The Alabama Baptist

Toll free 800-803-5201
www.thealabamabaptist.org

March 17, 2022

Vol. 187, No. 11
Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

INSIDE

Samford football player makes presence known on and off field

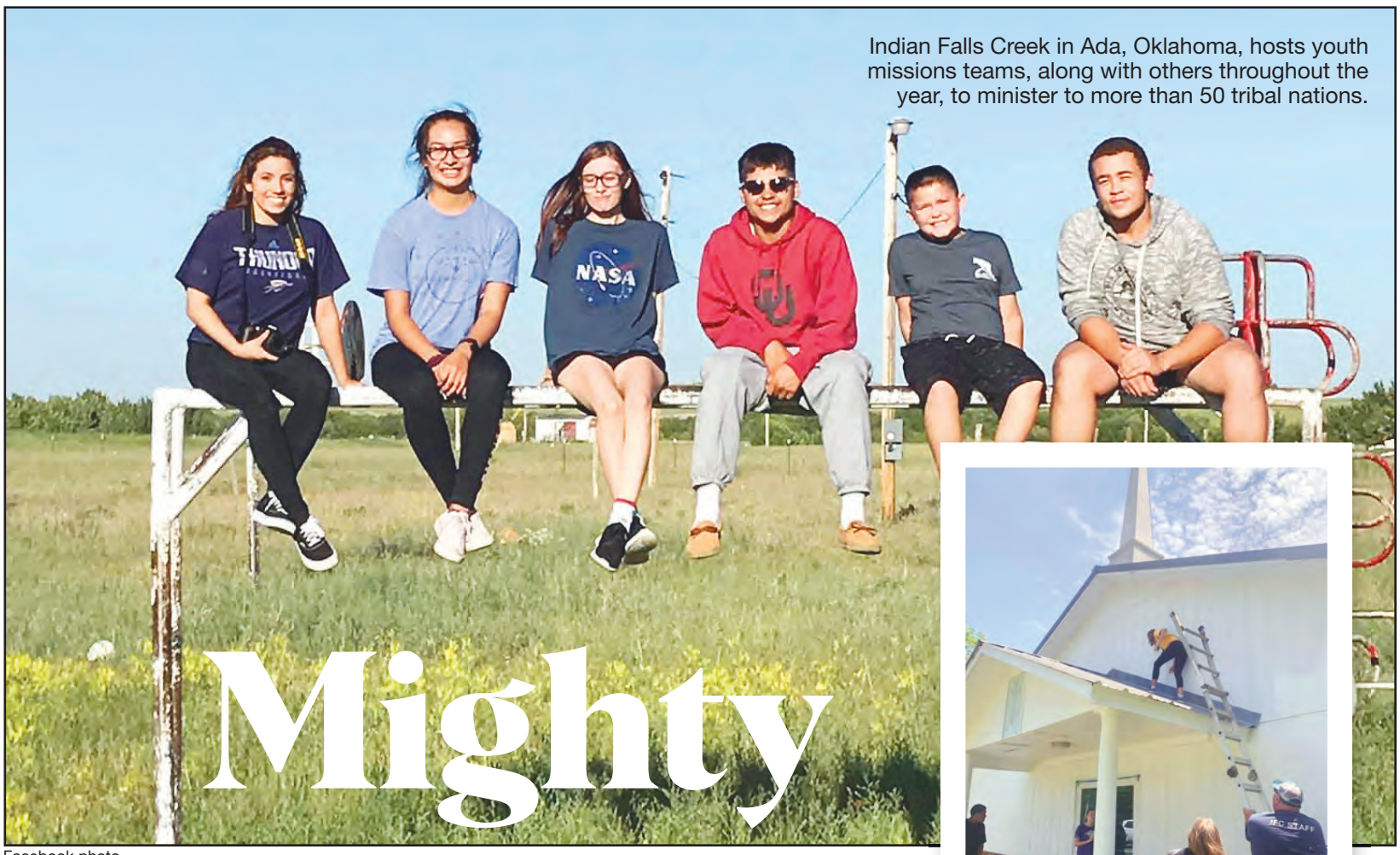
✦ Page 8

College students urged to seek contentment in Christ at annual Pursue conference

✦ Pages 10–11

Updating church website offers fresh look for community, members

✦ Page 14



Indian Falls Creek in Ada, Oklahoma, hosts youth missions teams, along with others throughout the year, to minister to more than 50 tribal nations.

Facebook photo

Mighty outpouring

Photo courtesy of Indian Mounds Baptist Church

Youth and other volunteers paint Indian Mounds Baptist Church in Moundville.

Moundville church displays generosity in missions, ministry to Native Americans

By Karen L. Willoughby
The Alabama Baptist

An Alabama Baptist pastor's call to serve Native Americans began with his family and has grown to include the entire congregation in prayer and service over the last 35 years.

Charles Spence, pastor of Indian Mounds Baptist Church in Moundville since 1990, said to his family at dinner one night in 1987, "I feel God wants us to do something in missions."

He was pastor of Second Baptist Church in Uniontown at the time.

"He told us, 'I can't do it by myself; I can't do it alone. We all have to be on board,'" his wife Jean recalled. "He said, 'No more vacations to the beach. No Dollywood.'

"The kids prayed about it together," she continued, referring to Amanda, Elizabeth and Charlie, who at the time were 13, 11 and 8. "We prayed about it around the table that day, and then the kids said, 'Whatever God wants us to do, we want to do it.'"

"It" became ministry to, for, with and among Native Americans.

SPENCE

Spence was given a packet of suggestions for short-term projects by the then-Home (now North American) Mission Board, but nothing panned out until he struck missions "gold" with Billy Barnett, pastor of Indian Nations Baptist Church in Seminole, Oklahoma.

That first weeklong missions trip, which also included the Davis family from Pine Flat Baptist Church in Hale County, involved maintenance on the Seminole church building and organizing the church's library.

At week's end, Barnett invited the two families to do ministry the next summer at Indian Family Camp at Falls Creek (Baptist) Conference Center in Oklahoma.

Serving others

The Spence and Davis families, accompanied routinely by other church members, have ministered every year since, with the pandemic-related exception of 2020.

"God just led us into [Native American] ministry," Spence said. "We keep going back

(See 'Indian Mounds,' page 17)

Find us on YouTube
TAB Media
youtube.com/tabmediagroup

CONNECT WITH US

alabamabaptist

alabamabaptist

thealabamabaptist

YouTube
TABMediaGroup

TABMediaGroup

TAB MEDIA GROUP PODCASTS
tabonline.org/podcasts

The crossword puzzle can be found on page 15.

Photo courtesy of Gloria Sloan-Castellanos

Gary and Gloria Sloan with their children (from left) Carla, Alan, Rissa and Alyssia in 1998 before deployment to Mexico with the International Mission Board.

God's faithfulness shines in widow's story

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

The news was jarring when it made it back to the States on June 18, 1999. An International Mission Board missionary, his daughter and two summer missionaries had drowned just off the coast of southern Mexico.

One of those summer missionaries was 19-year-old Joy Murphy, the daughter of the late Allan Murphy (then pastor of North Shelby Baptist Church in Birmingham) and his wife, Mary. The young student was fluent in Spanish and had a heart for missions, and after her funeral her family and friends began a long grieving process.

So did Gloria Sloan-Castellanos, who lost her husband, Gary Sloan, and 11-year-old daughter, Carla, that day. They had only been on the missions field six months when the accident happened.

'Multiple grieving process'

"For me, it was a multiple grieving process," said Sloan-Castellanos, who married Edwin Castellanos, a pastor in El Salvador, a few years after Gary's death and after retiring from the IMB.

Not only did she grieve her family, she grieved the loss of Joy Murphy and John Weems, the other student who died. She felt the weight of their parents having entrusted her with their care. But what she found as the days and years went by is that God did a work from that difficult situation, starting with the day her loved ones' bodies lay on the beach.

"We didn't get up this morning expecting to have a death. ... But I know that [they] ... gave their lives to Jesus," Sloan-Castellanos recalled saying on the beach that day.

And she shared the gospel. "I said, 'I'm sure you got up this morning not wanting to have a tragedy in your life, but we don't know what's going to happen,'" Sloan-Castellanos told the group. "'What if you were the ones laying on the sand and not them? Where would your soul be?'"

Listen to "Stories" podcast Season 5, Episode 1 at tabonline.org/stories.

Hannah Carter, one of the student missionaries who survived, said her life is different because of Sloan-Castellanos' response to such profound tragedy — not only from watching her bold witness but also seeing how she embraced suffering.

Want to hear more of Gloria Sloan-Castellanos' story? Read more at tabonline.org/gloria or check out Season 5, Episode 1 of TAB Media's "Stories" podcast, available now.

This season tells her story along with that of two other women who lost their husbands while on the missions field.

The Alabama Baptist

"If ye continue in My word, then ... ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:31–32

(ISSN 0738-7741; USPS 011-080)
© The Alabama Baptist, Inc.
is published weekly except for one week in July and December by The Alabama Baptist, Inc., at 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. Phone: 205-870-4720. Statewide phone: 800-803-5201.
Website: www.thealabamabaptist.org
Email: news@thealabamabaptist.org or subscribe@thealabamabaptist.org
Periodicals postage paid at Hattiesburg, Miss.

ANNUAL TAB SUBSCRIPTION RATES
Includes print, digital, app and full web access

Group Rate per subscriber per year — $16.25
(Check with your church or group to find out if it has a TAB group account)

Individual — $34.95 per year (50 issues)

JENNIFER DAVIS RASH
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Debbie Campbell
Dir. of Communications

Dave Walsh
Marketing Consultant

Susan Stevens
Director of Advertising

Melanie McKinney
Advertising Manager

Pam Holt
Outside Sales Rep

Shawn Hendricks
Director of Product Management

Maggie Evans
Operations Manager

Jessica Ingram
Event Coordinator

Annette Brown
Guest Services

Deb Lowery
Financial Assistant

Richard Maddox
Computer Services

Lauren C. Grim
Creative Services Manager

Carrie B. McWhorter
Content Editor

Holly Smith
Copy Editor

Robin McCall
Copy Editor

Grace Thornton
Special Assignments Editor

Margaret Colson
Special Assignments Editor

Dianna L. Cagle
Production Manager

Amy Hacker
Creative Services Assoc.

James Hammack
Digital Services Manager

Sarah Gill
Digital Services Assoc.

Hannah Muñoz
Digital Editor

Megan Harris
Proofreader

Selah Vetter
Student Intern

NEWS SERVICES
Baptist Press (BP), Associated Press/Religion News Service (AP/RNS), Morning Star News (MS).

POSTMASTER
Send address changes to:
The Alabama Baptist
3310 Independence Drive
Birmingham, AL 35209

ADDRESS CHANGE
Send old and new addresses, and name of church to:
Subscription Department
3310 Independence Drive
Birmingham, AL 35209
Allow two weeks.

To the best of our knowledge, all of the ads in *The Alabama Baptist* represent legitimate companies and offerings. However, one should always exercise normal business caution in responding to ads.

Full member of Alabama Press Association

Accredited member of Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability ECFA

'Nation's Top Regional Christian Newspaper'
1999, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 as judged by Associated Church Press, Baptist Communicators Association, Evangelical Press Association or Religion Communicators Council

OPINION

RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

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

jrash@thealabamabaptist.org @RashionalThts

When is it time to either do something about it or let it be?

We are two weeks into the Lenten season and moving quickly toward Holy Week. As we take this time to prepare for Easter, would you be open to sharing how your Lent experiences of prayer, fasting and helping others bring you closer to the Lord?

I'm confident your personal stories will be an encouragement to us all, and we'd love to consider publishing them in upcoming issues of The Alabama Baptist.

When it comes to the fasting aspect, many have shared in past years how giving up social media during Lent renewed their spirits and refreshed their hearts.

Avoiding the negative

Others noted a specific attempt at avoiding the negative people in their lives for self-preservation.

And, of course, eliminating certain foods or a particular meal each day always surfaces as a top choice.

The list of options really is endless, and no matter what you might have already selected, I'd love to suggest three more items for each of us to consider.

What if for these next few weeks we all refused to complain, avoided spewing negative commentary about another person and restrained ourselves from becoming emotional over any situation which we cannot control?

If we find ourselves failing in these commitments, we can pull strength from prayer and determine to do something about what has us upset.

Sometimes a situation is so overwhelming we can't see how anything we do will make a difference, and we spiral downward into a pessimistic outlook.

However, we really can only complain about something so long before we either have to do something about it or let it be.

Otherwise, we end up wearing down everyone around us while making no forward progress.

It's been quite daunting to hear the number of pastors, ministry leaders, business executives and others share how discouraging the past few years have been for them — primarily because of how many complaints they receive on a weekly basis.

They know they are capable of leading in their specific areas and, in most cases, they have high-quality team members assisting them, but with the continual decline of trust in our culture, many of them end up spending their days countering continual accusations. And many times the accusations are not based in fact, the leaders said.

Being accountable

While we most definitely contend for integrity, truthfulness and accountability related to all of us as individuals, as well as leaders and organizations, it has been interesting to hear how many say they are exhausted and discouraged.

It makes me wonder if we can find a better way to hold our leaders at all levels accountable while also remembering to pray for, encourage and believe in those who are truly seeking to fulfill their calling.

Some issues and decisions definitely deserve to be challenged, and we'll need to take stands in certain situations.

At the same time, many moments of friction occur over differences of opinion and sometimes because of incorrect information.

How different might a potential confrontation be if we assume the best in people first and seek to fully understand all the facts before launching an allegation?

After all, with our ability and access to study people in positions of power who were or are, by all accounts, truly evil, a little perspective gained during Lent might inject the culture with the dose of hope and inspiration it needs right now.

Tips for remaining calm amid frustrating situations

1. ***Find*** a calm, quiet place and turn off or silence any devices.
2. ***Take*** a deep breath in and let it out slowly (repeat three times).
3. ***Say*** out loud what has you upset.
4. ***Explain*** to yourself why it upsets you.
5. ***Spend*** time in prayer asking God to guide you.
6. ***Ask*** friends to pray for and with you.
7. ***Decide*** to either take action or let it be.
8. ***Seek*** help from professionals as needed.
9. ***Journal*** about your journey if possible.
10. ***Dive*** deeper into God's word.

Compiled by Jennifer Davis Rash

OPINION

Your Voice

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

MK in East Asia shares lesson learned: 'Trust the Storyteller'

By Jasmine Greenbay*
IMB missionary kid, East Asia

In 2019 my family moved from a small East Asian town to one of the largest cities in the world.

Our new home city wasn't like the other East Asian towns I loved, so it's not an exaggeration to say that I despised the place — at least at first.

Slowly, I began to fall in love with the sights, my apartment complex, the beautiful trees and weather and the delicious culinary selections. My family and I made countless memories laughing at the dinner table, touring the city and enjoying sunny days. I came to appreciate it, genuinely thankful for God's provision.

After only four months in this city, my dad received a call offering him a position that would eventually move us to Taiwan.

When I heard the news, my heart plummeted, racing with questions, pounding with dread.

Instantly, I compiled a mental list titled, "Why we should definitely not move to Taiwan." I hated to think my parents were actually considering this.

"We just got settled here," I journaled. "We just painted the walls. We just hung up my room décor. ... We just got here."

Anxiety stilled my ability to speak. My unwillingness to accept this was clear.

A grand plan

But God works in mysterious ways, and over the next few days a strange, comforting peace smoothed the worry wrinkles from my mind, and I could not ignore the small voice inside assuring me of God's sovereignty.

It would take forever to explain all the little things He put in place to convince me to trust Him, but the most important thing was that God quieted my tumultuous thoughts and doubts. He replaced worry with peace, and anger with trust.

By the end of December 2019, we found ourselves in the country of Taiwan, ready (or not) to start anew. I'd soon come to realize that it was all a part of a plan — one grand, masterpiece of a plan that could have only been orchestrated by the greatest Storyteller to ever exist.

Only months later, an unidentified virus had plunged the entire world into a state of panic.

COVID-19 dramatically affected families and individuals across the globe — including countless numbers of my MK friends. Multiple other complications sprang up for fellow missionaries, creating one gigantic headache for everyone involved.

Consequently, many families I knew suddenly evacuated or relocated, taking only their most essential and precious possessions with them. Everyone lost something.

During the beginning of the pandemic, COVID massively infiltrated almost every country ... save one small East Asian island off the coast of China — Taiwan.

Talk about God's perfect timing.

I was shocked. We were all shocked. I kept thinking, "How in the world is my family worthy of being spared all that heartache that others are experiencing?"

The answer is, we weren't. God had an epic story to bring Himself glory amid the impending turmoil, even if that meant guiding us away from one city to another.

'Faith flourished'

My faith flourished as a result. Experiencing how God can fashion something beautiful from my sorrow has taught me to better trust Him because I know He holds my future securely in His hands.

So when my spirit is crushed because I am yet again called to leave what I love, I will remember in the midst of all the chaos, a purpose has been fashioned and perfected to glorify the greatest Storyteller in history. He is best-equipped to plan my life — now, and forevermore.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Jasmine Greenbay (name changed) lives with her family in East Asia. COVID-19 did eventually affect Taiwan, but the Greenbays didn't have to move. This article was originally published by the International Mission Board and has been edited for space.*

Looking forward to one flock being led by the Shepherd

By James Jackson
Pastor, Glynwood Baptist Church

Maybe I'm reading into the text here (Gen. 30), but I have to wonder if this speckled, spotted, mottled, black, brown, off-white flock is also a prophetic picture of God's kingdom.

For a long time, the church in America tried its best to be an all-white flock.

But that was never God's intention. Jesus came to create one flock for Himself.

It would be made up of both Jews and Gentiles.

This is what He meant when He told His disciples "I have other sheep that are not of this fold" (John 10:16).

And one day, there will be a multitude from every tribe, tongue and nation standing before the throne.

Red and yellow, black and white. Streaked and spotted, blemished and mottled.

There will be one flock, with one Shepherd. Oh Lord, haste the day.

EDITOR'S NOTE — James Jackson blogs through Scripture at jamesjackson.blog where this item originally appeared.

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

OPINION

> “Let’s not tire of doing good! After all, there are people who need Him so much.”
>
> UKRAINIAN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
> *via Facebook*

“If the government is already moving these people all over the place naturally, why not, instead of seeing that as a problem, see that as an opportunity to say, ‘Let’s disciple these families, and then they’re going to take the gospel with them everywhere.’ To me, it seems like a great way to accomplish the Great Commission,” said **Jared Huntley**, a **North American Mission Board missionary**. He and his wife, Jennifer, are seeking to reach the surrounding military communities near their church plant in Washington, D.C.

“The moments we take to pause and look back at all that God has done inspires us to dream of just what God might do through another generation of faithful and bold followers,” said **John Nicholson, pastor of Siloam Baptist Church in Marion,** which will celebrate its 200th anniversary this fall.

“The Church in Ukraine is thriving and doing great. ... The Lord can do great things out of destruction,” **Bailey Krause, a missionary with the International Mission Board in Warsaw, Poland,** who is helping serve Ukrainian refugees.

“When the Supreme Court releases its hold on abortion policymaking, we will show the world that we are ready and willing to empower women and promote life,” said **Mississippi Attorney General Lynn Fitch.**

“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,” said **Crantford Hicks, pastor of Mulga Baptist Church,** while celebrating the church’s 100th anniversary.

Are you living for money? Are you living for ease? Are you desirous of “the good life”? Repent from that today and be rich in God. Build a retirement fund and then retire to the service of others. Use manmade systems for accumulating wealth to be generous with your time and money, goods and services.

James Hammack
the-scroll.com

From the *Twitterverse*

@brocraigc

Lord, today, use the preaching of Your Word to save the lost and strengthen the saved to live for You.

@MichaelCatt

Evangelism is not just for extroverts or those gifted in sharing their faith. The Great Commission is an all call to all of us. @whosyour1_

@john316marshall

We believers must create relaxed settings where we regularly connect with unbelievers. We have to casually be around the lost to effectively communicate with them. Our homes are made to order for this. They can provide unbelievers a place where they can safely ask hard questions.

@GregMathias

Missionary Myth: To serve as a missionary, one needs a clear and specific call to a certain place or people. May be true, but often it is a call to love God and others coupled with a persevering passion to take the gospel to a different culture/s.

@DustinBenge

7 prayers before worship:
1. Lord, fix my heart upon Christ.
2. Lord, open my mind to Your word.
3. Lord, remind me of the gospel.
4. Lord, empty me of this world.
5. Lord, bless those who minister.
6. Lord, help me to encourage others.
7. Lord, equip me to respond in grace.

@pastorjgkell

Don’t measure Bible reading by how you feel about it. I recently had a “boring” time in God’s word. But later in a conversation, three things came to mind from what I read. God’s word never returns void, even when it doesn’t feel like it’s working. Read by faith, not feeling.

@claysmith79

If you are a pastor, you are NOT a CEO, an “influencer,” a life coach; though your job may require skills learned from all three. If you are a pastor you are a shepherd. Feed, lead, guide and protect the sheep.

@bigvox

I have been guilty of this myself but we must stop trying to make God something we are more comfortable with. We must repent, leave faith in self, place faith totally in Jesus our Lord and Savior. God then reconciles us to Him. He changes us! We don’t change Him!

@bobgoff

What constantly distracts us will eventually define us.

Rivers in the wasteland

Look, I am about to do something new; even now it is coming. Do you not see it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert” (Isa. 43:19).

This verse has been the background on my phone for all of college.

On days when I need a reminder of God’s character and His promise to deliver me, this verse is a comfort.

We have triumphant hope that God is working at all times.

It can be easy to allow current circumstances to cloud your view on God’s promises. However, it is important to remember that God cannot be less good to you on a mundane Monday than He was on the Friday afternoon Christ hung on a cross for us all.

So when life does not match my definition of “good” during my season of wandering, I have confidence God is working all things together for good (Rom. 8:28).

When I am assured of this fact, I can face my circumstances because I can stand in confidence and strength in the Lord, not in myself.

There is not a single moment where God is not loving and merciful to us. When I cannot see the goodness in my situation, I remember to shift my focus not on what the world may see but to what God sees, knowing He is at work and has a purpose for every moment I find myself in.

I know the temporary suffering is bearable because He has promised to deliver us and to provide rivers in the wilderness.

I am not alone through the wandering and struggles of this earthly life.

Let us worship the God who deserves to be praised for His goodness during both the blessings and hardships of our lives.

Selah Vetter
the-scroll.com

NEWS

3 stories you should know

Photo courtesy of Samaritan's Purse

Samaritan's Purse, the Christian humanitarian relief organization, sets up an emergency field hospital in an underground parking garage in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv to provide medical aid to those besieged in escalating Russian attacks. Israel also has dispatched an emergency field hospital in Lviv. Officials said the two will work cooperatively to treat wounded Ukrainians fleeing Russian attacks. Lviv is just 44 miles from the Poland border. (RNS)

Cooperative Program giving remains strong

Southern Baptist gifts through the national Cooperative Program Allocation Budget remain high, according to the February report from the SBC Executive Committee.

Gifts through the CP in February totaled $18,700,369.71, 20.84% more than gifts received in February 2021 and $2,867,036.37 (18.11%) more than the monthly budgeted amount of $15,833,333.34.

As of Feb. 28, gifts received by the EC for distribution through the CP Allocation Budget total $89,879,186.88. The amount given is 13.53% ahead of year-to-date needs as projected by the current year budget. Giving to Southern Baptist missions offerings also is at record levels through the first five months of the fiscal year.

CP totals are posted online monthly at sbc.net/cp. (BP)

Tech firms dominate 2022 Dirty Dozen List

The National Center on Sexual Exploitation released its 2022 Dirty Dozen List on March 8, calling out 12 companies rated top enablers of sexual exploitation.

Netflix, Discord, Meta and Etsy are among the tech companies that dominate this year's list.

Two companies, Verisign and Visa, were cited for providing web infrastructure and payment services that promote child abuse and other forms of exploitation.

"Big Tech holds incredible influence over society, so it's especially egregious when tech companies normalize, enable and even profit from sexually exploitative practices, policies and products," said Lina Nealon, director of corporate and strategic initiatives for the NCOSE.

View the full list at tabonline.org/2022-dirty-dozen. (TAB)

Persecuted church

Islamic extremists kill 28, burn 57 houses in attack on Christians

YITH PABOL, South Sudan — Islamic extremists attacked the Christian community of Yith Pabol, killing at least 28 people and burning 57 houses, reported the relief group Barnabas Fund.

Bishop Joseph Mamer Manot told the Barnabas Fund the attack in early January also resulted in "massive displacement" and an alarming humanitarian situation for survivors who need food, safe drinking water and shelter.

At least four people were killed and three others were missing in a similar attack the same week in nearby Miodol village, Barnabas Fund reported. Arab Muslims from Sudan have been attacking Christians across the border in South Sudan, the report explained.

South Sudan became independent of Sudan in 2011 after years of civil war, notes the CIA World Factbook. More than 60% of South Sudan's population is Christian. The current unrest began in 2013. Since then, nearly 2 million South Sudanese have fled to other countries.

Sudan was No. 13 on Open Doors' 2022 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian. South Sudan did not appear on the list in 2022.

Kenyan, Somali extremist groups kill six Christians in raid

WIDHO, Kenya — Muslim extremist groups from Kenya and Somali are suspected of killing six Christians in a Jan. 3 raid, reported Morning Star News.

Members and sympathizers of Somali militant group Al Shabaab, which is aligned with Al Qaeda, are believed to have joined local Muslim extremists for the attack in Widho, Kenya, the report stated.

Three of the targeted Christians had met at a shop to pray and died when the building was torched. Two other Christians burned to death in their homes.

Morning Star News

The other man killed had grown up Christian and converted to Islam. The assailants beheaded him because he had left Islam and returned to Christianity, the report says.

Somalia is No. 3 on Open Doors' 2022 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian. Kenya is not on the list.

NEWS ITEMS COMPILED BY CARRIE MCWHORTER AND LEIGH PRITCHETT

NEWS

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

▸ **Quincy Thurman "Q.T." Curtis,** pastor of several churches in South Alabama, died Jan. 25. He was 97.

Curtis was a veteran of the U.S. Army and served in several major World War II battles in North Africa; Italy; and the D-Day invasion at Normandy, France.

He studied physical education at Lenoir-Rhyne University, Hickory, North Carolina, with plans to become a coach. But after giving his life to Jesus, he was called to preach. He earned a master's degree in theology from New Orleans Seminary.

CURTIS

His first pastorate was Mexia Baptist Church, followed by Southside Baptist Church, Monroeville, and then Sage Avenue Baptist Church, Mobile. He retired after 38 years in full-time ministry and then served as an interim pastor for several churches.

Curtis was preceded in death by his wife, Helen. He is survived by four sons, Terry, Bobby, Dwight and Ronald, 14 grandchildren and 32 great-grandchildren.

BLOUNT ASSOCIATION

▸ **Pleasant View Missionary Baptist Church, Holly Pond,** will host its third Sunday night singing March 20 at 5 p.m. with The Baileys, a bluegrass gospel group from Sand Rock. Earl Harper is pastor.

BUTLER ASSOCIATION

▸ **Butler Crusade** will be April 4–6, 7 p.m. nightly, at football fields throughout the county. Daniel Wilson, director of evangelism for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, will speak at McKenzie on April 4; Mitchell Dean, pastor of Resurrect Church, Smiths Station, and area director of East Alabama Fellowship of Christian Athletes at Georgiana, on April 5; Phil Winningham, an evangelist formerly with SBOM, at Greenville on April 6. For more information, contact Tim Skipper, pastor of Ebenezer East Baptist Church, at 334-303-6578.

CALHOUN ASSOCIATION

▸ **Greenbrier Road Baptist Church, Anniston,** will present the Engage Mission Conference. The conference will be held April 24–27 at Lighthouse Church, Oxford.

The Sunday session will begin at 6:30 p.m., with dinner at 5. Monday through Wednesday sessions will begin at 9 a.m. and end with the 6:30 p.m. keynote speaker.

Speakers include Mac Brunson, pastor of Valleydale Church, Birmingham; Jarman Leatherwood, pastor of House of Hope and Restoration Church, Huntsville; Bob Reccord, founder of Total Life Ministries in Georgia; Vance Pitman, president of NAMB's Send Network; and Joel Southerland, pastor of Peavine Baptist Church in Georgia. Worship will be led by Dalton Screws, worship leader at Lighthouse Church.

Other churches partnering for the conference include Orr Street Baptist, Alexander City; Friendship Church, Frisco, Texas; Reno Baptist, McCalla; Life Church, Oxford; FBC Garland, Texas; FBC White Plains, Anniston; and Heflin Baptist.

GOODE

More information, including tickets and a detailed schedule, can be found at engagemissionconference.com.

CLARKE ASSOCIATION

▸ **Andy Goode,** former pastor of Stave Creek Baptist Church, Jackson, is the new pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

COLBERT-LAUDERDALE ASSOCIATION

▸ **Tim Wooten** is the new interim pastor of **Fairview Baptist Church, Florence.**

DALE ASSOCIATION

▸ **Jacob MacFadden** is the new youth pastor of **Daleville Baptist Church.** He studied at Wallace Community College. Jacob and his wife, Taylor, live in Dothan.

MACFADDEN

ETOWAH ASSOCIATION

▸ **Etowah Baptist Association** will host this year's School of the Prophets conference April 24–25 at First Baptist Church Gadsden. This year's theme is "Essentials: Tools to Strengthen Today's Ministry."

Jason Keith Allen, president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, will speak Sunday at 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. Then on Monday, Ed Litton, Southern Baptist Convention president and pastor of Redemption Church in Saraland, will kick off the day at 10:30 a.m., followed by David Eldridge, pastor of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church in Birmingham; Matt Henslee, SBC Pastors Conference president; Bart Barber, pastor of FBC Farmersville, Texas; and Marshall Blalock, pastor of FBC Charleston, South Carolina.

Topics will range from "The Pastor's Personal Devotional Life" to "The Importance of Personal Sabbath." Etowah Association's School of the Prophets conference started in 1948 and was held for decades. In the mid-1990s, it paused for 23 years before being revived in 2019.

The event is free. For more information or to register, visit etowahbaptist.com/sop.

FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION

▸ **Paul Richey** is the new pastor of **Union Hill Baptist Church, Oneonta.** He holds a master of divinity from Beeson Divinity School, a doctor of ministry degree from Southern Seminary and a master of theology and doctor of philosophy from New Orleans Seminary. He and his wife, Rachel, have three daughters.

RICHEY

Send obituaries, staff changes and event announcements to news@thealabamabaptist.org. Include a recent photo.

Check insurance before going to Eastern Europe

Missions volunteers and others contemplating a trip to Eastern Europe in the next few months would be wise to consult their insurance carriers before booking their travel.

Scotty Goldman, director of the office of global missions for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said many insurance providers are indefinitely suspending coverage for those headed to Ukraine, Russia or Belarus. Other countries may be included if the conflict continues.

Edited unsplash.com photo

"As doors open for teams from Alabama to go and assist with refugee ministry or other needs, we don't want people to get caught off guard," Goldman said.

Insurance coverage depends on the provider, but missions volunteers typically obtain short-term policies, Goldman said.

"You might also want to check with your personal medical insurance provider before you make a commitment," Goldman said. (The Alabama Baptist)

ALABAMA NEWS ITEMS COMPILED BY DIANNA L. CAGLE AND DEBBIE CAMPBELL

'FAITH IN ACTION'

Samford football player makes presence known on and off the field

When Taryn Chapman was pregnant with her son Dakota, she and her husband, Terry, got some alarming news.

Dakota might have spina bifida, doctors told them and suggested running tests that could be potentially dangerous.

"My dad put his foot down and said, 'No, we are not running those tests,' and walked out and said, 'My son is going to be healed,'" Dakota Chapman related.

"They started praying from that day forward that they would have a healthy baby and that God would provide, and here I am 22 years later."

Dual threat

Chapman has made his presence known at Samford.

In January, he was named to the Fall 2021 Academic All-Southern Conference Team, an honor bestowed on select student-athletes who carry at least a 3.3 cumulative GPA at the conclusion of the fall semester, and who competed in at least one-half of their teams' competitions.

On the field, he has become a dual threat, playing running back and tight end.

"He is a versatile player in a lot of different areas," said Samford offensive coordinator Mitch Stewart.

His teammates recognize his work ethic too.

"Everyone knows Dak is a Mack Truck when he runs and blocks, but off the field his greatest strength is his mindset. He is hardworking," said Samford running back Jay Stanton.

Chapman gets up at 5 a.m. and sends Bible verses and inspirational messages to teammates. At 5:31 he sends one to Stewart.

"I see his faith in action every morning at 5:31 when he sends me a spiritual, motivational message," Stewart said. "Every morning when I wake up that notification is already there."

Chapman was young when he made a decision to accept Christ as Savior, and his parents have videos of him "preaching" when he was 3 or 4. They led a college and career class at Oasis of Praise Church of God in McCalla, and when the class came over Chapman would get on a stool and preach; his sister would sing; and they took up an offering.

Photo by Chase Cochran/Samford Athletics

Dakota Chapman lines up during Samford University's Sept. 2 home opener at Seibert Stadium against Tennessee Tech University. Samford defeated TTU and finished the 2021 season with a 4–7 record.

CHAPMAN

Chapman has actually preached at Oasis of Praise twice and at other churches as well, but he doesn't feel called to be a pastor.

He plans to be a college football coach.

After transferring to Samford from Jacksonville State University in 2020, his first games for the Bulldogs didn't come until last spring due to the COVID-19 lockdown. Through the seven-game season, he scored three touchdowns.

Chapman has brought leadership, tenacity, physicality, blocking ability, positive attitude and all-out effort to the Bulldogs, coaches and teammates say.

"The best thing about Dak is guys on the team know exactly where he stands with his walk with the Lord," Stewart noted. "They know they can come to him [with] questions, problems, praise or prayer.

"Dak brings an old-school toughness to our team. He's usually walking through the building taped up, iced-down, wrapped up, bruised, all with a smile on his face."

Chapman made the 2020–2021 All-Southern Conference Academic Team, with a 3.86 GPA. At JSU, where he earned a bachelor's degree in political science, he was on the All-Academic Ohio Valley Conference Team from 2017 to 2019.

Chapman is completing graduate degrees in business and theological studies while he finishes out his college football eligibility.

'Advocate for my faith'

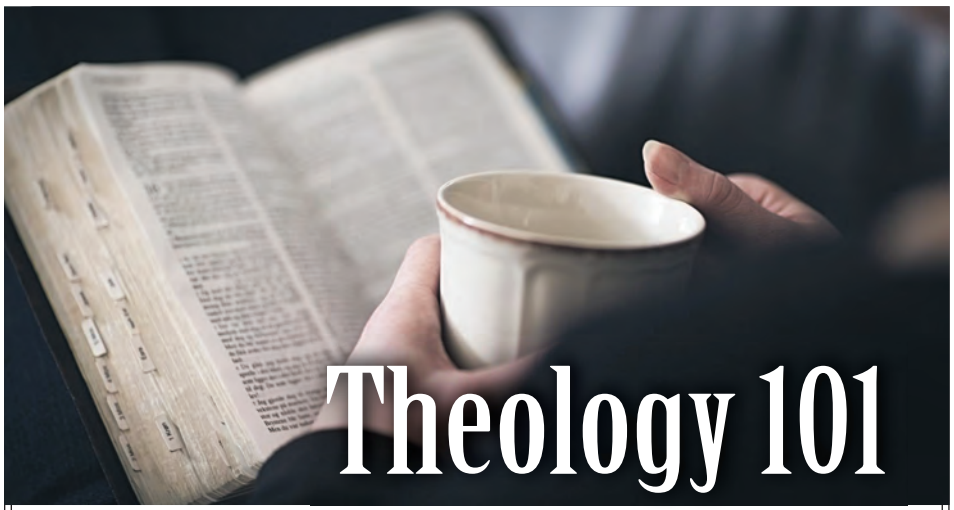
At Oasis of Praise, Chapman helps out on Sunday afternoons as one of two leaders with high school boys.

Football has given him a "broader avenue and spotlight to be an advocate for my faith and share it," Chapman said, adding that "If you are faithful to God, He will be faithful to you.

"My commitment to whatever I do, whether it is sharing the gospel, whether it is football, going hunting, learning a new skill, I am going to throw 100% into everything." (Bill Sorrell)

Photo by Marvin Gentry

Dakota Chapman carries the ball for Samford during the Bulldogs' game at Seibert Stadium against the East Tennessee State University Buccaneers on Sept. 25. Chapman recorded 46 yards in kick returns during the 2021 season.



BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

The People of God

A Divine-Human Building

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
The Alabama Baptist

It is a truism to say that every building is built by someone. Buildings are neither hatched nor dropped from the sky. They are the result of a cooperative effort by a team of architects, construction workers and foremen, decorators and other craftsmen.

The Church as God's building is fitly framed together by many workers. What began with Jesus and the apostles has continued across these many centuries. While the Church is God's building, He uses human instruments to accomplish the work. This divine-human partnership has been going on since God's outpouring of His Spirit following Christ's ascension.

Neither the Church nor its local congregations has ever belonged to the human partners in the building process.

As with any building, the foundation is the decisive part and determines the size and weight that can be supported.

The foundation of the Church was laid at its inception, as implied in 1 Corinthians 3:11: "No other foundation can anyone lay than that which I laid, which is Jesus Christ."

While human workers, in cooperation with God, build on the foundation, they work under a caution flag that reads, "Let each one take heed how he builds on it" (1 Cor. 3:10).

As we choose to be involved in the work of our local church, we do well to hold in mind that we are "workers together with God" (1 Cor. 3:9).

The work of all human partners in building the Church will be tested at a future date when their workmanship will be disclosed.

The imagery about the testing centers upon fire and its effect on wood, hay and straw in contrast to gold, silver and precious stones.

Consuming fire

The work that passes this testing will be rewarded. That which fails will be burned up. Though the workers may suffer loss they "will be saved, but only as through fire" (1 Cor. 3:12–14).

The declaration of Deuteronomy 4:24 and Hebrews 12:29 that God is a consuming fire will have dramatic meaning when God tests our workmanship.

As we choose to be involved in the work of a local church, we do well to remember we are workers together with God. He is the architect and construction foreman; we are simply His workers. As such we must always seek to know God's direction and stay in step with Him.

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.

FBC Robertsdale sends volunteers to Ukraine

By Carolyn Tomlin
The Alabama Baptist

Ukraine is a long way from Robertsdale — more than 5,700 miles, in fact. But that vast expanse isn't stopping the people of First Baptist Church Robertsdale from being involved in the war-torn area.

Jeff Copeland, senior pastor of FBC Robertsdale, and Josh Lilly, the church's family pastor, left March 4 to work with refugees fleeing the Russian invasion.

More than 2.3 million refugees have left Ukraine. Of those, more than 300,000 people have fled into Moldova and about 83,000 refugees remain there, according to a March 10 report by the International Organization for Migration.

Copeland and Lilly are part of an effort to provide food, support and transportation to refugees seeking safety in Moldova. Food, water, baby items and medications are being moved through the border to church partners.

Thousands have responded to the call to help, church leaders said.

Long-term partnerships

Putting boots on the ground takes planning and organization. Though the crisis in Ukraine is only weeks old, the ground work for FBC Robertsdale's involvement in ministering to refugees has been laid for two decades.

"For 20 years, FBC Robertsdale has been working with churches in Moldova," Lilly said.

Four years ago, they expanded their missions involvement and partnered with a congregation in Ukraine. The pastor of that church has promised to help anyone who calls, Lilly said. The pastor said food banks have been set up, but the fighting is growing more intense.

Battle continues

"News here is getting worse every hour," the pastor reported, noting the fighting in the streets of Ukraine's capital, Kyiv. "There are street battles now. Everyone who can hold a weapon has risen to defend the capital, including students, schoolchildren and even the retired."

The network set up by FBC is working to purchase and supply food to those remaining in Ukraine, Lilly said. Youth pastor Thomas Ray said the church is simply following the Great Commission.

"Our pastors are ... serving people and being the feet and hands of Jesus," he said.

To find out more about FBC Robertsdale's efforts and ways to give, go to firstrobertsdale.com or call 251-947-4362.

Those who wish to support IMB ministry to refugees may do so through the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions at alsbom.org/ukraine.

Photo courtesy of FBC Robertsdale

Financial gifts through local churches, the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and Send Relief are being used to purchase emergency food and hygiene kits and to provide shelter and transportation for refugees fleeing Ukraine.

‘Chasing Contentment’

At Pursue conference, students urged to fully trust Christ in all things

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

In a typical day, the average student contemplates a multitude of decisions, all while navigating classes, jobs and relationships. It’s no wonder young adults are “Chasing Contentment.”

That was the theme of this year’s Pursue conference, hosted by the office of collegiate and student ministries of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and held Feb. 25–26 at First Baptist Church Opelika.

The 500 or so students, young adults and leaders gathered for the event were encouraged that true contentment, the kind that comes through trusting in Christ, is possible even in the midst of the busyness of their stage of life.

“As culture says to pursue all these different things … we’re called to pursue Christ alone,” said Janie Gray, whose husband, Ryan, serves as minister to college students and single adults at First Baptist Church Montgomery. The Grays served as emcees for this year’s event. Music was led by Iron City Worship.

Speaking Friday night, Jarman Leatherwood, pastor of House of Hope and Restoration Church in Huntsville, introduced the theme Scripture for the weekend, Philippians 4:10–13, beginning with an anecdote from his young son’s homework: the story of the house mouse and the field mouse.

Satisfied and at rest

In that story, the house mouse has all the comforts the field mouse does not, but he lives with the constant threat of the house cat. In the end, the field mouse decides he is content with less possessions but a safe home.

“True contentment comes ‘through Christ’ and means being satisfied and at rest with what I have, where I am and Who I have,” Leatherwood said.

For Paul to write these words during the time of the Roman Emperor Nero, who is notorious for his persecution of Christians, says something about his mind and his heart, Leatherwood said. “He was not focused on his circumstances but on Christ.”

LEATHERWOOD

To be content in all circumstances is not natural or automatic, Leatherwood said. It must be learned.

‘In plenty or in want’

“God teaches us contentment through the ups and downs of life,” he said, “whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.” For students, that might mean, “I know how to make do with ramen noodles, and I know how to make do with lobster and shrimp.”

Contentment, he said, is not found in political affiliations, geographical location, one’s financial situation or academic accolades.

“You can have more degrees than a thermometer and not be content,” he said. “You can have Gucci, but not have God. You can have a car and not have Christ. You can have nice shoes, but not have the Savior; and you can have jewelry, but not have Jesus.

“True contentment lies in the fact that we have Jesus Christ,” he said. “To think that we can live a life apart from Christ is like a pencil that hasn’t been sharpened. It has no point.”

Speaking Saturday, author and Christian communicator Michael Kelley continued to explore the theme of contentment in the Christian’s life.

“If you were to ask a bunch of people what ought to mark people who follow Jesus, you’d probably get all different kinds of answers that would likely center around the characteristics of Jesus,” Kelley said. “Paul could have said there’s any number of things that he can do through Christ, who gives him strength, but the attribute he specifically picks out to make that commentary on is contentment.”

Photo by Lauren Cumbie/SBOM

Iron City Worship leads more than 500 Pursue conference participants in worship during the Feb. 25–26 event held at First Baptist Church Opelika. Pursue is an annual event for college students, young adults and their leaders.

The disposition you have

Philippians 4:13 is one of the most famous and well-known verses in the entire Bible and one of the most misquoted, he said.

“This is not a football locker verse. It’s not a victory verse, It’s not a power verse. It’s not a fulfillment-of-all-your-wishes verse,” he said. “If you want to claim Philippians 4:13, claim it about the disposition that you have when you are in want.”

In contemporary culture, the connotation of contentment is often “settling for something less,” Kelley said. “I could have the filet, but I’m going to have the burger. You know all about that because you’re in college. You know what it means to settle for something less.”

KELLEY

Christian contentment is about realizing how much you already have in Christ, he emphasized.

“In a culture that has an insatiable appetite for more, the Christian must be willing to swim upstream and say, ‘I don’t need any ‘more’ … because I have it all already.”

Kelley suggested three beliefs about God that are needed in order to say no to more and yes to contentment:

1. God is wise.
2. God is loving.
3. God is generous.

The measure of those three attributes of God is not in a person’s circumstances, but in the “established, historical, one-time, set-in-stone ... death of Jesus Christ on the cross,”

Photo by Lauren Cumbie/SBOM

Madison Lawrence (front center), a student at the University of Montevallo, competes during a game held at Pursue. The next day, she shared her testimony of hearing the gospel for the first time and accepting Christ at BCM.

Kelley said. "This is the apex of the wisdom and the love and the generosity of God."

A secret learned

Speakers Beverly Skinner and Chris James spoke to the day-to-day challenge of chasing contentment during a Q&A-style discussion based in Ecclesiastes.

"Solomon is looking back at his life and ... details all the accumulated wealth and all the accomplishments he gained. He had possessions, achievement, beautiful art and music all around him. He had women, sex — he had it all. And what he concludes is that it was all so meaningless, like chasing the wind," said Skinner, who serves as the director of campus expansion for the Georgia Baptist Mission Board. "The things we think will ultimately bring us contentment and satisfaction only leave us wanting something more."

SKINNER

James, campus minister at UMass Lowell and founding pastor of Mill City Church in Lowell, Massachusetts, emphasized that "God designed us to find contentment, but He designed us to find it in places we don't always go to look for it."

"The contentment in your heart that you so deeply long for is found in God. The meaninglessness in life … ultimately finds its purpose in God. Nothing in life either makes sense or has purpose apart from God," James said. "If you find your ultimate satisfaction in Jesus, He will empower you to rightly enjoy people and possessions and achievement in this life and beyond."

JAMES

Throughout the two-day event, breakout sessions also were offered on topics ranging from vocation and calling, budgeting, discipleship and navigating issues such as homosexuality and gender, sexuality and online communication. Students also heard about summer and short-term missions opportunities through One Mission Students and had the opportunity to engage with representatives from several missions-sending organizations and seminaries.

Nuss recognized

Mike Nuss, director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions office of collegiate and student ministries, was recognized Saturday for 22 years at the helm of the department. Nuss plans to retire in June.

Under Nuss' leadership, 6,968 professions of faith have been reported through the state's Baptist Campus Ministries, said Chris Mills, SBOM student missions mobilizer.

"Mike is a friend, he's a champion of college ministries and an encourager," Mills said. "He's an equipper, he's just a great guy and he's going to be missed."

SBOM launches undergrad training for future leaders

By Hamilton Richardson
The Alabama Baptist

A new discipleship program for Alabama college students — the Timothy Initiative — will focus on training the next generation of Alabama Baptist leaders through mentorship and missions.

Mike Nuss, director of the office of collegiate and student ministries for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, introduced the program to student ministers at the Pursue conference Feb. 25–26 at First Baptist Church Opelika (see story, page 10).

"Helping college students think strategically about life after college and guiding them as they make decisions and prepare for future ministry and missions opportunities is an important part of Alabama Baptists' ministry to college students," Nuss said. "The Timothy Initiative is a new avenue for highly motivated college juniors and seniors to begin serious preparation for a missional life beyond college."

To learn more about the Timothy Initiative or to apply online, go to timothyal.org.

Prepared for impact

The Timothy Initiative, or TI, is designed to help college juniors and seniors across Alabama spend their final years on campus developing gifts and skills to impact the world and the culture for the gospel.

Just as Paul begins a long and fruitful relationship with Timothy in the Book of Acts, TI will pair each student with a mentor.

During the program, the student/mentor team will meet virtually or in person with other students and their mentors. Local churches will be involved as well, according to Kaleb Wimberly, associate pastor at First Baptist Church Enterprise and a member of the TI leadership team.

'Farm league' approach

Wimberly likened TI to baseball's farm league, with churches and mentors as coaches.

"We want to assist in developing a 'farm system' of ministers who have a rightly developed understanding of their calling, a right formation of their character, a right commitment to their church community and a competency to minister with excellence," Wimberly said.

"It is our vision and desire to provide a curriculum and training program that comes alongside our churches who desire to train, but are unsure of where to start. We pray this will help Alabama Baptist churches catch a vision for leadership training in their churches."

In addition to weekly meetings, students will be encouraged to participate in missions between their junior and senior years. Students who complete the program may also be eligible to receive up to $5,000 for two years of missions engagement through the International Mission Board or North American Mission Board following graduation.

Rising college juniors are encouraged to apply or learn more at timothyal.org.

"The Timothy Initiative is a new avenue for highly motivated college juniors and seniors to begin serious preparation for a missional life."

Mike Nuss
director, SBOM office of collegiate and student ministries

Someone You Should Know

COLEY HOLLOWAY

By Leigh Pritchett
The Alabama Baptist

The full-time ministry of Coley Holloway, 86, of Dothan spanned 60 years. In that time, he was pastor of eight churches and interim pastor at eight others.

He conducted 911 funerals, preached 137 revivals and has read through the Bible 56 times so far. He was in the first graduating class of Howard College (now Samford University) after it moved to its current location in Birmingham.

Holloway felt called to ministry at rural churches. His church, Bay Springs Baptist in Dothan, has named him pastor emeritus. He and his wife, Nancy, reared seven children — four biological children and three special blessings.

MINISTRY: Retired, but "I'm still a pastor in my heart"

CHURCH NAME: Bay Springs Baptist Church, Dothan, Southeast Alabama Baptist Association

LIFE VERSE: Philippians 3:13–14

HOLLOWAY

Q: Who was or is one of the most influential people in your faith life? Why?

A: Both in my faith life and my personal life is my wife, Nancy. Oct. 19, we (were) married 65 years. In my second year (of college) ... I was looking (and praying) for a wife. We met and we were married six months later. ... She has the gift of contentment. She is truly a pastor's wife. We have lived in 14 different places.

Q: Tell about a "turning point" in your life and how God was involved.

A: When I was 16, I believe, I knew God was calling me. ... I said, "God, if you want me to preach, tell somebody to come up to me and tell me to preach." ... Our pastor came out (of church) one time and said, "Boys, we're going to have a youth revival. And one of you will preach Sunday morning and one Sunday night." I took the Sunday morning. ... (The calling) was so clear.

Q: What has God been teaching you lately?

A: Total surrender to Him.

Q: If there was one thing you could tell your younger self about faith, what would it be?

A: We've got a textbook called the Bible. Stay true to the Word. If you can't teach me from the Bible, don't try anything else.

Q: Have you ever read a book or heard a song that changed the way you think about God and faith? What was it and what did you learn from it?

A: The song "O What a Moment (When We See Jesus)."

I read several Billy Graham books. I believe he is one of the great evangelists of my day. I heard him speak at First Baptist Church Dothan when I was 16 years old.

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

Place a classified ad for $1 per word. For more information call 205-870-4720, ext. 102.

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 seeks 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 South, 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 35903.

MISSIONS/DISCIPLESHIP MINISTER
Woodmont Baptist Church in Florence, Ala., is searching for a missions/discipleship minister. We are searching for someone to develop and grow our missions and discipleship ministry. Minimum five years ministry experience. College degree required, seminary degree preferred. Strong interpersonal and communications skills needed. Please go to woodmontbaptist.org to submit resumés by April 15.

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.

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.

STUDENT MINISTER
First Baptist Church Stevenson is seeking a full-time student minister. Direct questions to the church office at 256-437-8530. Please send resumés to: RMNamanny@gmail.com.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY DIRECTOR & BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH MINISTER
Macedonia Baptist Church in the Coats Bend Community of Gadsden, Ala., is prayerfully seeking a children's ministry director and a bivocational youth minister. Please send resumés and/or questions to: Ken Blakney at ktblakney@yahoo.com.

PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER
First Baptist Church of Woodstock, Ala., is seeking a part-time candidate to lead our youth ministry. Please submit resumés to: office@fbcwoodstock.org.

CHILDREN'S MINISTER
North Shelby Baptist is seeking a full-time children's minister. We are a church that values tradition and is conservative in 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: cmsc@ehbc.church.

PART TIME CHILDREN'S PASTOR/DIRECTOR
Pleasant Grove Baptist Church in Moulton, Ala., is prayerfully seeking God's person to fill the part-time position of children's pastor/director. All inquiries can be sent to: info@pgbcmoulton.com. Resumés can be sent to the same email address or mailed to: 11450 AL Hwy 33, Moulton, AL 35650.

OTHER POSITIONS

EMPLOYMENT
Job opportunities. Details at wmu.com/about-wmu/employment.

HISPANIC CHURCH PLANTING RESIDENCY
Dawson Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, is seeking candidates for its Hispanic Church Planting Residency. Once trained these residents will seek to plant eight new Hispanic churches in Alabama before 2025. The residency director is Joshua del Risco, pastor of Iglesia Vida Nueva in Fultondale, Alabama. Financial support during the residency will include salary and housing. Funding for the church plant will continue for an additional four years following residency. Residents must agree with Dawson's Doctrinal Foundation as shown at dawsonchurch.org/doctrinalfoundation and complete the NAMB planter assessment. Questions and/or resumés should be sent to: Ben Hale, Dawson's missions pastor, at bhale@dawsonchurch.org.

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.

BUSINESS

CASH FOR BOOKS
Baker Books pays cash for pastoral and academic religious libraries, large or small. Email quotes@bakerbookhouse.com. Phone: 866-241-6733.

FOR SALE NEW & USED STAIR LIFTS
Lift chairs, power wheelchairs, car lifts, scooters and walk-in tubs. We service Alabama. 1-800-682-0658.

TRAVEL/VACATION

AFFORDABLE BEACHSIDE CONDOS
Orange Beach, Ala. Rent direct from Christian family owners. Lowest prices on the beach for over 30 years! Call Don, 251-752-2366, call Donna, 251-656-4935 or www.gulfshorescondos.com.

LOG CABIN RENTAL
Lake Guntersville area, beautiful view and fully furnished. Discounts to ministers. Log on to www.paradisevista.net to see pictures. Call for reservations at 205-540-3600.

MISCELLANEOUS

LOOKING FOR A MISSION HOUSE
Grace Covenant Worship Center is looking for a moderately priced house in the western section of Birmingham for the purpose of missions. Michael Frazier, pastor, 205-923-3304 (o), pagfelton@gmail.com.

Alabama Baptist STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS

ONEMISSION:TheGreatCommission**ONEPROGRAM**:TheCooperativeProgram**MANYMINISTRIES**:GreatCommissionMinistries

ALABAMA BAPTIST DISASTER RELIEF TRAINING

Training in all areas of disaster relief will take place throughout March and April. All statewide training events will take place at the Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief Center, 118 Jesse Samuel Hunt Blvd. in Prattville. Register and find more information at **sbdr.org/events**.

HERE ARE THE DATES AND TRAINING TOPICS:

Administration, **March 19**
Communications, **March 26**
Shower and Laundry Unit, **March 26**
Cleanup and Recovery, **April 1**
Chainsaw, **April 1-2**
Temporary Child Care, **April 2**
Chaplain, **April 7-9**
Mass Feeding, **April 23**

SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION
DISASTER RELIEF
ALABAMA

This ministry is made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program and to the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering.

Church branding expert Mark MacDonald urges congregations to follow a few simple steps to update websites for the community and members.

Spring cleaning

Unsplash.com

Updating church's digital presence offers fresh look for community, members

By Mark MacDonald
The Alabama Baptist

It's digital spring cleaning time — specifically time to freshen up your church website and online presence.

Even after just a few months, so much on your website needs a little attention. It's probably picked up a ton of content over fall ministry launches, Christmas busyness and the "new year, new you" ministry refresh.

Keep in mind the website is where people turn for information, so the information should be the latest and best. This is especially important since Easter is on its way and your congregation and community view that season as a time for renewal.

Where to start

Want to give your website a deep spring cleaning but don't know where to start? Here are four tips for covering the foundational areas.

1. Backup and update. Your website has many files housed on a hosting computer with access to the World Wide Web. Protect your files. Most hosts allow backups into a zip folder you can store on your computer. Why? If something goes wrong as you do the next three website spring cleaning items, you can always restore to backup. It's a safety thing.

After the backup, look around your website dashboard for areas requiring updating (such as plugins and your content management system). Be cautious. Start with plugins and then do CMS, ensuring plugins are approved for the latest updates.

2. Organization. Look at your website with fresh eyes. Think of it as a filing cabinet with content your community and congregation need. Your main menu is the main filing drawers. Ensure you don't have too many or it'll feel confusing.

Web paradigm says the first tab should be "About" and the last should be "Contact." The other four or five need to allow everyone to discover what you do in ministry. A good starting point: Serve, Ministries, Missions, Events, Watch, Resources, Calendar, Give.

Improve and update

3. Improve calendar functionality. There are two types of web content: static and dynamic. Static requires adding content that remains until you remove or change it. Dynamic allows adding content into a dashboard and having it "magically" get added to other pages.

This functionality improves the user experience so they can get a customized feel from the website. Concentrate on calendar dynamic content as part of your spring cleaning as much as the CMS system allows. Try calendars with filterable events and filtered events distributed to appropriate ministry pages.

4. Update your staff page. The "About" tab should be an easy way for your community to see what church leadership looks like. The community often uses staff pictures to understand if they'll belong, so make sure photos are current and friendly. Consider how your audience will judge the photos. Headshots may be preferable to whole body shots.

Make pictures consistent so no one person stands out. The staff or team page should have an easy way to identify who's in charge of ministries and provide easy contact (email link or clickable phone number).

EDITOR'S NOTE — Mark MacDonald is a communication pastor, speaker, consultant, bestselling author, church branding strategist for BeKnownforSomething.com and executive director of the Center for Church Communication, empowering 10,000-plus churches to become known for something relevant (a communication thread) throughout their ministries, websites and social media. His book, "Be Known for Something," is available at BeKnownBook.com.

Resources and notes for ministers about 2021, 2022 taxes

By Michael J. Brooks
The Alabama Baptist

Gas prices are higher and 2021 tax refunds might be delayed, but the news on taxes for ministers is not all bad for 2022.

Lee Wright, coordinator of church compensation services for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, shared these and other updates for ministers at a recent conference.

One bit of good news is that federal stimulus payments sent out in 2021 are not taxable income. Another positive is that those who file their tax returns electronically probably will see their refund checks quicker than those who file with paper.

Contact Lee Wright at 800-264-1225, ext. 2241, or lwright@alsbom.org.

On most other tax-related issues, the positives and negatives depend on the individual.

The IRS increased the business mileage rate for 2022 for ministers, up two and a half cents to 58.5 cents per mile. But that amount cannot be deducted by most on the Federal 1040 form, Wright cautioned.

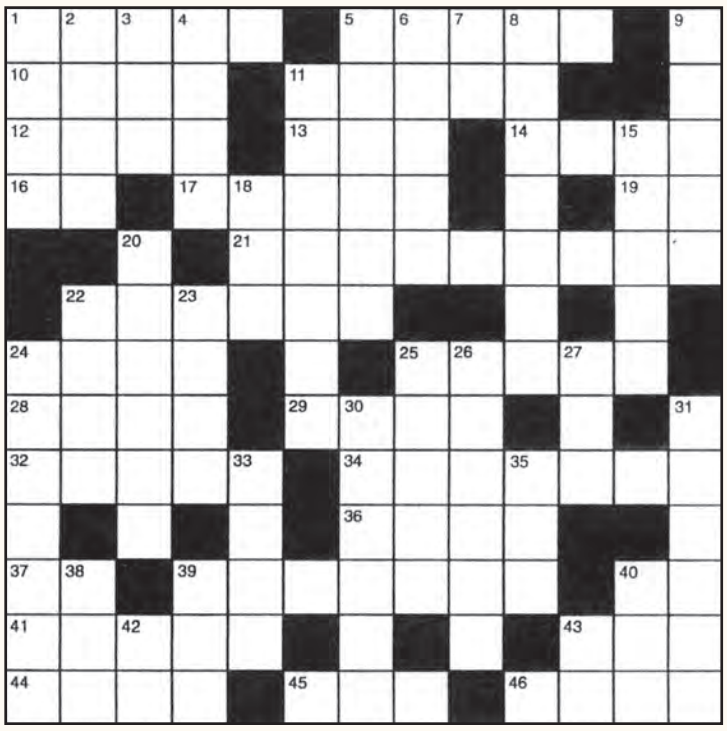
Reimbursement plan

"The 'Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017' raised the standard deduction, but it also took away business deductions for those who get a W-2, which ministers should," Wright noted. "Therefore we've been recommending an accountable reimbursement plan."

He recommends GuideStone tax publications, Richard Hammer's Church Law and Tax organization (churchlawandtax.com) and articles by Frank and Elaine Sommerville and Hammer.

Wright offers a number of tax and other financial materials at alsbom.org/ccs.

CHRISTIAN crossword



By Glen G. Luscher Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

ACROSS

1. But ye shall receive ___. (Acts 1:8)
5. A son of Midian. (Gen. 25:4)
10. ___ the voice of the Lord. (Deut. 27:10)
11. We shall not all ___. (1 Cor. 15:51)
12. The Word was ___ flesh. (John 1:14)
13. My sins are not ___ from thee. (Ps. 69:5)
14. Son of Enoch. (Gen. 4:18)
16. Plural (abbr.).
17. Adina was his son. (1 Chron. 11:42)
19. Whosoever shall ___ the will of God. (Mark 3:35)
21. Imitation.
22. Great-grandson of Asher. (1 Chron. 7:32)
24. Ruth's husband.
25. To gather.
28. Capital of Italy.
29. Father of Salathiel. (Luke 3:27)
32. An adversary.
34. Under the ___ they were gathered. (Job 30:7)
36. Type of palm.
37. He is faithful and just ___ forgive us. (1 John 1:9)
39. He ___ him, and said to him. (2 Kings 10:15)
40. He saith among the trumpets, ___. (Job 39:25)
41. Shechem's father. (Gen. 34:2)
43. Bartimaeus … ___ by the highway. (Mark 10:46)
44. Ephraim's grandson. (Num. 26:35–36)
45. Bring thee a ___ heifer. (Num. 19:2)
46. ___ on this side, and ___ on that side. (Josh. 8:22)

DOWN

1. The ___ of her strength shall cease. (Ezek. 30:18)
2. A son of Joktan. (Gen. 10:28)
3. With this ring, I thee ___.
4. Blessed are the ___ which see. (Luke 10:23)
5. Name of Shedeur's son. (Num. 7:30)
6. A lever operated by the foot.
7. ___ shall save his people. (Matt. 1:21)
8. Ye are our___. (2 Cor. 3:2)
9. Son of Hillel. (Judg. 12:13)
11. Son of Harim. (Ezra 10:31)
15. Women ___ themselves in modest apparel. (1 Tim. 2:9)
18. She touched the ___ of his garment. (Matt. 9:20)
20. Son of Mahli. (1 Chron. 6:46)
22. For it is ___ cut off. (Ps. 90:10)
23. David's older brother. (1 Chron. 2:15)
24. Neither left they any to ___. (Josh. 11:14)
25. And all her ___ men were bound. (Nah. 3:10)
26. A covered coach.
27. Who gave himself a ransom for ___. (1 Tim. 2:6)
30. His seed shall ___ forever. (Ps. 89:36)
31. In his ___ shall stand up a vile person. (Dan. 11:21)
33. Two days, or a month, or a ___. (Num. 9:22)
35. Short for Theodore.
38. A paddle.
39. Thou art my beloved ___. (Luke 3:22)
40. Noah's son. (Gen. 5:32)
42. Another name for mother.
43. His sickness was ___ sore. (1 Kings 17:17)

Famous Christians from previous centuries

Heroes of the Faith

Famed lyricist teaches us to 'Count Your Blessings'

Johnson Oatman Jr. (1856–1922) wrote lyrics for thousands of gospel songs. His most famous hymn was "Count Your Blessings."

This year marks the 100th anniversary of his death.

Oatman, the son of Johnson and Rachel Ann Oatman, was born April 21, 1856, near Medford, New Jersey, where his father was a merchant. Johnson Oatman Sr. was an excellent singer, having a beautiful, powerful voice, and Oatman Jr. admired his father's talent.

OATMAN

Oatman Jr. received his education at public schools. He then attended the New Jersey Collegiate Institute. He worked with his father for many years in the family business, Johnson Oatman & Son.

When he was 19, Oatman joined the Methodist Church and was later ordained to preach. In 1878, he married Wilhelmina Reid of Lumberton, New Jersey.

After realizing he could not sing or preach well, Oatman sought God's will for his life. He found it as a hymnwriter and, in 1892, began writing the words to 200 hymns a year. He eventually wrote 5,000.

Beloved hymns

His hymns found in the Baptist Hymnal are "Higher Ground," "No, Not One," "He Included Me" and "Count Your Blessings."

"Higher Ground" has been a favorite since its publication in 1898. Oatman's lyrics and Charles Gabriel's music were written in 1892. The focus of the hymn is to have a deeper spiritual life: "A higher plane than I have found/Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."

"No, Not One" was written in 1895. Composer George Hugg wrote the music the same year. The hymn was so popular it was published in 35 hymnbooks within a year. "He Included Me" was written in 1909; Hampton Sewell wrote the music the same year.

"Count Your Blessings," written in 1897, was Oatman's masterpiece; E.O. Excell wrote the music. The hymn was published in 230 hymnals and was immediately popular in Great Britain.

The prolific hymnist died in Norman, Oklahoma, and was buried in Lumberton, New Jersey.

By Joanne Sloan

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

Thank You!

Your amazing faithfulness in giving through the Cooperative Program and to the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering in 2021 allowed missionaries to stay on the field, mission work to continue and Great Commission Ministries to go forward without interruption, resulting in lives changed for eternity.

To God be the Glory!

State Missionary and Executive Director
Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

Candace L. McIntosh
Executive Director
Alabama Woman's Missionary Union

CP COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

AlabamaCP.org
Myers-Mallory.org

Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering

Indian Mounds members witness to neighbors, beyond

(continued from page 1)
because we haven't seen a stopping point. It's a huge opportunity, an entire people group we're not reaching. The need is very great and we want to do our part.

"We have formed strong friendships over the years with the wonderful Christian Native Americans," he added. "It's a blessing, a great joy, to be with them."

Last summer, Indian Mounds Baptist members ministered at American Indian camps in Oklahoma, North Carolina and Montana. They've also served at camps in Florida, Minnesota and California, becoming known for ministry to children as well as skits written and performed by youth of the church.

Photo courtesy of Indian Mounds Baptist Church

Nora Brooke Loper (center) leads children through the plan of salvation during camp.

One, called "The Sin Chair," involves a chair that looks deceptively comfortable. A girl has been warned by her parents to stay away from it. She chooses to sit in the chair, and one by one, her sister, friends, parents and a church member come by, judging the girl but not helping her.

Then a Christian comes by with a Bible, kneels and shows the girl what the Bible says. The two pray, and the chair releases its captive.

The Native American ministry is just one of many fulfilled by Indian Mounds Baptist, which got its name from the 29 massive, flat-topped mounds, which were built along the Black Warrior River by ancient Mississippian people.

Some 3,000 residents now live in Moundville, located about 15 miles south of Tuscaloosa, but in the 1400s at the height of the Mississippian culture, it was the largest city north of Mexico.

About 50 people attend Sunday morning services, and they are strongly invested in missions involvement.

"We support missions through our giving and our going," Spence noted. "All we have is from God. It's a privilege to give back a portion. It's an even greater privilege to serve Him by serving others in His name."

Photo courtesy of Indian Mounds Baptist Church

Youth members from Indian Mounds Baptist Church in Moundville perform "The Sin Chair," a skit that shares the gospel message, during Indian Family Camp in Ada, Oklahoma.

Equipping members

The church focuses in-house on equipping members to be Jesus' hands, feet and arms in the community and elsewhere, with a daunting list of ministries for a church its size.

"We want to teach our members what the word of God says, but also how to do what the word of God says," said Spence, who also is a farmer and recently retired as a manufacturing plant manager. "If you don't go out and practice what you're learning, what good is it to learn it?

"There's a need for people in the community to see you have a heart for God. It's a witness."

Indian Mounds Baptist is located north of the town's one red light on State Highway 69, and has a role in the community's Ministerial Alliance to provide gas vouchers to travelers in need.

Members provide a meal for the football team, cheerleaders and band twice during the season's home games. In the fall they bake cookies for local first responders.

Coats, blankets and personal items are gathered year-round for the homeless, distributed locally and by truck drivers.

There's also "Pack a Purse" for homeless women, filled with toiletries and personal items.

At least 25 backpacks stuffed with school supplies are given each September to Southern Baptist Appalachian Ministries, and about 35 shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child are contributed each November.

Consistent effort

Some 1,500 winter coats are gathered each fall (many donated from area schools' lost and found boxes), cleaned (with quarters donated by church members) at a laundromat and sent to Navajo Reservations in Arizona and New Mexico.

"This all sounds like a lot, but we do it in small amounts," Jean Spence said. "We're a small church but we want to do what we can, where we can."

Each Sunday morning worship service includes a "Children's Mission March," where youngsters bring their money to the front, with proceeds going, over the course of a year, to the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes, Gospel for Asia farm animal ministry and Samaritan's Purse.

"The children love the barnyard animals ministry," she said.

"We figure out how much money we have, and they get to choose the animal from a book. It's fun and it gives children an opportunity to learn giving and being a part of missions."

"The Great Commission says to 'Go,'" Spence noted. "God led us here and to Native Americans. Our people enjoy getting out and becoming part of ministering to others, showing with their actions their heart for God and their love for the people."

Reliable SIGN SERVICES
"Celebrating Over 25 Years"
CHURCH SIGNS

"It was overall a great experience. Each step of the way Reliable was there and ready to assist. We love our sign! It looks great and was even installed quicker than we expected! We would certainly work with Reliable again."

Brian Marbury
Associate Executive Pastor
Double Oak Community Church
Chelsea Campus

www.reliablesigns.com • 1.800.729.6844 • 205.664.0955

LEEDS STAINED GLASS & CHURCH FURNITURE
SINCE 1995

Toll-free: 888.699.9679
AL local: 205.699.9679
Call for FREE on-site consultation
Ask for Terry Barnes, Owner
information@LeedsStainedGlass.com

Visit www.LeedsStainedGlass.com
for an online gallery of windows and church furniture!

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For March 20

Explore the Bible

By Ben Stubblefield
Visiting assistant professor of Christian studies, University of Mobile

CONFRONTED
1 Thessalonians 2:13–20

The war in Ukraine is forcing nations to pick sides. Will they support Russia? Or Ukraine?

Even Switzerland, which typically abides by its historic position of neutrality during international conflict, has supported sanctions against Russia.

The reality of the 21st century global economy makes political neutrality simply untenable. We have no choice but to choose.

The ministry of the gospel is no different. The claims of a risen and returning Christ confront us: Will we receive or reject Jesus as Lord? We can't defer, delay or deflect. The stakes are too high and the consequences too important.

Here, Paul contrasts two responses to his ministry in Thessalonica and reaffirms his deep passion for this church to fulfill their commitment to live out the gospel.

Received (13–14)

It was not uncommon for Paul to be dismissed as a sophist, a madman or a fool. So the Thessalonians' joyful acceptance of the gospel produced in the apostle a heart of thanksgiving.

Notice also that they welcomed the Word, "which also performs its work in you." Paul knew it wasn't his wisdom or eloquence that changed the Thessalonians. Rather, it was the power of the divine Word, rooted now within them.

There's a role for clever marketing in church life; there's a place for well-designed websites and well-curated social media platforms; there's something to say for dynamic worship music and charismatic pastors.

It's exciting to be part of a well-run organization. But if the word of Christ is not received in our hearts, we ought not to expect the work of Christ to be revealed in our lives. Our wisdom won't change anybody; we need the Word from above.

Rejected (15–16)

Of course, not all welcomed the gospel. There was, Paul notes, significant opposition to Kingdom work from the church's beginning in Judea to its arrival in Thessalonica, and it will continue wherever the gospel is preached.

The church there didn't experience just a minor obstacle. Opponents aggressively harassed, threatened and hindered them.

This decision comes with a high cost. Consider the stunning promise of God's wrath upon them: Their rejection and antagonism of the Lord fills "the measure of their sins."

The invitation to follow Jesus doesn't come with a rain check. There's no middle way, no neutrality and no opportunity to serve two masters. You are His follower or His foe. He has either forgiven your sins or you are "filling up your measure" of them.

Focused (17–20)

Despite their hardship, Paul and his companions express their affection and determination to reunite with the Thessalonians. Indeed, the progress of the church gives Paul encouragement: They are his "hope," "joy," "glory" and "crown of exaltation."

We probably all get a pick-me-up when they hear from others that we've done well. But most people get a super boost of happiness when they hear someone say their children have done well. It's a snippet of confirmation that, just maybe, they've done something right, and it's good motivation to keep at it.

Church life can be sometimes frustrating, sometimes toilsome, sometimes thankless.

But we can draw fresh fuel when we remember how the Lord is at work in the lives of those impacted through us. The Lord has used you to change someone's life for eternity. What a privilege, and what a reason to keep "weeping, sowing for the Master," for we shall soon come "rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves."

Bible Studies for Life

By Will Kynes
Associate professor of biblical studies, Samford University

A LIFE OF TRUST
John 13:36–14:6

One of the more humbling aspects of the life of faith is that its best exemplars are children.

They demonstrate the devoted love, complete trust and utter dependence faith demands (Matt. 19:14; Mark 10:14–15; Luke 18:16–17).

As Jesus prepares the disciples for His departure, we see their faith challenged and Jesus' patient compassion for them, as He both challenges and comforts them like loving parents treat their children.

We are to trust God rather than our own abilities. (13:36–14:1)

With his characteristic ignorant and even childlike enthusiasm, Peter responds to Jesus' cryptic comment that He is going somewhere His disciples cannot come (13:33), with a question of where this place could possibly be (13:36) and a commitment to lay down his life in order to follow Him there (13:37).

Peter's heart is in the right place, because he echoes Jesus' repeated refrain in the other gospels that His disciples must take up their cross and follow Him.

Jesus' question in reply to Peter, "Will you really lay down your life for me?" is one we all must answer (13:38).

However, Jesus uses it to quickly call out Peter's self-confidence, adding that, rather than lay down his life, Peter will disown him three times before the night is over.

But, as with his earlier interaction with Peter that night over foot washing (13:6–10), Jesus corrects Peter but also encourages him.

Drawing Peter into the community of the disciples, immediately after foreshadowing the faith-challenging night ahead of them, Jesus declares, "Do not let your hearts be troubled" (14:1).

Jesus made it possible for us to be with God the Father. (2–3)

To reassure the disciples, Jesus tells them the purpose of His departure: to prepare a place for them in His Father's house.

Whether the Father's "house" is understood to include many "rooms" (NIV, CSB) or "mansions" (KJV), Jesus' point is that it is spacious enough to include all who will follow Him.

This scene is reminiscent of a father speaking comforting words to a toddler he is leaving in the nursery.

With a final hug, he says, "Don't worry; I'm coming back."

Trusting Jesus is the only way to God the Father. (4–6)

Like that toddler, the disciples don't quite understand what is going on.

A father may reassure his clinging child with, "I'm just going to the sanctuary."

Jesus also attempts to comfort His disciples by telling them they know the way to the place He's going. Thomas replies, "Lord, we don't know where You are going, so how can we know the way?" (14:5).

But they do know the way, because they know Jesus (14:7), and Jesus is "the way and the truth and the life" (14:6).

We can then read Jesus' claim that "no one comes to the Father except through Me" as another way He attempts to console the disciples about His impending departure.

He has to go, because there is no other way to bring them and "all the peoples on earth," whom the Father long ago determined to bless (Gen. 12:3), if He does not go.

This text forces us to ask ourselves some important questions. Do you love Jesus enough to lay down your life for Him?

Do you love Him enough to cling to Him like a toddler clings to his father?

Do you trust Him enough to let Him do His work? Will you follow the way, trust in the truth and embrace the life that comes through knowing Jesus?

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Erin Roach
The Alabama Baptist

‘Triumph from Tragedy’ shares stories of God’s intervention

Triumph from Tragedy” is a compilation of stories telling how God brought good from times of deep tragedy for believers, including a Bible study to encourage those who are struggling.

All the writers in the book are part of Christian Writers for Life, a private Facebook group of more than 3,000 writers from throughout the world. The group is guided by authors Denise George and Rebecca Pounds George.

Many members have “personal stories of defeating tragedy with God’s help and turning tragedy into triumph,” Denise George said, “and we wanted to make their stories available to others currently experiencing difficult times. We simply asked our writers if they’d like to share their stories, and they responded with enthusiasm.”

Because getting published in today’s marketplace can be competitive, George wanted to provide an opportunity to minister through one book, she said. “Out of all our submissions, we chose 49 to publish.”

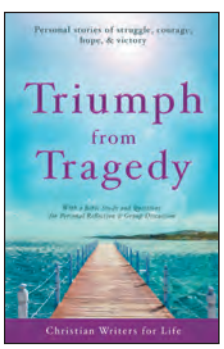
Facebook photo

Hayden (right) and Cody Walker (left) have had two children since they lost their firstborn Zoe Karis in 2016. Their story is included in “Triumph from Tragedy,” and the Zoe Karis Walker Endowed Fund for the Center for Women in Ministry at Beeson Divinity School (at Samford University in Birmingham) was announced March 3.

Learning from trials

Three received first, second or third place awards. Hayden Walker, who works with the Robert Smith Jr. Preaching Institute at Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, won first place for writing about losing her firstborn child to a rare skeletal disorder.

“As the moments passed following Zoe’s diagnosis, I read and studied the Bible like it was oxygen,” Walker writes. “I had believed the doctrine of the bodily resurrection, but as life and impending death wiggled in my womb, I became captivated by the beauty of the glorious hope that is ours in Christ.” (Read more of Walker’s story at tabonline.org/zoe-karis.)



Jim Jones, a former nurse anesthetist, and Richard Greene, a retired journalist, received second place for writing about Jones’ stroke that led him and his wife to start a hunger ministry.

“Linda and I are not superheroes,” Jones writes. “We’re just ordinary Christians who follow an extraordinary God. We’re grateful that He brought trials into our lives and gave us the grace to triumph to serve Him with joy and offer His hope to people who need Him!”

Terrie Todd, a faith and humor columnist, won third place for writing about her husband’s arm amputation. She shares four things God taught her through the trial: “I’ve learned that one can question God and survive. ... I’ve learned to be a little more considerate. ... I’ve learned gratitude. ... I have learned to anticipate Heaven even more.”

Readers will be encouraged by the personal accounts, George said.

“The stories touch on many different types of difficulties people are experiencing, showing how to overcome and get through them,” she explained. “We’ve been especially encouraged by our readers’ desire to get copies of this book into the hands of their friends, family members and community members who are suffering.”

‘Openness and honesty’

Many who read “Triumph from Tragedy” are responding with letters of appreciation “for the openness and honesty of our writers who shared their stories,” Denise George said. “We’ve been excited to hear that the Bible study and discussion questions we included in the book are proving especially helpful to both individuals and to groups who are meeting together to talk through the many ways God transforms tragedy into triumph.”

Tracy Riggs, a freelance writer and photographer, said she was “elated” when she learned her submission would be included in the book. “Ever since I was little, I wanted to be an author,” she said.

Riggs wrote about God getting her through something she tried desperately to avoid: a divorce that came as “a crushing blow.”

“Encouragement is the biggest thing I hope people will gain from reading my story,” Riggs said.

“I have been through a lot in my life. I try to let people know they are not alone in going through this stuff. Being a Christian doesn’t make everything OK. Being a Christian means you can get through whatever happens with the hope of God, being able to lean on God.”

Riggs surmised that “maybe there are people that have it all together; I’m just not one of them. I want to show that there are Christians that have been through a lot, and God has brought them through, and there is a triumph.”

“Triumph from Tragedy” is available for purchase on Amazon.

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.

AMPLIFY

conversations about life + faith

LISTEN TO AMPLIFY AT

TABONLINE.ORG/PODCASTS

or wherever you listen to your podcasts.