet-and-greet at Hunter Street Baptist Church in Hoover drew a cross-section of the women from the area representing 11 faith-based nonprofits in BMBA and two churches that meet in the association's building.

The gathering included prayer time, discussion of the direction of WMN and suggestions for the future.

Participants agreed the main purpose would be fellowship and forming relationships.

The ministry has several goals, including

encouraging women in ministry, building relationships, networking and missions.

It is available to any woman in ministry in BMBA, including church staff, pastors' wives and women working in faith-based nonprofits.

Women today often are considered the "sandwich" generation, taking care of elderly parents while running their own home and caring for children. If they are involved in full-time ministry, there can be little time left for themselves or

to build relationships with other women.

"Our leadership team is dedicated to women's ministry," said Debby Haralson, one of three WMN leaders.

"In addition, we have a common mission as to what glorifies God, [though] finding time to meet as a group is often a challenge."

Battling isolation

BMBA Executive Director Chris Crain said beginning women's ministry in the association stemmed from the realization that many women may become focused on their church and feel isolated because there aren't as many networking groups for them.

"The BMBA has 180 churches, and the women have a need to serve," Crain said.

"We know that many small churches would not still be open today if it wasn't for the women. They kept the doors open and prayed for their church.

"With the 14 million members that make

up 48,000 churches [in the Southern Baptist Convention], we need to raise the visibility of women in ministry."

The WMN leadership team includes Haralson, who serves with The WellHouse, a center for girls and women who have been involved in sex trafficking; Stephanie Newton, with women's ministry at Eden Westside Baptist Church in Pell City; and Adrianna Anderson, director of women's ministry at Hunter Street Baptist.



Photo courtesy of BMBA
The Fireside Room at Hunter Street Baptist provided a meet-and-greet event to welcome the women.



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

WHY I BELIEVE IN THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

I am in an association with about 14 small country churches that are not able individually to support a missionary or program. However, combined through the Cooperative Program we can make a difference.

Since the early 20th century, the Cooperative Program has been a well-organized and essential tool for spreading the Gospel at home and around the world.



By Gay Oswalt

From what I have observed, no other denomination has been as effective with supporting missions as have Southern Baptists.

On a personal note, I am especially thankful for the money that Southern Baptist churches have given through the Cooperative Program to help shoulder the cost of Christian education for young men and women who desire to go into Christian ministry.

Our son was a recipient of that blessing. He felt the Lord calling him into ministry and heeded that call. We could not have been able to help him totally with the finances, but because of the lower cost at the seminaries due to the financial support of the Cooperative Program, he was able to attend Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

Since that time, he has served as a youth minister and, for several years now, as a children's minister.

I cannot fathom the many souls that have been saved due to the Cooperative Program's support of various ministries. Only God knows. But we have all had a part in these through our faithful support of the Cooperative Program.



Gay Oswalt serves as a trustee for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. She is a member of Arbor Springs Baptist Church in Sipsey Baptist Association.

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.

MARCH 2022

- 4-5 **COMPLETE...A gathering for Teen Girls**, Heritage, Montgomery, Kathryn Helms, ext. 2325
- 4-6 **Children's Honor Choir**, Tuscaloosa area, Cindy Parrish, ext. 2230
- 6 **A Night of Encouragement & Evangelism**, Canaan, Bessemer, Lori McGough, ext. 2245
- 6-9 **Alabama Association of Baptist Secretaries Conference**, Shocco Springs, Lee Wright, ext. 2241
- 6-13 **Week of Prayer for North American Missions & Annie Armstrong Easter Offering**, Shannon Mayes, ext. 2226
- 8 **Ministers' Wives Connection**, ONLINE, Trish Jackson, ext. 2224
- 8 **Concourse Library Software Training**, ONLINE, Linda Hicks, ext. 2263
- 12 **Ready. Set. GO! Learning All About God's Word**, Shades Crest, Birmingham, Belinda Stroud, ext. 2255
- 13-14 **Regional State Evangelism Conference**, First, Cullman, Lori McGough, ext. 2245
- 14 **Ministers' Wives Gathering**, First, Cullman, Trish Jackson, ext. 2224
- 15 **Senior Adult Singin'**, First, Oxford, Frank Jones, 205.393.7020
- 15 **The Basics of Church Security**, SBOM, Prattville, Mark Wakefield, ext. 2267
- 15 **Great Commission Conversations**, ONLINE, Cindy Wilson, ext. 2225
- 15 **Atrium, an Internet-based Library Software Program Training**, ONLINE, Linda Hicks, ext. 2263
- 17 **UpLink on the Road**, First, Decatur, Scooter Kellum, ext. 2280
- 17 **Enlace Global Alabama 2022**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Kimberly Sandoval, ext. 2244
- 18-19 **Adventure Weekend**, Shocco Springs, Mary Kelley, ext. 2227
- 18-20 **OneVoice Tour**, Central Alabama, April Brewer, ext. 2279
- 19 **Disaster Relief Admin Training**, Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Ana Raymundo, ext. 2356
- 20 **Substance Abuse Prevention Sunday**, Keith Hinson, ext. 2289
- 22 **Senior Adult Singin'**, Valley View, Tuscaloosa, Frank Jones, 205.393.7020
- 22 **Programming Activities for Church Libraries**, ONLINE, Linda Hicks, ext. 2263
- 24 **Child Safety Workshop**, First, Fairhope, Lee Wright, ext. 2241
- 26 **Disaster Relief Shower and Laundry Training**, Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Ana Raymundo, ext. 2356
- 26 **Disaster Relief Communications Training**, Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Ana Raymundo, ext. 2356
- 27 **A Night of Encouragement & Evangelism**, Shocco Springs, Lori McGough, ext. 2245
- 29 **Church Libraries Making Disciples with Their Churches**, ONLINE, Linda, Hicks, ext. 2263

APRIL 2022

- 1 **Disaster Relief Cleanup and Recovery Training**, Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Ana Raymundo, ext. 2356
- 1-2 **Disaster Relief Chainsaw Training**, Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Ana Raymundo, ext. 2356
- 2 **Disaster Relief Temporary Child Care Training**, Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Ana Raymundo, ext. 2356
- 4-5 **2022 Alabama Discipleship Conference**, Glynwood, Prattville, Mark Gaaney, ext. 2240
- 7-9 **Disaster Relief Chaplain Training**, Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Ana Raymundo, ext. 2356
- 9 **Renew**, First, Gardendale, Kathryn Helms, ext. 2325
- 10 **Deaf Men Zone**, Shocco Springs, Kristy Kennedy, ext. 2311
- 11-12 **Transitional Pastor Training**, SBOM, Prattville, Ken Allen, ext. 2210

Highlighting historic Baptist work

New book shares stories of West Alabama churches' regional efforts

A new history of Pickens County Baptists is available, thanks to the work of late Pickens Baptist Association Director of Missions Gary Farley.

The book, "Studies in the History of the Pickens Baptist Association of West Alabama," includes 26 church histories written by Farley and information about the years of Baptist work in the region, said Bonnie Windle, who compiled the collection.

"This work was too valuable to lose," said Windle, who was Farley's administrative assistant from 2011 to 2016.

Windle helped write the association's monthly newsletter, so she knew about Farley's notes, which he kept in a notebook he titled "PBA History."

Windle tried to convince Farley to publish his notes before his death in 2020. When that didn't happen, she worked with Farley's wife, Jacque, to publish his collection posthumously.

Rules of decorum

"I think Dr. Farley would say, 'Well, y'all finally got your way,'" Windle told The Pickens County Herald.

The 275-page book is a resource for Pickens County Baptists and associations like Cahaba (now part of West Central Baptist Association), Bigbee, Sipsy and Tuscaloosa that border Pickens County, Windle said.

The book includes information about Baptist rules of decorum, articles of faith and the missions heritage of the association. It also includes information about Pickens Association's min-

istry to the federal prison in Aliceville, the beginnings of Sunday School and the split between missionary Baptists and primitive Baptists in the early 1800s.

Anyone interested in church history, especially rural church history, will enjoy reading the compilation, Windle said.

"I think this book will tell [those in Pickens County] something about their origins and [others] about the development of the churches and what the churches stood for at that time," she said.

Janet Estis, Woman's Missionary Union director for Pickens Association, is happy to see Farley's notes published.

"Praise the Lord for Dr. Farley's love of history and his desire to preserve it for future generations," she said.

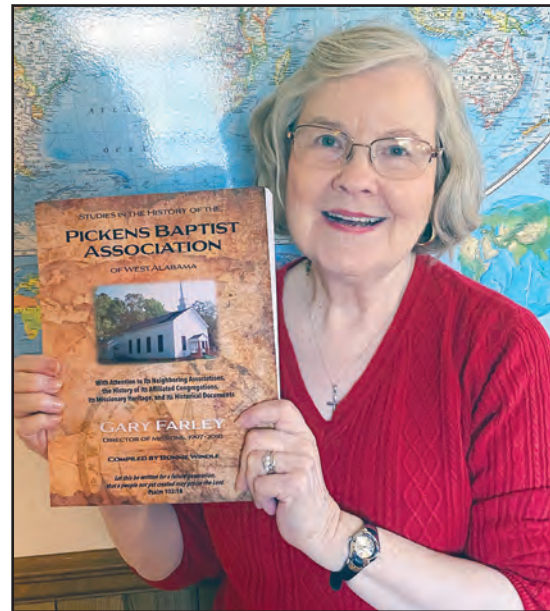


Photo courtesy of Bonnie Windle

Bonnie Windle wrote and edited "Studies in the History of the Pickens Baptist Association of West Alabama" based on the late Gary Farley's notes. Farley served as the association's director of missions from 1997 to 2018. He died in 2020.

Fellow church member and friend of Farley, Joe Irwin, said the book is tangible evidence of many of Farley's gifts.

"While he was a recognized historian and teacher, I think of him as a storyteller — one of the finest. He had the uncanny ability to completely captivate anyone regardless of age, education, background or station."

Farley served as director of missions for Pickens Association from 1997 until his retirement in 2018.

He had previously served as a rural church specialist with the North American Mission Board and brought

years of experience to his ministry in West Alabama.

His life mission, Windle said, was to serve rural churches and reach people for Jesus Christ.

"Studies in the History of the Pickens Baptist Association of West Alabama" is one way Farley's legacy will live on, she added.

For information about ordering the book, contact Windle at 1971 Spring Hill Road, Carrollton, AL 35447, or go to tabonline.org/pba-history.

EDITOR'S NOTE —
Reporting by Donna Bain of the Pickens County Herald and The Alabama Baptist.

"While [Gary Farley] was a recognized historian and teacher, I think of him as a storyteller — one of the finest. He had the uncanny ability to completely captivate anyone regardless of age, education, background or station."

Joe Irwin

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For March 6

Explore the Bible

By Ben Stubblefield

Visiting assistant professor of Christian studies, University of Mobile



COMMENDED 1 Thessalonians 1:1–10

Mark Twain said, “I can live for two months on a good compliment,” and I think I could stretch it to three. Everybody needs uplifting, particularly pilgrim Christians, tempted and tried.

Paul often applied the good medicine of encouragement. In 1 Thessalonians he gives his young, persecuted, disheartened church plant a hefty double-dose.

In fact, that’s the main business of Paul’s opening, which can be described under four headings.

Partnership (1)

Though Paul is the inspired and authoritative writer (2:18; 5:27) the letter opens by identifying Silvanus and Timothy, who as co-senders undoubtedly gave input to the content of 1 Thessalonians.

I think it is worth observing that this Kingdom ministry comes from Paul and his friends.

And that’s not unusual in ministry — we are rarely productive in work for the Lord when we attempt it alone. And how much sweeter, how much better, how much happier it is to labor together for the Lord (Phil. 1:3–5).

Evidence (2–5a)

Remember, Paul was in Thessalonica for three weeks before he got run off by a mob (Acts 17:5–9). But that was long enough to start this church which, since his absence, had been facing the same kind of opposition and anger.

They’re disheartened and likely wondering if they had gotten something wrong.

When you’re down and out or life hits you hard, it helps to know a couple of things: 1. You’re not making a mess of it, and 2. God hasn’t left you.

In verse 2, Paul begins encouraging them by observing how grateful before God he is for the ample evidence of His work in their lives. They are showcasing the triple virtues — faith, hope and love. And they’re not just squeaking by; they’re inspiring Paul to joy.

He continues by reminding them of

God’s design — what they’re going through is not the result of God-forsakenness. God loves, chooses and indwells them.

Isn’t it good to be reminded God is working through us even, and perhaps especially, when we are down and out?

And isn’t it good to cherish the truth that He loves us still, like Joseph, even when life puts us in the bottom of a well?

Influence (5b–8)

They’ve not only blessed Paul. Their example has influenced those “in every place” who have heard about their faith. In fact, their witness has been so profound he need offer no correction, no warning, no rebuke. He comments, “We have no need to say anything.”

Again, for a church that feels it’s struggling, they are making a mighty impact.

This is akin to the church in Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7–13) that has “little power” but stands out among all the churches because, as Jesus says, they “have kept My word.” The Thessalonians are having an outsized impact on the world because they are being faithful under fire.

Purpose (9–10)

Finally, Paul encourages them by talking about their tremendous future. All this trial is going to end in resurrection.

If you’ve ever watched a suspenseful movie, you know what it’s like to be set on edge.

At any moment something could spook you, and you’re constantly nervous. But if you watch it again, you’re serene because you know how it’s all going to turn out. You know the end from the beginning.

We know how this age is going to end, don’t we? So whether we face trials, tribulations, problems, pain or persecution, we can move through this life with a peace beyond all understanding.

We have this assurance, as the hymn says, “Because we know He holds the future, and life is worth the living just because He lives.”

Bible Studies for Life

By Will Kynes

Associate professor of biblical studies, Samford University



A LIFE OF HUMBLE SERVICE John 13:3–10, 14–16

In his history of Alabama Baptists, Wayne Flynt lists foot-washing as one of the first (of many) issues over which Baptists in the yet-to-be-recognized state of Alabama divided.

In the early 19th century, some Baptists claimed that Jesus’ command in John 13:14, “Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet,” was perfectly clear and should be obeyed literally. Others disagreed. At least one church, First Baptist Church Wetumpka, after holding a conference on the issue in 1823, nearly split over the matter.

Jesus’ behavior in John 13 is so radical, it’s not surprising it created division. This passage, however, raises a more pressing spiritual question than even whether or not foot-washing should be added as a third church ordinance (in addition to baptism and the Lord’s Supper, as some groups like Primitive Baptists believe).

It forces us to ask ourselves why we find following Jesus’ example so difficult. As we see with Peter, our response to His extreme humility says a great deal about what we think about ourselves and about what Jesus accomplished on our behalf.

Jesus models humble service. (3–5)

The text begins with the remarkable claim that Jesus “knew that the Father had put all things under His power, and that He had come from God and was returning to God.” Believing that Jesus is God, it is easy to forget that since He also was fully human, He would have to come to understand His divine status. It’s unclear from the Gospels how exactly He gained that knowledge, but John here affirms that He had it.

After this astounding claim about Jesus’ superior authority and divine nature, the next verse could not be more unexpected. The Son of God strips off His outer clothing and

washes His disciples’ feet. The Lord of all takes on the humble role of a servant.

It’s easy to over-spiritualize this, so it’s helpful to imagine concretely what was involved: feet caked with the mud of dust and sweat and the eventual filthiness of both the water in the basin and the towel around Jesus’ waist.

Jesus forgives and makes us completely clean. (6–10)

When we think about it this way, Peter’s aversion is understandable. How would you respond if someone you respected offered to wash your feet? Once again, Peter doesn’t quite understand what’s going on, but we have to appreciate his enthusiasm. When Jesus tells him this washing unites them, Peter demands a full bath. Jesus’ response is as practical as it is enigmatic — He connects it to a deeper spiritual truth by claiming that not all the disciples with Him are clean. Verse 11 makes clear that Judas’ uncleanness is of the spiritual and not the odiferous sort.

Jesus’ first reply to Peter in verses 6–8 presents this washing as a symbol of His approaching sacrifice on the cross, through which He provides full cleansing from sin. His second reply in verse 10, contrasting the fully cleansing bath with subsequent foot-washing, reinforces this message and adds that the cleansing will extend to future sins Christians must continue to confess (1 John 1:9).

Jesus calls us to humbly serve others. (14–16)

Jesus instructs His disciples to adopt the same humble, forgiving and self-sacrificing spirit. Whether or not foot-washing is normative for the Church, humbly serving one another should be. We must have “the same mindset as Christ” though He was “in very nature God ... He made Himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant ... He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to death — even death on a cross” (Phil 2:5–8).

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Tracy Riggs
The Alabama Baptist

'America's Got Talent' winner Darci Lynne Farmer keeps faith a priority

Ventriloquist Darci Lynne Farmer is back on the road, finding time to nurture her faith even as she travels the nation entertaining audiences with her humor and vocal talents.

At just 12 years old, Farmer, a native of Oklahoma, won "America's Got Talent" as a singing ventriloquist. She came in second two years later on the "AGT: Champions" season. Throughout the journey, Darci Lynne, now 17, has learned that it's OK to be unique, crediting her puppets for giving her confidence.

After three cancellations due to COVID-19, Darci Lynne finally was able to perform Jan. 30 in Birmingham. She brought her puppets Katie, the yodeling cowgirl; Petunia, the operatic diva rabbit; Oscar, a shy mouse; Edna, elderly and outspoken; and her newest, Ivan, a one-eyed purple Australian. She also brought her amazing voice and new songwriting skill, performing three original songs with her band.

Faith and show business

Like many performers, Darci Lynne admits combining faith and show business is not easy.

"It's hard to be a Christian in this business. It's very pressuring, and



DARCI LYNNE FARMER

Photo by Tracy Riggs/The Alabama Baptist

it's not that cool," she said.

Darci Lynne grew up in a Christian environment and decided to follow Christ at summer camp when she was 12. After her first AGT win, a top priority for the \$1 million in prize money was to give a portion to her church, she said.

"[My faith] is really important to me," she said, "and if I'm home I go to my church. If I'm only home on Wednesdays, I go then."

She attends New Covenant Methodist Church on Sundays when she isn't performing, though she's able to be more consistent attending the youth program on Wednesday nights at Quail Springs Baptist Church in Oklahoma City.

Her show, though family friendly, does not include any faith-based elements, but she's considered what that might look like.

"I've yet to incorporate a spiritual moment into my shows, which is something I've thought a lot about," she said. "It's just a matter of figuring out what that would look like. Even outside of my shows, I want to

think on opportunities and moments where I can share what I believe in with other people, especially the kids I inspire."

Darci Lynne describes herself — as do her friends and family — as "an old soul." She loves a variety of music genres a typical teen may never have heard — jazz, funk, soul and ragtime — and watching classic movies that include those styles.

Before the pandemic she had been touring for four years and was rarely home, especially on weekends. When she wasn't able to tour, she made time to hang out with her best friend and learn to drive, important to any teenager. But Darci Lynne also worked on her act.

Exploring songwriting

"I was at home all day, every day. It was so weird," she said. "So I took it upon myself to get into things that I usually wouldn't be able to do when I was on the road. One was songwriting ... which was just so fulfilling and super fun to explore and to learn that craft," she said.

When she was younger, a lot of Darci Lynne's material was written with input from adults and her parents. But with extra time and her experience performing, she came out of quarantine with a new show.

"This show is a lot of my ideas and my vision. I'm really proud of it," she said.

Looking ahead

The pandemic also gave her time to think about the future. Though she loves ventriloquism, Darci Lynne has always been adamant she's more than a ventriloquist. She's praying for clarity about what to do after she graduates from high school in 2023.

One of her favorite aspects of performing, Darci Lynne noted, is how she can inspire others to learn the fading form of comedy — ventriloquism.

"This happens every show — I always see kids who come into my shows and sit in the audience and bring their own ventriloquist puppets. It's so cool. I see how their faces light up whenever I'm singing or performing. They have their puppets, and their puppets are just nodding along. It's the coolest thing to see."

Her goal when starting to perform, even before AGT, was to help "kids my age to know about ventriloquism more. I wanted to share this gift with the world because it was dying."

She also loves the age range within her audiences, from 3 to 83.

"This world needs something that is fun and entertaining and enjoyable for everyone to watch," Darci Lynne said.

"I think that's super important, especially for kids. There's songs of all different genres and a live band, which is a really important aspect to me, then the puppets, which bring the life and the comedy."

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.

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