

# The Alabama Baptist

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March 31, 2022

Vol. 187, No. 13  
Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

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Nine-year-old Claire Boswell makes cookies to raise money for friends in Ukraine.



Photo courtesy of Erin Boswell

## Giving hearts

### One mom's daughters inspire help for Ukrainian escape efforts

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

**E**rin Boswell's two youngest daughters might be too young to really understand what Ukraine is or what's happening there right now. But her oldest two — Claire, 9, and Lily, 5 — have a better idea.

They know their mother loves the eastern European

country. And even more than that, they know she loves her friends there.

"When the conflict started, I was obviously very distraught, and they knew something upsetting was going on," Boswell recalled.

"So we found ways to talk to them about it and tell them what was going on."

The girls were familiar with Ukraine. Boswell had served there as a Journeyman with the International Mission Board after she went on a missions trip with Whitesburg Baptist Church in Huntsville.

"I had interned with the church's missions ministry in college, and a week before we

went on the trip, I was told I would be going off to an ESL camp separate from my team," she remembered.

Boswell was disappointed. She had been planning a lot of the things the rest of the team would be doing and was excited about it.

#### Connections

"But I went, and it changed something in me, and I just knew I'd be back in Ukraine," Boswell said.

Over time, God opened a door for her to go back to the city of Poltava in the short-term IMB role.

And once again, she'd be going it alone, with team-

mates supporting her from other cities.

She said being the only IMB missionary in Poltava pushed her to develop a network of Ukrainian friends even faster than she might have otherwise.

"I developed relationships with many believers and non-believers, and they became my lifeline," Boswell said.

She's kept up with them since returning to the U.S. in 2010.

She talks regularly with them, gets language lessons online and celebrates Ukrainian Independence Day every year with her daughters.

(See 'Baking,' page 10)



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Photo by Dianna L. Cagle

Robin McCall helps polish each page of the paper at TAB's Homewood office.

## McCall brings technical skills, prayerful focus

Robin McCall said The Alabama Baptist has been a faithful companion in her home for more than 30 years.

“In addition to being a dependable news source for all things SBC, the paper has provided exhortation, grace and encouragement in my personal faith journey,” she said.

So McCall said she’s “thrilled” for the chance to “pay it forward” in her new role on the editorial team and “come alongside TAB’s incredibly talented staff to offer Alabama Baptists news, resources and information designed to enhance their faith journey.”

McCall began her career in education, then took an 18-year career hiatus to raise her children. During her stay-at-home years, she did some freelance writing and editing and taught English in a couple of local educational cooperatives.

Then in 2012, she became the design editor for preschool resources at national Woman’s Missionary Union.

### ‘Discovered a love’

“After several years serving on the preschool team, I discovered a love for writing and editing digital content and began working with the marketing and compassion ministries teams,” McCall said. “In 2019, I moved into the role of hub

manager for the Content and Marketing Hub.”

When changing family responsibilities necessitated that she retire from her full-time position at WMU in early 2022, she connected with Jennifer Davis Rash, TAB’s editor-in-chief, and began working part time at TAB in March.

### ‘Extra boost’

Rash said the staff is “thrilled to add Robin to our team and know she is going to help us continue the longstanding tradition of producing relevant content and high-quality publications.”

“Her positive and uplifting spirit also provides an extra boost to all who have the privilege of working alongside her,” Rash said.

McCall said she loves the technical aspect of editing, but more than that she loves thinking about how the work impacts the lives of readers. It makes her think of who might need encouragement from a story or who might be challenged to share the gospel with someone else.

“Because my husband is a pastor, I often wonder how stories might lead church members to consider new avenues of service,” McCall said. “It’s a joy to pray over the work, asking our Father to use the stories and resources to pierce the hearts and minds of readers for the advancement of His kingdom.” (Grace Thornton)



McCALL

## 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)

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The crossword puzzle can be found on page 15.



# RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

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

✉ [jrash@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:jrash@thealabamabaptist.org)    🐦 @RashionalThts

## How are you sensing God leading you to make a difference?

**T**he conversation from a few weeks ago keeps surfacing in my mind. A new friend and I chatted about how children in difficult family situations exist all around us, and yet so many of us look past them every day.

We really do care, but we don't always know how to act — what's appropriate, what's manageable, where to start, etc.

And while many incredible ministries and help organizations assist in a variety of ways, some areas are still overlooked or underrepresented.

For instance, children who are not taught proper hygiene and have no one assisting them in that area need guidance.

We can't expect elementary and middle school-aged students to know what to do without someone teaching them. And even then, they need access to hygienic resources.

What are ways churches and other ministry groups could partner with schools to make a difference in this area without embarrassing the children in need?

I remember how sad I felt for the kids in my classes through the years who weren't clean. They were picked on and pretty much isolated to themselves.

My heart hurt for them and I always wanted to help, but I didn't know how. And while I decided to be kind to them when others weren't, I still didn't actually give them a way out of their situation.

Along with teaching children and families in this situation about cleanliness and providing access to soap and water, we also could help them maintain a closet of clean clothes.

Think about the difference in a child's confidence who shows up at school in freshly washed and dried clothes that fit correctly and blend in with modern styles versus a child forced to wear the same soured hand-me-down outfits day after day.

It's not so much about keeping up with the latest fashions but

caring for a child's hygiene and comfort in general, which also leads to better physical health as well as stronger emotional health and emotional intelligence.

And with less stress taking place emotionally, the child will have more room mentally to learn and develop, which also spills over into other areas of life. Even his or her sleep will likely be better with freshly laundered sheets.

Who knows the difference clean clothes might make in the long run for that child already enduring daily ridicule at age 6 or 7.

We've all seen how one or two simple opportunities can truly change the course of a person's life, and when those who are

reaching out are people of faith, a watching world gets the added bonus of seeing a glimpse of Jesus.

As far as serving a family by washing their clothes, I can't wait to see how God works and am praying for Him to show me exactly how to help while also drawing others to similar opportunities.

With the genuine love I experience every day among Alabama Baptists, I'm confident we can truly make a difference.

It might be through our disaster relief laundry units and volunteers, or maybe a young career person partnering with a retiree to each play a part (one picks up and delivers while the other washes, dries and folds).

The result could also be affordable neighborhood laundromats set up and managed by churches in low-income communities. The facility could also offer ministry-based services such as after-school tutoring, job skills training, creative classes, Bible studies and disciple-making sessions — all scheduled within the timeframe of washing and drying a load of laundry.

Let us know if you are already serving in this way — or discover an opportunity in your community — so we can learn from your efforts.

### St. Jude works with global partners to help Ukrainian children with cancer

**B**ecause we can all help, we must help. And we are."

That's how Richard Shadyac Jr., CEO of ALSAC, the fundraising and awareness organization for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, explained the effort to move more than 600 Ukrainian children with cancer to safety.

Working with its network of global partners, St. Jude led hun-

dreds of people to help within hours of Russia's attack.

Now those children and their caregivers are receiving treatment in hospitals across Europe.

And four families arrived in Memphis March 21 to be treated at St. Jude, with more expected to arrive by the end of the month.

"In such darkness, we must be a light," Shadyac said. (JDR)

# Your Voice



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

## Responding to the epidemic of online, sports gambling

By Jason Thacker

Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission

In recent years, there has been an explosion of online gambling, especially related to sports.

Whether professional sports like football, soccer and basketball, or collegiate sports including the current NCAA basketball tournaments, many of us are inundated with countless advertisements about making a quick buck or even betting on our team to win it all.

About 30 states, plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, currently allow sports gambling either online or in person, which means more than 30% of the population is able to legally bet on March Madness or other sporting events, across sports.

These deceptive schemes or forms of entertainment can ruin someone's life quickly, particularly those who may be prone to addictions or destructive behavior. They can be devastating and predatory.

But how did this explosion in online sports betting become so widespread, and what is the human toll? And how does the Church begin to navigate these complex ethical issues plaguing our communities?

Gambling has become an epidemic around the world in recent decades. But it is not a new phenomenon or simply related to sports, as this form of entertainment (and addiction) has long been a part of our culture in the U.S. Due to the digital age, the means have become easier in recent years, and gambling addic-

tions can be assumed to be prominent in our communities.

This is true for about 1–3% of our country's population, which brings the total of those dealing with serious gambling addictions to more than 10 million people.

### Large revenue

According to Forbes, gambling accounts for about \$53 billion of revenue in the U.S. alone, with more than \$4 million in sports-related gambling revenue in 2021.

It isn't hard to see the devastating effects of gambling in our communities. Whether it's a neighbor getting \$5 on pump 2 and \$10 worth of scratch-offs or intoxicated casinogoers racking up major tabs with the hopes of striking it big, the house always wins by design.

It's clear that gambling is an extremely attractive venture for many as it can bring in desired tax revenue for local governments and be a lucrative business venture. But if the chances of winning were high enough for most to win, then gambling wouldn't be such a profitable business model.

Online gambling companies, especially those connected to sports, know they will draw a major profit. Business leaders will never willingly put themselves at risk of financial loss even if the public suffers as a result of their business.

Given the ubiquity of sports betting in our digital society, it is likely

that you or someone you know well is gambling or is struggling with addictive behavior. In light of the addictive and predatory nature of gambling, how should the Church respond to this growing epidemic in light of the biblical ethic?

The Christian ethic reminds us of some core truths to apply in conversations about gambling and addiction.

First and foremost, we are each called to live righteous and God-honoring lives, knowing that everything we have is from God Himself (1 Cor. 4:7). Among Christians, it can be tempting to simply give God "His portion" of our income and fail to see that all the rest is a gift from God too.

We are called to wisely steward these gifts as we seek to love God and love our neighbor (Mark 12:29–31). This all comes down to the perennial question of ethics: Just because we can do something, does that mean we should?

### Stewardship question

It may be one thing to participate in a company tournament raffle or to have a friendly wager between friends, but online gambling and app-based sports betting is different and can lead someone to become flippant about their stewardship of God's provisions.

Gambling can lead to a person's sacrificing necessities in the hopes of winning big.

Another angle to gambling not often discussed are the social effects of our sin, greed and pride. Gambling is a predatory practice — exploiting some for the benefit of others. Online gambling is designed to line the pockets of the company rather than to promote the common good rooted in the dignity of all people.

Gambling also leads to other social ills, including the breakdown of families, other highly addictive behaviors, loss of homes and jobs and extreme financial peril.

Gambling, including the meteoric rise of sports betting, often leads to encouraging vice in our society rather than virtuous and wise behaviors.

It is important for the Church to remember that all policies, laws and practices are inherently moral by nature as they encourage or discourage certain behaviors.

As many in our communities are lured in by the delusions of quick cash, massive payouts and a long list of 'what-ifs,' the Church must be ready to care for and love those who are seeking to break these addictions.

Far from being an isolated and simple issue, gambling has unfortunately become a mainstay in our society, especially in this digital age.

*EDITOR'S NOTE — Jason Thacker serves as chair of research in technology ethics and leads the ERLC Research Institute. This article originally appeared at [erlc.com](http://erlc.com) and is edited for space. The Alabama Legislature is currently considering bills that would legalize several forms of gambling, including online and sports betting, in the state.*



THACKER

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“I see the military as my missions field, and I want to make the most of that.”

MICHAEL WENZEL

*University of Mobile senior and recipient of the prestigious national ROTC George C. Marshall Award*

“Leadership begins with listening. People are entrusted to our care, and we must assure them we hear them. ... Listening transforms, and we must develop empathy for others. ... We listen for their losses and longings. Rather than responding with, ‘Yeah, but ...’ we ought to respond with, ‘Tell me more.’ We listen with grace and without judgment,” said **Scott Cormode, Hugh De Pree associate professor of leadership development at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California**, speaking at a seminar hosted by the Center for Congregational Resources of Samford University in Birmingham.

“When we’re talking about evangelism, ... it’s not a hard conversa-

tion. Just do it because it’s who we are,” said **Blake Newsom, director of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary’s Caskey Center for Church Excellence**. “We are people who have embraced the gospel.”

Navigating the current technology and social media landscape as a parent, let alone as a Christian parent, is daunting. On one hand, outright banning all social media activity can unintentionally ostracize your child from his or her peers. On the other hand, there is plenty of evidence to show that social media can easily hurt young people.

In the face of the fear and difficulty that comes with parenting amid such tension, we parents must run to the Scriptures and cling to our God,

who says in Isaiah 41:10, “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

God is with us as we love our children and do all we can to lead them in the ways they should go. We must lean on Him for our strength and our hope.

**Chris Martin, author “Terms of Service: The Real Cost of Social Media”**

“Sometimes when we’re listening and not talking, when we’re asking good questions, what I’ve found is that God will open a door,” said **J.J. Washington, evangelism catalyst with the Georgia Baptist Mission Board**.

## From the *Twitterverse*

### @RobertAtCCC

Good Morning! Press on and stand firm. These days there is much evil cast around us, but LOVE wrote the play!  
#JesusLovesYou #MakeDisciples

### @StephenRummage

Preacher: If your expository sermon doesn’t have a clear main idea expressed in a short simple sentence, then you don’t really know what your sermon is about. If you are unsure, your listeners won’t have a clue. Write that sentence!

### @peterlinkjr

The faithful, prayerful study of the whole Bible and the proclaiming of its message remain the priorities of one who seeks the mind of God.

### @Bellevuepastor

Lots of beaten up, broken, bur-

dened, bewildered lead pastors out there. The past two years have been very difficult. Pray for your pastor and his family.

### @the\_mike\_lee\_

Baptizing a little girl today who said “I just want to tell the whole world about Jesus!” How fantastic!!

### @shane\_pruitt78

One of the most unloving things you can do is stay silent about Jesus.

### @PaulTripp

You will never find yourself in a place where God doesn’t rule.

### @JackieHillPerry

I know why some people don’t believe in God. Because they never thought about who made the earth. If they did, they’d start believing.  
— Eden (my 7-year-old daughter)

### @CatherineRenfro

Ministry is a marathon. On the day to day, you may wonder if what you’re doing matters; but what a joy to see years down the road those you invested in now serving in full-time ministry & living life on mission!

Keep pouring into others. It matters #JesusChangesEverything

### @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.

### @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.

## Use your gifts mix for His glory

Often in the church and in other organizations we recruit to fill an empty slot with any warm body, the first warm body to say yes. That is all we are looking for. Slot filled — we move on.

This can be detrimental to the individual recruited and is almost always detrimental to the church or organization.

Every person has natural abilities and special giftings that when put to use in the proper settings will produce quality results and effective production of effort.

Believers in Christ receive what are known as spiritual gifts. Before you were born, God knitted you together so your spiritual gifts, natural abilities and giftings all work together with your personality to accomplish great things.

Along with these, God also gives each person a passion. Your passion will always compliment your other gifting attributes. Your God-given passion will always point to the areas in which you are gifted.

As a born-again believer your gift mix is not about you, but about the Savior you represent. Every person’s gift mix is to be used to shine the light on the Creator of the universe.

When properly utilized the way God knit you together in your mother’s womb, your gifting will draw people to understand who God is and to be drawn to Him.

Have you made the connection between your personality, spiritual gifts and your natural God-given abilities?

Have you attempted to connect them to your passions?

What is your next step in discovering how God expects you to use your special gift mix for His glory?

**George Yates**  
Church health strategist  
Alabama Baptist State  
Board of Missions

# 3 stories you should know



Photo courtesy of Anaheim/Orange County Visitor & Convention Bureau

The 2022 Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting will be held June 14–15 at the Anaheim (California) Convention Center. This year's theme is "Jesus: The Center of It All." The program is designed around three focus areas: church planting, racial reconciliation and pro-life advocacy. Several nominations for convention officers have been announced and more are expected. Find more details about candidates and events at [tabonline.org/sbc-22](http://tabonline.org/sbc-22). (TAB)

## *Voters afraid to share opinions, survey finds*

A new poll finds nearly one-third of Americans fear sharing their personal beliefs and opinions publicly will negatively affect their professional and personal lives.

In the survey of 1,000 likely voters, 31% said they are "very" or "somewhat" concerned that sharing their beliefs could cost them their jobs; 42% fear sharing their opinions on cultural or political issues will result in backlash from family, friends or coworkers.

A majority (79%) agreed people who adhere to biblical values have the right to express their religious beliefs publicly. Only 13% said "canceling" someone for their opinions or beliefs is helpful to American society.

McLaughlin and Associates in partnership with Summit Ministries conducted the survey. (TAB)

## *West Virginia restricts genetic-based abortion*

West Virginia is the latest state to ban abortions because of a prenatal diagnosis of a disability or a chromosomal condition, such as Down syndrome.

West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice signed the bill on World Down Syndrome Day, March 21.

The law does make exceptions for medical emergencies and states "a licensed medical professional may not perform or attempt to perform or induce an abortion unless the patient acknowledges that the abortion is not being sought because of a disability."

Several states have passed similar bills. Last month, a Tennessee law banning abortions based on a Down syndrome diagnosis was reinstated by a federal appeals court, reversing a previous ruling that blocked the measure. (TAB)

## Persecuted **church**

### *Belgium court's euthanasia ruling threatens religious objection*

BRUSSELS, Belgium — The Belgian Constitutional Court's Feb. 17 ruling on expansion of the country's euthanasia law threatens religious objection and the right to life, according to an international legal advocacy group.

Alliance Defending Freedom International said the amendments mandate that health care institutions offer euthanasia and prevent "religious ethos" or "general policy" from being used as reasons for not providing euthanasia.

Medical professionals who object to euthanasia are required to direct patients to a euthanasia provider, ADF International reported.

Jean-Paul Van De Walle, counsel for ADF International in Brussels, said the amendments "threaten the right to freedom of conscience for

those in the medical profession" and take away the patients' right to be in "an environment where they can be sure no euthanasia will be practiced."

### *Activist detained for raising awareness of 'chained' woman*

ZAOZHUANG, China — Officers in China threatened and held in residential surveillance a Christian human rights activist for drawing attention to the plight of a "chained woman."

On March 8, the woman, Li Yu, made a video of herself wearing a chain about her neck and a face mask bearing the image of a chained woman. She was surveilled 10 days and national security officers in Zaozhuang told her to stay home three months, according to human rights organization China Aid.

Her friends reported they lost contact with her

during the surveillance, China Aid reported.

According to various news sources, the "chained woman" for whom Li Yu was raising awareness was found shackled in a shed in Xu-zhou. Information indicates the shackled woman had been trafficked for years and had given birth to eight children as a result.

An investigation into the shackled woman's case resulted in the arrests of five people and punishment of more than 17 Chinese Communist Party officials.

China is No. 17 on Open Doors' 2022 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian.



Photo courtesy of Li Yu/ChinaAid

# Alabama news

## OBITUARIES

► **Erma Friese**, who served as an administrative assistant in the office of Cooperative Program/stewardship development for the State Board of Missions from May 1990 until June 2000, died March 8. She was 86.

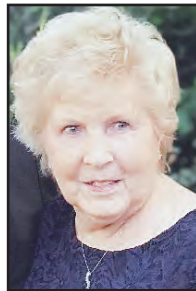
Friese was a longtime member of Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery, and worked as a church secretary at Highland Avenue Baptist Church, Montgomery, before coming to the SBOM.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Chuck, and grandson Zachary Middleton. She is survived by two children; five grandchildren; and one great-granddaughter.

► **James Deaun “Jody” Marston**, 55, died March 20.

He worked in the construction industry and was a member of and assistant pastor for Chavies Baptist Church, Fort Payne.

He is survived by his wife, Emily; three children; and eight grandchildren.



FRIESE



MARSTON

## ALABAMA-CRENSHAW ASSOCIATION

► **Jack Anderson**, associational missionary for Alabama-Crenshaw, celebrated 50 years of ministry at a March 20 reception hosted by Luverne First Baptist Church. Raised in Selma, he received a bachelor's degree from the University of Mobile (then Mobile College) and a master's in religious education from New Orleans Seminary. Anderson previously was a representative for Lifeway Eastlake Store in Montgomery for 10 years, starting as a clerk and becoming one of the assistant store managers.

Previous to that, he served in the accounting office of Colonial Bank, Montgomery, for 10 years. He was interim pastor of Bradleyton Baptist Church, Grady, for three and a half years and then as bivocational pastor, before resigning his position at the church and also at Lifeway to become the full-time associational missionary for the association in 2017. His ministry has included serving churches as minister of music and youth and education in Mississippi and Alabama. Churches in Alabama include: Bell Road Baptist Church, Montgomery (which merged with Morning View Baptist Church); Southside Baptist, Montgomery, for more than 22 years; Gateway Baptist Church,



ANDERSON

Montgomery; West End Baptist Church, Selma; Pine Hill Baptist; and Sister Springs Baptist Church, Selma. “I remember while serving as music and youth minister at Sister Springs, I had to take off to go to my high school graduation,” Anderson said.

“He [God] takes mud clay and makes teacups out of it,” said Anderson, referring to how God has molded and shaped his own life in ministry.

Clay Crum, pastor of Luverne FBC, said, “He is very diligent to stay connected with the pastors and the churches. He is a perfect fit for our association. He has a heart for serving others. He is very humble, but very knowledgeable in so many areas of ministry.”

## AUTAUGA ASSOCIATION

► **Matt Hall** is the new pastor of **Boones Chapel Baptist Church, Prattville**. He has been serving Alabama churches for 20 years as a student pastor, associate pastor and administrative pastor.

He has an associate's degree from Troy State University and a bachelor's degree from New Orleans Seminary. He and his



HALL

wife, Leslie, have twin daughters.

## BETHEL ASSOCIATION

► **Nanafalia Baptist Church** plans its homecoming celebration April 10 at 11 a.m. The speaker will be Bo Brantley, pastor at Nicholasville Baptist Church, Sweet Water. An offering will go toward the church's cemetery fund. Lunch will follow the service. Tommy Campbell is pastor.

## COFFEE CO. ASSOCIATION

► **Bethany Baptist Church, New Brockton**, will host Resurrection Celebration & BBQ April 9 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. There will be games, live music and free barbecue plates. Greg Cotter is pastor.

## ST. CLAIR ASSOCIATION

► **St. Clair Association** is hosting Holy Week Services, “Worshiping the Risen Christ!” April 11–15 at Cook Springs Baptist Church, Pell City, 7 p.m. Speakers, beginning with Monday, include Danny Courson, associational mission strategist, St. Clair Association; Patrick Horne, Mount Pleasant; Pat Giles, Macedonia No. 1; Thuran Henninger, Mount Olive; and Joe Karr, Cook Springs. Child care is not provided.

## TUSCALOOSA CO. ASSOCIATION

► **Circlewood Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa**, will host its revival April 3–6 at 6 each night. The featured evangelist is Jeff Crook. Herb Thomas is pastor.

## WEST CENTRAL ASSOCIATION

► **Orrville Baptist Church** recognized **Andy Brunson** (left) for 47 years of volunteer music ministry to the church. The sermon, “Serving God in Your Generation,” was delivered by Pastor Michael Liles (right) based on Acts 13:36. A video celebrated some of Brunson's milestones over the years and included a personal video recorded message from a former pastor and longtime friend Robert Pemberton, who served with Brunson for nearly



Photo courtesy of Wendy Yeager

a decade at Orrville in the late 1970s and 1980s.

Liles presented Brunson with a plaque and gift card, and pianist Lallie Pruitt gifted him a new music stand. Brunson,

who studied business at the University of Montevallo, is married to Annette and has three children; four grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren. He credits a youth minister, James Castlen, at his church with getting him started leading music. As a teenager, Brunson was asked to lead songs while Castlen was away. He was first music director for New Hope Baptist, Orrville, which was a product of a church split from Orrville Baptist. Those churches later reunited, and Brunson continued to lead music. Over the years, Brunson has worked in the auto parts industry as well as in cattle farming. At age 71, he plans to continue to serve until the Lord tells him to stop.

“God called me to something that I could do, and I intend to do that to the best of my ability,” said Brunson, who shared his favorite song is “In Christ Alone” by Keith and Kristyn Getty.

Liles shared his appreciation of Brunson: “He serves not only as music and choir director but as a deacon, and his love for the church is unquestioned. Andy demonstrates a faith that doesn't just give the Lord his leftovers or what is considered ‘convenient,’ but gives all of himself for the One who gave all of Himself for our salvation.”

## OTHER

► **Samford University** will host Charles Martin, author of “What If It's True? A Storyteller's Journey with Jesus,” April 5 at 7 p.m. His appearance at Brock Recital Hall is part of the Tom and Marla Corts Distinguished Author Series hosted by the Orlean Beeson School of Education. Tickets are available at tickets.samford.edu or 205-726-2853.



MARTIN

# Headline news

## from around the Southeast

### ARKANSAS

First Southern Baptist Church in Bryant recently partnered with the missions team from the Arkansas Baptist State Convention to host their first medical/dental clinic of the year.

The ABSC missions team assisted the church by providing equipment needed for the event. The March 5 clinic was staffed and planned by FBC Bryant, while the church provided volunteer medical and dental staff, as well as church members who were able to share the gospel with those in attendance.



Photo courtesy of Arkansas Baptist News

The clinicians saw 128 patients, extracted 106 teeth and performed 43 cleanings. Three salvations were recorded.

### FLORIDA

Aware of the difficult, lonely and emotionally challenging times pastors face as they juggle ministry and their own well-being, a team of pastors in Walton County are taking steps to encourage and strengthen their brothers in ministry, reported The Florida Baptist Witness.

The Walton County Baptist Association's Minister Encouragement Team was created with three local pastors committing to pray for other pastors and uplift them through relationships.

"This gives us close relationships to share our concerns and burdens. I find myself encouraged as I strive to encourage one another. It is an iron-sharpening-iron relationship," team member Randy Nelson, pastor of Westside Baptist Church in DeFuniak Springs, said.

The West Florida pastors call, send text messages and invite pastors out to eat with the goal of being a blessing to their fellow pastors.



Photo courtesy of Florida Baptist Witness

In addition to pastors reaching out to pastors, other goals include making sure each pastor has a friend who holds him accountable and that church members participate as encouragers

and help meet needs within the church. Nelson also invited his church members to support other pastors in the association by sending cards

to let them know someone is praying for them. (Baptist Witness)

### GEORGIA

Becoming a revivalist while he was studying at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1996, Scott Smith has ministered across the country for 26 years. It's something he still enjoys, though it's transitioned to a part-time ministry.



Photo courtesy of Scott Smith

Now the communications director for the Georgia Baptist Mission Board, Smith continues to tell others about finding an identity in Christ.

He also shares the gospel message through his podcast, "The Sermonators," with Joel Southerland, lead pastor of Peavine Baptist Church in Rock Spring. Southerland said he and Smith share a passion for using "business tools" for the church.

"Marketing and evangelism are both trying to get a message out," Southerland noted. "If we can leverage the tools of marketing for the church, it helps us get the message of the gospel out." (The Baptist Paper)

### KENTUCKY

Richard Greene, director of the Freeda Harris Baptist Center, gave 1,432 kids in Pike County backpacks sent from the Georgia Baptist Convention, along with extra Christmas backpacks donated by churches in the Pike Association of Southern Baptists, reported Kentucky Today.



Photo courtesy of Kentucky Today

Greene also delivered about 250 backpacks to Princeton to help those impacted by the Dec. 10 tornado devastation in western Kentucky. The backpacks included a Bible, a printed copy of the Christmas story, new clothing items, hygiene products, socks, underwear, toys and nonperishable foods.

"We had some leftover backpacks as well, so we ended up having about 600 to distribute," Harrell Riley, executive director of HR Ministries and a KMSC missionary, said.

"We took them to First Baptist Church in Dawson Springs, where we had a partnership

with a team that did a recovery meeting for those in the community impacted by the tornado."

Seven people made professions of faith at that distribution. (Kentucky Today)

### LOUISIANA

Last year Riverside Baptist Church in Vidalia — which averages 70 for Sunday worship service — witnessed 10 people profess Jesus as Lord. Six of those already have been baptized, reported the Louisiana Baptist Message.

In early 2020, the congregation moved Sunday assembly from the 1,680-square-foot worship center to the 4,000-square-foot family life center. Since then, members have recreated the space for worship services and Sunday School.

"When we open this up, we are praying and believing that God will send even more folks our way who need to hear about the Good News they have through

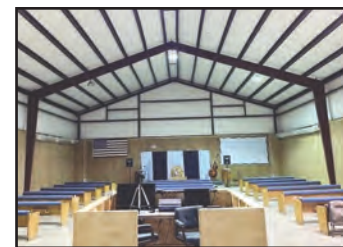


Photo courtesy of Baptist Message

His Son," Willie Gillespie, a member of the building committee, said. (Louisiana Baptist Message)

### TENNESSEE

The Tennessee Baptist Mission Board hosted a "Blue Oval City Coalition" on Feb. 22 at Brownsville Baptist Church to discuss church planting and church revitalization necessary to meet the massive population increase in West Tennessee due to the Ford Motor Company automobile plant, reported Tennessee Baptist and Reflector.

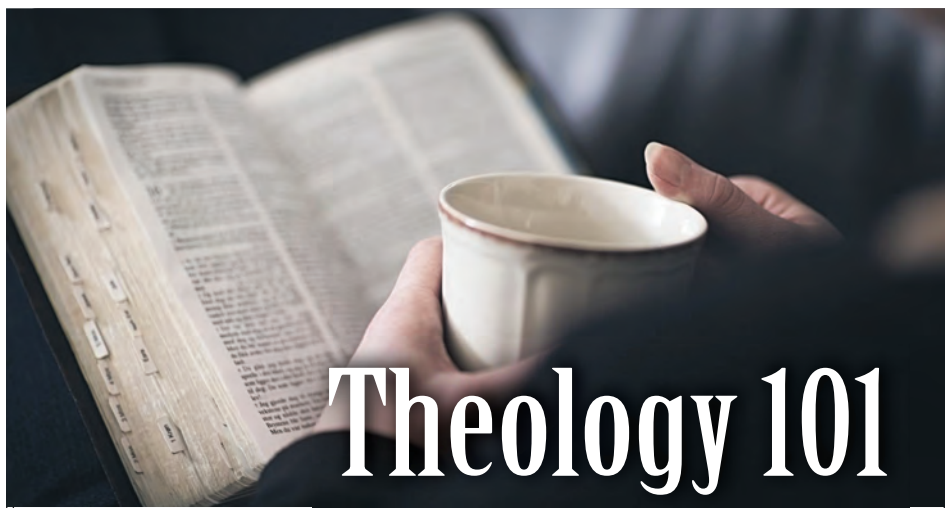
"Teach your churches to pray for people before they move into the community. Prepare for a harvest," Kevin Minchey, TBMB church revitalization specialist, said.

In September 2021, Ford Motor Company announced plans to construct Blue Oval City, a \$5.6 billion project to produce electric trucks and electric batteries, creating thousands of jobs in Stanton.

It will be the largest automobile manufacturing plant in the nation, according to projections. (Tennessee Baptist and Reflector)



Photo courtesy of Baptist and Reflector



# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## The People of God

# A Royal Priesthood

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.  
The Alabama Baptist

In 1 Corinthians 3:16 and Ephesians 2:21, the Church is termed a temple. The imagery of God's people as a holy temple in the Lord is closely associated with the image of the Church as a holy and royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5, 9).

This week our thoughts make the small step from temple to priesthood. The images compel us to think of believers in a collective sense. The idea of a priesthood implies a company of priests.

From its roots in the Old Testament we might ask ourselves, "What were the basic functions of that priesthood?" We might say the priests represented the people before God.

The most obvious way they did this was to offer to God the sacrifices the people brought to the altar. Symbolically, this representation was seen in the breastplate worn by the high priest when he entered God's presence. That breastplate had precious stones that represented the tribes of Israel (Ex. 39:14).

Applying the priesthood imagery to church members, we might say that as a holy and royal priesthood we offer spiritual sacrifices to God. First Peter 2:5 puts it like this, "You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

The Bible doesn't leave us wondering what spiritual sacri-

fices are. They include the offering of our bodies in dedication to God (Rom. 12:1), the sacrifice of praise (Heb. 13:15), the sacrifice of doing good to others and sharing material gifts (Phil. 4:18; Heb. 13:16) and the sacrifice of brokenness and contrition when we sin (Ps. 51:17).

## Worship

First Peter 2:9 goes on to explain the priestly function to include proclaiming "the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." In this instance, the priestly assignment is couched in the language of witness and proclamation.

Thus, we have two very basic ideas connected with the church as a priesthood: worship and proclamation. When we fix our gaze inward as a church, we exist to worship God. When we turn our gaze outward to the world, we exist as a priesthood to proclaim God's truth to others. A healthy priesthood engages in both tasks simultaneously.

At the core of this priesthood we worship by offering up spiritual sacrifices to God, and we witness by proclaiming the excellencies of God.

*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.*



# Deaf Baptists hold annual fellowship at Shocco

The Alabama Baptist Conference of the Deaf met at Shocco Springs Conference Center in Talladega March 11–12 for preaching, fellowship and business.

Guest speaker Nathan Hill, pastor of Agape Deaf Baptist Church in Stone Mountain, Georgia, led the gatherings for adults, focusing on building a relationship with God. Hill compared it with a garden that allows for a place of intimate communication. When God made Adam, He put him in the Garden of Eden so he would have a quiet place to worship with undivided attention.

Hill told the group about Wang Mingdao, a pastor in China who was imprisoned at age 60 for 23 years. He transformed his cell into a garden, Hill related, though not a literal one — Mingdao had no possessions or contact with others, and spent all day every day in communion with God in that garden.

## 'Go at a walking pace'

After he was released, a journalist interviewed Mingdao, who asked the reporter, "Young man, how do you walk with God?"

He quickly mentioned spiritual disciplines like Bible study and prayer. But Mingdao told him all his answers were wrong, saying, "To walk with God you must go at a walking pace!"

Hill said most people today are too busy, believing in "microwave

Christianity" when they need to be "in the slow cooker."

While the adults were meeting, teens (both hearing and deaf) were having fun, fellowship and teaching. Guest speaker Nathan Burleson, a deacon at Deaf Fellowship Church in Little Rock, Arkansas, shared about situations that cause division today.

Most agreed social media generates a lot of the difficulty.

## Planning for future

During a business session, a motion proposed by Steve Dye, Deaf ministry catalyst for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, suggested that instead of having traditional officers, the leadership model ABCD has used to this point, they switch to a board style. He said he has seen it work in other states and feels it would relieve the pressure of trying to find officers. The motion passed.

Current officers include Jeff Farmer, president, member of Eden Westside Deaf Ministry in Pell City; Mark Moore, vice president, member of Eden Westside; Paul Pitts, treasurer, member of Birmingham Community Deaf Church; and Jin Mayer, secretary, member of Dauphin Way Baptist Church in Mobile.

The positions of assistant secretary and webmaster have not been filled.

Visit [albcdeaf.org](http://albcdeaf.org) or email [albcdeaf@gmail.com](mailto:albcdeaf@gmail.com). (Tracy Riggs)



**Nathan Hill, pastor of Agape Deaf Baptist Church in Stone Mountain, Georgia, shares during the 2022 Alabama Baptist Conference of the Deaf.**

# Baking to help

## Girls make cookies, breads to raise money for Ukrainian crisis

(continued from page 1)

“They have learned to love my Ukrainian friends as well,” Boswell said.

So when they heard their Ukrainian friends were hurting, Claire and Lily wanted to do something. They’d been saving their money since they had visited a cat café in North Carolina, where the family now lives, because they wanted to start one of their own one day. They’d begun a baking business, selling cookies and pastries to make money to fund their café dream.

### Emptied savings

But one night Boswell walked into the dining room and found two envelopes lying on the table — one yellow, one blue — in the shape of the Ukrainian flag. Her older daughters had given their savings.

“They had emptied their piggy banks into these envelopes to send to my friends who were trying to get west,” Boswell said. “They also said, ‘Can we open our baking business again to raise money for Ukraine?’

“And they were just so



Photo courtesy of Erin Boswell

Since Erin Boswell’s first trip to Ukraine, God has nurtured her love for the country and its people. She and her daughters celebrate the country’s independence day every year.

earnest about it, so I put on Instagram that they were doing that and said if you’d like to combine forces with us to help some friends we know in real life, Claire will make you cookies or banana bread.”

By the end of the day, Boswell had about \$1,000 worth of gifts in her Venmo account. After a few days, they’d gotten up to \$1,500. And now, a few weeks later, donations are still coming in and have passed the \$3,500 mark.

“We’re doing our best to take in money and send it to people who have real needs,” she said.

Boswell noted all of her friends who have had to leave did so in a hurry. For those who are traveling, the money can help buy food

and other necessities. For those who have stayed behind, the funds can provide hot meals and also help people they’ve taken in who are refugees from other parts of Ukraine.

### Separating families

It’s tough for everyone, Boswell said. Since men between 18 and 60 have had to stay in Ukraine to fight, the wives and children who have fled are worried about their husbands, as well as older parents and grandparents who refused

to leave their homes.

“One of the biggest things I find myself praying for is that [those who fled] would meet with kindness and the love of Jesus in their new places,” Boswell said, “that they would find people willing to take them in and care for them after a traumatic journey across their homeland and that the Lord would protect those they had to leave behind.”

She also prays regularly with her husband and daughters that truth would be made known and that God would protect the innocent.

### ‘Praying for healing’

“We are praying for healing for the hurt and devastation that’s happening,” she said.

Boswell said her friends who are believers can see God’s hand in the middle of the heartbreak.

“I have a friend who has made her way with her family to western Ukraine and she has been journaling her thoughts and the way she’s seeing the Lord at work,” Boswell said. “It’s amazing to see how she’s finding the Lord’s hand at work, and the beautiful things she’s finding in the midst of all the darkness and fear, and how she’s watching the church step up and serve.”

Boswell asked prayer for “the believers in Ukraine to be able to stand firm in their faith in these hard times.”

**“We are praying for healing for the hurt and devastation that’s happening.”**

**Erin Boswell**  
former Journeyman to Ukraine

## War’s impact on hunger

The war in Ukraine will affect global food prices and distribution at a time when hunger was already on the rise, according to Eugene Cho, president and CEO of Bread for the World, a Christian advocacy group whose mission is to help end world hunger.

Bread for the World has been advocating for emergency aid for Ukraine.

“We should be rightly concerned about the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, and we should be advocating for Ukraine,” Cho said. “Russia and Ukraine are responsible for 29% of global wheat exports — 19% from Russia, 10% from Ukraine.

“You can just connect the dots and see how wheat prices are going to increase dramatically, which means food prices are going to increase dramatically. And we’re talking not just about food and wheat, but you’re also talking about fertilizer and fuel — which both Russia and Ukraine produce.

“Both of those things are really critical to the global food system.

“There is a sense of helplessness. But we’re not a hopeless people.

“We have got to come together and ... keep doing what we feel like we can do even within our limitations.

“I truly believe that as Scripture tells us in the Book of Hebrews, we can cling to [our] unwavering hope, despite some of the challenges we see in our world.” (RNS)



Photo courtesy of Erin Boswell

A sign on the front door advertises the girls’ baking business to raise money for Ukraine.



Photo courtesy of CrossPoint Church

CrossPoint Church Pastor Ryan Whitley (right) is joined on stage by executive pastor Steve Parr (left) and ministry leader Deidre Purnell (center) as they announce the church's gifts to four causes, including Ukrainian relief efforts.

# 'Manna Stream'

## CrossPoint's decade-long 'generosity initiative' provides God-driven, 'breathtaking' moves

By **Hamilton Richardson**  
The Alabama Baptist

God's blessings often appear in surprising ways, and that has happened over and over at CrossPoint Church in Trussville, manifesting through the church's River of Stewardship initiative.

CrossPoint was planted in 2005 by First Baptist Church Center Point, and Ryan Whitley, senior pastor, is grateful for the way God has led the congregation.

He noted CrossPoint has experienced many blessings in its 17 years, some of the most recent revolving around three "funding streams" in their River of Stewardship campaign that specifically affected the mortgage.

### Beginnings and impact

Steve Parr, CrossPoint executive pastor, explained the beginnings and impact of the River of Stewardship.

"In 2012, following a series of capital campaigns and capital campaign extensions, our stewardship team was looking for a way for us to pay off the mortgage as quickly as possible," Parr recalled.

Since the congregation did not want another capital campaign, they sought counsel and began a new initiative.

"We gave [it] the name, 'It's Your Move,'" he said.

"We have conducted this 'generosity initiative' each fall since then, focusing on various aspects of

stewardship and generosity. It has been a blessing and a rallying point for our church family."

### Fed by 'streams'

Parr noted that, as a result, the church has grown in what he calls "streams" that feed the River of Stewardship, including ministry (church budget), mortgage (every dollar reduced the mortgage) and missions (directed to SBC missions and CrossPoint missions projects).

"Since our mortgage payment was in our ministry stream budget we were able to pay additional principal payments each month, and in the last few years were reducing our mortgage by almost \$500,000 per year," Parr said. "Now that the mortgage is gone, our ministry stream budget has changed dramatically and we were able to land the mortgage stream and launch a new [one] called the manna stream."

Whitley agreed that CrossPoint is a generous congregation.

"Our people have always been generous," he said. "However, much of our generosity through the years has been funneled towards reducing our mortgage. That's not to say we have not been generous in other ways. We are consistently in the top 10

churches in Alabama that give to Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong [missions offerings]. We have been generous in numerous other ways.

"Yet the mortgage continued to limit us," he said. "We knew we needed to become debt free in or-

der to do more for the kingdom of God."

The manna stream, which has already had a major impact, gets its name from Scripture, Whitley noted.

"We call it the manna stream to illustrate its purpose. The biblical word 'manna' means 'what is it?'" he explained. "Manna was given by the Lord for His people to meet their needs. Thus, we created the manna stream to enable us to discover [what it is] the Lord wants us to do to meet the needs of others. In less than three months we have seen [Him] do some breathtaking things with the manna stream."

Whitley said on March 13 the church disbursed \$10,000 each to four ministries involved in providing relief for Ukrainian refugees: Ukrainian Baptist Theological Seminary, the North American Mission Board's Send Relief, Samaritan's Purse and Teleios Ministries in Romania.

### Other blessings

Other ways CrossPoint has been a blessing are a \$12,000 gift to City View Church in Atlanta, \$5,000 to Clay-Chalkville Middle School for a library renovation, \$7,500 to the Discovery Bible Club at Clay Elementary School, \$5,000 to the Deaf Pastors Conference, \$10,000 to Alabama Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries, and \$12,000 to the WellHouse ministry.

Whitley said it's important for CrossPoint to share with others what God has done through the manna stream.

"Our purpose for going public about this is three-fold," he explained. "First and foremost, we want to use the manna stream to glorify the Lord. We want others to know God did this. We did not do this, God did this."

### 'Just one more'

"Second, we want to use the manna stream, in addition to our other giving streams, to reach 'just one more' to become a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ. That is our singular vision and purpose.

"Finally, we want to use the manna stream to grow in our stewardship, not only in the current generation of CrossPointers, but

for future generations. After looking at where we have been, and what the Lord has done in the last three months, we believe we are well on the way to accomplishing these objectives."

Parr said he has "learned that God is faithful and that He blesses us when we are faithful to Him. I am thankful that I have been able to participate and experience God's provision in miraculous ways in the CrossPoint family.

"I look forward to what He is going to do this year, and in the years to come."

*"We knew we needed to become debt free in order to do more for the kingdom of God."*

**Ryan Whitley**  
senior pastor  
CrossPoint Church

For more information about CrossPoint Church and its ministries visit [crosspointchurch.info](http://crosspointchurch.info).



Unsplash.com

Limit social media until your church can handle communication to its members well. Only add to it when you have a plan and personnel in place to manage an online presence.

## 7 effective strategies for communication

By Mark MacDonald  
The Alabama Baptist

The habits of highly effective church communicators are regularly practiced in churches so they become routine.

And you'll always need to hone your communication skills.

People are listening less and less. The digital age is changing the way information is received. Habits of highly effective church communicators must take into consideration the increased noise level of communication and reduced attention spans.

Here are seven habits of highly effective church communicators to help solve this issue:

**1. Focus on them, not you.** Pay attention and listen to your audience, focusing on solutions from their vantage point rather than a description of what you have to offer them.

**2. Watch trends and adjust.** Use your ChMS (Church Management System) and demographic data to identify how internal and external audiences are changing.

Adjust methods, timing and ministries.

**3. Provide benefits.** To truly love an audience (like Jesus commanded) you need to identify needs, con-

cerns and goals, then provide solutions.

Control language so they understand and receive solutions as benefits.

**4. Control keywords.** If you tell people too many things, you risk them not remembering anything. Instead, limit messaging to sought-after keywords so more will connect.

**5. Use the right channels.** There are many communication channels and tools available, many of which are free.

**6. Calm messaging.** Don't add to perceived communication noise.

**7. Use video.** Research demonstrates most people prefer stories and information delivered in video form. Keep it short.

**EDITOR'S NOTE —** Mark MacDonald is communication pastor, speaker, consultant, bestselling author, church branding strategist for BeKnownforSomething.com and executive director of the Center for Church Communication, empowering 10,000+ 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.

## TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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

### CHURCH POSITIONS

#### SENIOR PASTOR

Shiloh Baptist Church, Hartford, Ala., is searching for a full-time pastor. Please mail resumés to: Shiloh Baptist Church, P.O. Box 326, Hartford, AL 36344 or by email to: SBCHSearch@gmail.com.

#### PASTOR

First Baptist Church of Floral, Ala., is seeking a full-time pastor. Send resumés to: 23593 Fifth Avenue, Floral, AL 36442 or email resumés to: fbfloralapsc@yahoo.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.

#### PASTOR

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

#### MISSIONS/DISCIPLESIP 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 Woodstock, Ala., is seeking a full-time or part-time candidate to lead our worship ministry. Please submit resumés to: office@fbcwoodstock.org.

#### 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.

#### PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER

First Baptist Church of Wood-

stock, Ala., is seeking a part-time candidate to lead our youth ministry. Please submit resumés to: office@fbcwoodstock.org.

#### 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.

#### 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 resumés 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.

### SIGNS

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### 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.

### PODCAST

#### STORIES SEASON 5: MISSIONS WIDOWS

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.

### MINISTRIES

#### TAB DIGITAL

In addition to the print edition, The Alabama Baptist also releases a weekly digital edition of the newspaper to every subscribers' email. The digital edition comes in pdf form as well as part of an app and is included with all subscriptions. To update your email address, contact subscribe@thealabamabaptist.org.

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



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FAITHFUL

April 4-5, 2022

Glynwood Baptist Church, Prattville

The Alabama Discipleship conference is more like an experience than a conference. This event will expose you to the principles of disciple-making through the conference content and structure.

This conference is an in-person event and provides you the opportunity to personally interact with conference leadership and learn from them first-hand!

## Featured Presenters:



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 Author, *Bold Moves*  
 Pastor, First Baptist Colleyville  
 President & Founder, DiscipleFirst  
 Colleyville, Texas



**KEN ADAMS**  
 Lead Pastor, Crossroads Church, Newnan, Ga.  
 Founder & Director of Impact Disciples



**MARK GAINEY**  
 State Missionary  
 Author, *4 Invitations*  
 Lead Pastor, Fultondale First Baptist

For a complete schedule and to register, visit [aldiscipleshipconference.com](http://aldiscipleshipconference.com)

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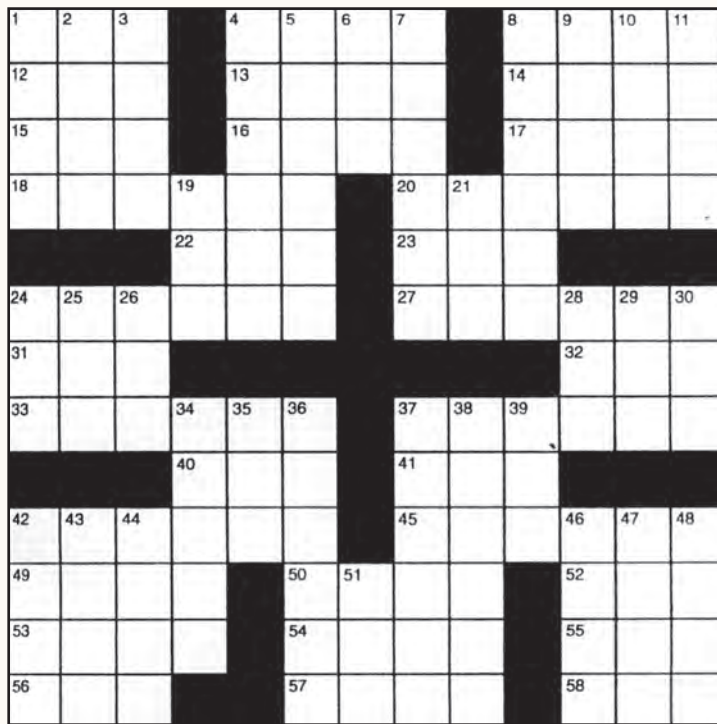
Alabama Baptist  
**CHILDREN'S HOMES**  
& Family Ministries

# CHRISTIAN CROSSWORD

**ACROSS**

1. Dance step.
4. David took an \_\_\_\_, and played with his hand. (1 Sam. 16:23)
8. The reeds and \_\_\_\_s shall wither. (Isa. 19:6)
12. Indian tribe.
13. Unusual person or thing.
14. Recently deceased.
15. The liberal soul shall be made \_\_\_\_\_. (Prov. 11:25)
16. Insect parts.
17. The day cometh that shall burn as an \_\_\_\_\_. (Mal. 4:1)
18. The worlds were \_\_\_\_ by the word of God. (Heb. 11:3)
20. Yet the \_\_\_\_ man is renewed day by day. (2 Cor. 4:16)
22. Compass direction.
23. For we shall \_\_\_\_ Him as He is. (1 John 3:2)
24. To them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Cor. 1:2)
27. He which converteth the sinner from the \_\_\_\_ of his way. (James 5:20; plural)

31. Flawed merchandise. (abbr.)
32. Residence. (abbr.)
33. Thou art \_\_\_\_, O Lord. (Ps. 119:151; comparative)
37. I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath \_\_\_\_d me. (1 Tim. 1:12)
40. Anger.
41. That the light shall \_\_\_\_ be clear. (Zech. 14:6)
42. And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of \_\_\_\_\_. (Zech. 14:4)
45. \_\_\_\_ not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath. (Rom. 12:19)
49. Fetch olive branches and \_\_\_\_ branches. (Neh. 8:15)



By Janet W. Adkins Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

50. River flowing to the North Sea.
52. Math branch. (abbr.)
53. Arabian prince.
54. \_\_\_\_ and void.
55. May. (French)
56. Nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the \_\_\_\_\_. (Luke 5:5)
57. Very. (French)
58. Belonging to the talking horse.

**DOWN**

1. Knowledge \_\_\_\_eth up. (1 Cor. 8:1)
2. \_\_\_\_oth and Dibon. (Num. 32:3)
3. Bristles.
4. Provide things \_\_\_\_ in the sight of all men. (Rom. 12:17)
5. Positively charged electrodes.
6. Quit work at 65. (abbr.)
7. I shall yet \_\_\_\_ Him for the help of His countenance. (Ps. 42:5)
8. All the goodness thereof is as the \_\_\_\_ of the field. (Isa. 40:6)
9. Volcano output.
10. The children of \_\_\_\_ of Hezekiah. (Neh. 7:21)
11. Masculine/feminine class. (abbr.)
19. \_\_\_\_ of high degree are a lie. (Ps. 62:9)

21. The captain of his host was Abner, the son of \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Sam. 14:50)
24. Be ye angry and \_\_\_\_ not. (Eph. 4:26)
25. Blessed \_\_\_\_ the merciful. (Matt. 5:7)
26. \_\_\_\_the lthrite. (1 Chron. 11:40)
28. Sphere.
29. Kin. (abbr.)
30. Compass direction.
34. I will extend peace to her like a \_\_\_\_\_. (Isa. 66:12)
35. Before.
36. To feel bitter.
37. I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath \_\_\_\_d me. (1 Tim. 1:12)
38. Long prose narratives.
39. Did eat.
42. His ears are \_\_\_\_ unto their cry. (Ps. 34:15)
43. And the people shall be as the burnings of \_\_\_\_\_. (Isa. 33:12)
44. First letter of a name. (abbr.)
46. Call his \_\_\_\_ Jezreel. (Hos. 1:4)
47. Let us be \_\_\_\_ and rejoice. (Rev. 19:7)
48. Protection.
51. Persian tribe member.

## West Cullman churches excited about future

By Tracy Riggs  
The Alabama Baptist

Justin Olvey has only been director of missions for West Cullman Baptist Association for a few months, but they've been eventful ones.

He accepted the position in August and moved Thanksgiving weekend. A month later, churches in the association worked together with East Cullman Baptist Association churches to respond to immediate needs created by destructive tornadoes in Kentucky.

"I think the churches are excited about the future," he said.

"The resources are here. There are good churches. We're poised to see some great local association work here in Cullman."

### Called to ministry

Called to ministry as an 18-year-old college student, Olvey first served as a youth minister at East McFarland Baptist Church in Tuscaloosa.

After graduating college with a business degree, his pastor, Doug Reeves, took Olvey aside and said the church wanted to pay for him to start seminary.

Beginning at the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary Birmingham extension, Olvey eventually moved to New Orleans to finish his degree on campus. His last pastorate was in Silas, where he served for nearly 12 years.

Two years ago Olvey felt it might be time to transition into another ministry.



OLVEY

"Although I didn't have any sense of a direction where I should go, I had a sense of release and a peace about seeing where the Lord was leading," Olvey

said. "I never had a sense of calling away from Spring Bank [Baptist Church] or to anywhere else to go pastor. I love them, and [thought] why not stay where I am? I never saw being a small- or medium-sized church as being less than a pastor of a big church."

Terry Long, DOM for Choctaw Baptist Association in Butler, recommended him for the open DOM position at West Cullman.

After prayer, Olvey sent his resumé, and in the end the search committee felt he was the correct candidate.

Olvey plans to continue the partnership with East Cullman.



Photo by Tracy Riggs/The Alabama Baptist

Volunteers sort, pack and load supplies donated for Kentucky disaster relief work. Churches from West Cullman and East Cullman Baptist associations helped with the effort.



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### APRIL 2022

- 1 **Disaster Relief Cleanup and Recovery Training**, Alabama Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Ana Raymundo, ext. 2356
- 1-2 **Disaster Relief Chainsaw Training**, Alabama Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Ana Raymundo, ext. 2356
- 2 **Disaster Relief Temporary Child Care Training**, Alabama Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Ana Raymundo, ext. 2356
- 4-5 **2022 Alabama Discipleship Conference**, Glynwood, Prattville, Mark Gainey, ext. 2240
- 7-9 **Disaster Relief Chaplain Training**, Alabama Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Ana Raymundo, ext. 2356
- 8-10 **Deaf Men Zone**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Kristy Kennedy, ext. 2311
- 9 **Renew**, First, Gardendale, Kathryn Helms, ext. 2325
- 11-12 **Transitional Pastor Training**, SBOM, Prattville, Ken Allen, ext. 2210
- 12 **Ministers' Wives Connection**, ONLINE, Trish Jackson, ext. 2224 ([alabamaWMU.org](http://alabamaWMU.org))
- 19 **Great Commission Conversations**, ONLINE, Cindy Wilson, ext. 2225 ([alabamaWMU.org](http://alabamaWMU.org))
- 20 **Speak Tour**, Springdale Estate, Andalusia, Josh Meadows, 478-410-0080
- 21 **North Regional Bible Drill and Speakers' Tournament**, East Highland, Hartselle, Belinda Stroud, ext. 2255
- 21 **South East Regional Bible Drill and Speakers' Tournament**, First, Dothan, Belinda Stroud, ext. 2255
- 22-23 **Mom & Me Spring Fling**, WorldSong, Cook Springs, Kathryn Helms, ext. 2325
- 23 **Disaster Relief Mass Feeding Training**, Alabama Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Ana Raymundo, ext. 2356
- 24 **Night of Encouragement and Evangelism**, Crossroads, Warrior, Lori McGough, ext. 2245
- 24 **South Central Regional Bible Drill and Speakers' Tournament**, First Montgomery, Belinda Stroud, ext. 2255
- 24 **North Central Regional Bible Drill and Speakers' Tournament**, Canaan, Bessemer, Belinda Stroud, ext. 2255
- 25 **South West Regional Bible Drill and Speakers' Tournament**, Shiloh, Saraland, Belinda Stroud, ext. 2255
- 25 **West Central Regional Bible Drill and Speakers' Tournament**, Fairhaven, Demopolis, Belinda Stroud, ext. 2255
- 26 **North East Regional Bible Drill and Speakers' Tournament**, Mt. Zion, Alexandria, Belinda Stroud, ext. 2255
- 28 **LIFT! Defining Worship**, First, Trussville, Karen Gosselin, ext. 2318
- 29-30 **Church Weekday Education Conference**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Linda Hicks, ext. 2263

### MAY 2022

- 1 **Senior Adult Sunday**, Daniel Edmonds, ext. 2285
- 2 **REVIVE**, Glynwood, Prattville, Lori McGough, ext. 2245
- 3 **Get Acquainted Day**, SBOM, Prattville, Amy Nelson, ext. 2231
- 4 **Speak Tour**, BMC Wellness Center, Centreville, Josh Meadows, 478-410-0080
- 8-14 **Christian Home Week**, Daniel Edmonds, ext. 2285
- 9 **Mobilize to Evangelize Seminar**, West Cullman Baptist Association, Cullman, Lori McGough, ext. 2245
- 9 **Mobilize to Evangelize Seminar**, Birmingham Metro Baptist Association, Birmingham, Lori McGough, ext. 2245
- 10 **Mobilize to Evangelize Seminar**, Calhoun Baptist Association, Anniston, Lori McGough, ext. 2245
- 10 **Mobilize to Evangelize Seminar**, Tallapoosa Baptist Association, Jackson's Gap, Lori McGough, ext. 2245
- 10 **Ministers' Wives Connection**, ONLINE, Trish Jackson, ext. 2224 ([alabamaWMU.org](http://alabamaWMU.org))
- 11 **Mobilize to Evangelize Seminar**, Evergreen, Evergreen, Lori McGough, ext. 2245
- 12 **Mobilize to Evangelize Seminar**, Bethlehem, Midland City, Lori McGough, ext. 2245
- 13 **Speak Tour**, The Beach at McFarland Park, Florence, Josh Meadows, 478-410-0080
- 17 **Great Commission Conversations**, ONLINE, Cindy Wilson, ext. 2225 ([alabamaWMU.org](http://alabamaWMU.org))
- 31-6/3 **YM Link on Mission Huntsville**, Jackson Way, Huntsville, Scooter Kellum, ext. 2280



Photo courtesy of the Brelands

The Breland family has included biological, adopted and foster children through the years. "Looking back, God knew. He had it all laid out," said Johnna Breland.

# Family matters

## Adoptive, foster families need support of churches to help children thrive

By Julie Donovan  
The Alabama Baptist

At a young age, Johnna Breland felt called to be a doctor, but as she grew up, that career never seemed to work out. It was only later that Breland realized God placed that call on her heart for another reason.

In her teenage years, Breland was told that for medical reasons she probably would never have children. As she was dating her now-husband, Rodney, they thought about fostering and adopting down the road.

It only made sense as Johnna Breland's only sibling had joined her family through adoption.

After several miscarriages the couple had two biological children, but they never forgot those early conversa-

tions. So when their boys were three and one, the Brelands decided to foster their first child, Beverly.

Before Beverly joined the Brelands, the social worker had two cautions for them: "Beverly is African American, and she needs heart surgery."

Neither was an issue, Breland assured the social worker.

### Joined by adoption

She and Rodney not only fostered Beverly, they eventually adopted her. She was part of their family for 31 years until her death in 2020 due to COVID-19.

Beverly's adoption put the Brelands on a path of growing their family and following the Lord's leadership at every step. Over the years,

10 more children joined the Brelands through adoption, making them a party of 15.

Using her academic background in science and her extensive volunteer experience, Breland has learned much about medical and disability issues, knowledge she uses to help her children. She also serves as president of The Arc of Alabama, a nonprofit that supports individuals with cognitive, intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.

"Looking back, God knew. He had it all laid out. My whole life all I thought about was being a doctor, and God knew what He needed to do. I can't imagine life without these kids," she said through tears.

"Specialists said [some of

the children] wouldn't survive, but they are still alive."

Breland said one of her biggest joys has been seeing her children exceed expectations physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually as they grow.

### 'All have a purpose'

"One child was told he could never talk or walk," she explained, "and now he makes jokes and walks with assistance."

Daughter Aimee, 24, who has dyslexia and was born with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, earned a degree in Christian ministries at Liberty University, graduating with a 4.0 GPA, and recently started a master's program in theological studies at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Bobby, 29, has intellec-

tual and developmental disabilities, vision and mobility impairments and depends on a feeding tube. Thanks to his parents' persistence, Bobby was the first student with such disabilities included in the Decatur City School System "in a regular classroom with regular peers," Breland said.

Their children "all have a purpose," and the Brelands have done their best to provide them with the best care and opportunities available. They encourage others to consider if God might use them in a similar way.

### How to help

"If we believe in pro-life then we need to open up our homes to these children," Breland said. "Support these birth families in any way we can or find homes for them."

She shared how churches and ministers can help families foster, adopt or have children with medical issues:

1. Welcome and include the children in your church.
2. Be open to members looking to foster or adopt.
3. Recruit other families.
4. Pray.
5. Understand.

Breland said having a good support system is imperative.

"Make them a part of your church family," Breland emphasized. "The children are normally coming out of trauma and need the understanding, love and support of a church family."



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# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For April 3

## Explore the Bible

By Ben Stubblefield

Visiting assistant professor of Christian studies, University of Mobile



### DEMONSTRATED 1 Thessalonians 4:1–12

We found the devil mask in my dad's closet. It brought back a lot of memories.

He would wear it to Sunday School occasionally to do a lesson called "When the devil comes to church."

He'd answer the teacher's questions with the right answers, get the class to pray for one of his friends, then ask everybody if it was OK for him to be an official member of the class and church that were filled with "such fine people."

We shouldn't be doing church in a way that the devil could fit right in. What makes us so different from the devil isn't that we believe different things. We don't (James 2:19).

The difference is that we live, follow and demonstrate our commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Paul here begins to turn his attention toward orthopraxis, right living, in the Thessalonian church, because the call to follow the Lord isn't just a call to think right; the call is also a call to live right.

### Pleasing (1–2)

The letter shifts gears at this point from friendly reflections in chapters 1–3 to moral exhortation in chapters 4–5.

Paul begins by reminding them of their daily conduct, their walk in the Lord.

This is because Christianity isn't just an intellectual pursuit. It is a hands-on religion, which commands intentional living to align with a right knowledge of God.

Paul also makes the effort to link his instruction with the authority of God. He did not presume to command the Thessalonians from his own authority but understood himself to represent the King.

Paul is giving us the cue we will do well to remember: We take our counsel from the authoritative word

of the Most High, always and before we look to the wisdom of men.

### Holy (3–8)

Paul doesn't pull any punches. The church has got to get its sex life under control. Sexual ethics have a prominent place in Paul's literature because, in the Gentile world then, sexual fidelity would have sounded absurd.

Paul says God gave them their vessel (body) for purity, honor and sanctification. Indeed, he indicates that to misuse the body outside of God's sexual design is tantamount to an outright denial of God.

We don't live in first century Rome, but we do live in 21st century Babylon, and we are more and more out of step with the prevailing culture.

The church is in a strange but familiar place because the integrity of our position on sexual fidelity is getting put under intense pressure. As it did in Paul's day, our sexual fidelity is making us a peculiar people.

### Daily (9–12)

In the final section, Paul reminds the Thessalonians the way they live has an impact on their reputation beyond the church community.

Though we have to do a fair bit of reading between the lines, it appears there were some in the church who were not earning a living, instead existing off of the largesse of other members and even unbelieving neighbors.

Paul applauds generosity in verses 10–11 but admonishes the unemployed to take care of themselves.

Southern Baptists have a missions DNA. But we sometimes see the Matthew 28:18–20 Great Commission commitment a bit too narrowly. Our missional life is networked to faithful living.

*"We shouldn't be doing church in a way that the devil could fit right in. ... The call is ... to live right."*

## Bible Studies for Life

By Will Kynes

Associate professor of biblical studies, Samford University



### A LIFE OF PERSECUTION John 15:18–25, 16:1–4a

Jesus presses the implications of association. Whose love do you want? What are you willing to sacrifice for that love? Experiencing the Father's love will mean forsaking the world's love, but pursuing the world's love will mean losing the love of the Father.

The passage flips Jesus' previous emphasis on love on its head. How will you respond to hate? Will you endure the world's hatred to persevere in loving Jesus?

### The world opposes us when we live like Jesus. (18–21)

Jesus continues His final instructions for the disciples before His crucifixion with a jarring transition from love in the previous section to hate in this one.

Earlier, He had connected the Father's love for Him with His love for the disciples and the love He expected them to have for each other. Here, He connects the hatred the world has for Him with the hatred the disciples will experience from the world.

Jesus' disciples would have experienced the world's love if they belonged to it, but Jesus has chosen them out of the world. They will experience the same persecution and rejection He does, since the world does not know the Father as the disciples know Him through Jesus (see also John 14:7).

### The world rejects Jesus in spite of the truth He has revealed. (22–25)

Jesus' revelation of the Father convicts the world of its sin. Continuing the contrast from the previous verses, Jesus' words in verse 23 are the mirror opposite of those in 15:9. There He said, "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you." Here He says, "Whoever hates Me hates My Father as well."

This hatred of the One who has revealed the Father's love in His words and deeds is illogical; it makes no sense. But it is not unprecedented. Citing either Psalm 35:19 or Psalm 69:4, Jesus claims

it fulfills what is written in the law (using this term in an expansive sense) in which the righteous are frequently opposed without cause.

### Anticipating persecution will help us have a steadfast faith. (16:1–4a)

Following the lead of the Spirit with whom they will be filled, Jesus' disciples must testify about Him (John 15:26–27). Faithfully carrying out this calling will be difficult. Not only will the disciples be thrown out of the synagogue, the central gathering place for their community, they will be hunted, and their hunters will think their violence against them is righteous.

Paul is a prime example of this misapplied zeal for the Lord, as he seeks to "destroy" the early church (Acts 8:3), "breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples" (Acts 9:1).

Paul will not see the error of his ways until he meets Jesus (Acts 9:3–6), just as Jesus says here that those who persecute the disciples will do so because they lack knowledge of the Father or Him (John 16:3). Jesus warns of this persecution to come so the disciples will be prepared to endure it.

It's vital to read these verses with those that precede them. The persecution Jesus tells the disciples to anticipate does not result from their attempts to protect their subculture or political interests.

It follows from their choice of Jesus over the world and all its trappings, expressed through their love for Him, demonstrated through their obedience to His commands, which Jesus summarizes in a simple imperative: "Love each other" (15:17).

This raises a challenging question of application: If you are facing opposition, is it a result of your love for Jesus and for others, or instead a result of your love for yourself and for the approval of the world, which can be any community not characterized by that divinely inspired love?

# MEDIA REVIEWS

By Tracy Riggs  
The Alabama Baptist

## Author seeks to fight sex trafficking with book turned movie

**A**uthor Francine Rivers has many books to her credit, but her 1991 best-seller “Redeeming Love” stands out to many readers.

The book portrays God’s unconditional love by following a couple, Michael Hosea and a prostitute named Angel, through their journey of brokenness to healing. “Redeeming Love” has sold more than 3 million copies and has been translated in 30 languages. Recently, the book was adapted into a film.

Since the book was published 30 years ago, more light has been shed on the sex trafficking industry, and on its perpetrators and victims.

When Rivers, co-screenwriter and executive producer of the movie, started writing “Redeeming Love” in the late 1980s, she knew little of sex trafficking. She grew up in a loving home and had no idea what a character like Angel, the daughter of a prostitute who herself was sold into prostitution as a child, would be thinking, feeling or acting like during her difficult childhood.

Rivers had read in a women’s magazine about a little girl who had disappeared. The story included three photos: the eight-year-old’s school picture, an image of her



Photo courtesy of Francine Rivers

### FRANCINE RIVERS

looking back over her shoulder fearfully (which was from a police-confiscated pornographic film) and the final, last-seen shot of her when she was a few years older.

“Her eyes were dead,” Rivers recalled. “She had sort of a seductive smile on her face.”

### Writing for Angel

“I posted [the first] two pictures on a bulletin board behind my desk. I kept thinking, ‘I’m writing for that little girl. That’s my Angel. That’s the main character in this story who I’m trying to reach.’”

Rivers assumed the magazine article account of sex trafficking was unusual, something common in the 1800s when “Redeeming Love” was set, but not now.

“It was really readers who educated me,” Rivers recalled. “I started getting letters from people that were in prostitution or were in prison or had drug problems or were from broken marriages — all kinds of stuff.”

She later discovered the book

was a “first contact” for those who thought God hated them and were judging them.

“This was a way to kind of introduce the Lord ... to say, ‘He loves you. No matter what you’ve experienced in your past or what you’re going through, God has a plan for you. He’s reaching out to you,’” Rivers explained.

Through the years, many filmmakers wanted to turn “Redeeming Love” into a movie, Rivers said, but each script was rejected because none understood the character of Michael. They wanted him to rescue Angel at the end, but he had to wait, trust and obey God, not knowing the outcome.

Just like Michael, Rivers has experienced times of waiting and trusting. Though raised in church, she didn’t develop a relationship with Jesus until adulthood. Her newfound passion for Him changed everything, including her writing.

“I had been writing in the general market for a number of years, steamy historical romances. When I became a Christian, I couldn’t write anymore,” Rivers said. “It’s like God just said, ‘Nope, you’re not doing this.’”

“During that time, I was reading the Bible and falling in love with Jesus,” she continued. “I realized that God had been telling me for a year, ‘You made writing your idol. That’s where you ran to whenever you needed something. You were running to your writing for your identity and your self-confidence and all the rest of it.’”

When Rivers’ home group studied the book of Hosea, Rivers said she was blown away, identifying with Gomer who turned to things

other than God and was always running away.

“I felt God just saying, ‘This is the love story I want you to write. ... You are learning the craft of writing, but here’s how I want you to use it.’”

### Faith-based message

The movie version of “Redeeming Love” released in theaters Jan. 21 and on DVD/Blu-Ray March 8. Like the book, the film has a strong faith-based message and themes of perseverance, compassion and forgiveness. But also like the book, the film deals with difficult subjects like child and domestic abuse, prostitution and rape. The film’s depictions of such violent acts, along with several characters’ use of strong language, some partial nudity and scenes suggestive of sexual activity, were too much for many critics and viewers alike, especially in a faith-based film.

Rivers told The Alabama Baptist she was surprised by those who have reviewed the book and/or movie without reading or watching. She said readers and viewers need to know “that these kind of things [sex trafficking] are happening around us all the time, and we can do something to stop it.”

To that end, the Redeeming Love Sanctuary Foundation was founded by Holly Caruso in 2021. The foundation partners with existing non-profit organizations that work to prevent trafficking and help survivors of sex trafficking and abuse.



### 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.

Visit [redeeminglovesanctuary.org](http://redeeminglovesanctuary.org) for more information on the foundation and its efforts.

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