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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

INSIDE



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WE ALL NEED JESUS

Russian people, churches need prayer too as war in Ukraine continues

Theresa Felts spent more than a decade in Russia as a field worker with the International Mission Board, so the war between Russia and Ukraine feels deeply personal to her.

"I don't know of a single Russian person who does not have relatives in Ukraine and vice versa," Felts, who now lives in Alabama, told *The Alabama Baptist*. "So it isn't just a concern of the lives that are being lost on either side of the conflict, but also that it's truly relatives fighting against relatives. I've compared it to the Civil War here in the U.S."

During her time with IMB, Felts served in several Russian cities and traveled to

Ukraine on multiple occasions. Her outlook on the current situation is shaped by those experiences.

When the U.S.S.R. legally ceased to exist on Dec. 31, 1991, Southern Baptists and other evangelical groups rushed to get the gospel to the people of Russia and the former republics. But in the 12 years Felts spent in Russia, she saw more and more laws passed to restrict the religious freedoms

that were allowed after the fall of communism.

Laws limiting the number of people who could gather in one place at a time affected worship and camp gatherings.

Yet despite the restrictions, the Church in Russia has continued to grow, and believers continue to be strong in their faith, she said.

Although Felts returned to the U.S. several years ago, her love for the Russian people remains

strong. As she speaks with people in the U.S. about the current conflict, she encourages them to remember "Russian people are the same as you and I."

'People are just people'

"Not all Russian people are supporting this," she said. "Always remember, our individual politics are often way different from the government's politics. People are just people. We are creations of God who need a relationship with Jesus."

Felts recalls fondly the many Russians who went out of their way to be helpful and make her feel welcome.

"I couldn't have survived as long as I did without them," she said.

(See 'Pray,' page 17)



Saint Basil's Cathedral in Red Square, downtown Moscow, Russia.

‘This is our time’

Romanian Baptist pastor reports on relief, discipleship efforts

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Pastor Sabin Boruga deletes the photos as quickly as they pop into his WhatsApp group text. The images of horrific scenes discovered in Ukrainian towns devastated by the Russian invasion filter into the text stream alongside hope-filled, encouraging pictures of Romanian Baptists serving refugees along the border.

“My heart can’t handle the photos of the bodies so I delete them ... and while I’m not one to cry easily, watching fathers having to leave their families at the border with the kids grasping to hold on to them gets me,” said Boruga, a Baptist church planter in Sighisoara, Romania.

Boruga shared his story with The Alabama Baptist on April 9 while in the Huntsville area visiting churches and ministry donors.

“Romanian Baptist churches were the first to take in refugees,” he mentioned, noting pastors have been working nonstop since the war began in late February. Some are at the border providing food, clothing and other resources; others are managing the makeshift dormitories set up within the church buildings.

Church leaders moved quickly to



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/The Alabama Baptist
Ron Lynch (right) of Madison Baptist Association in Huntsville hosts Pastor Sabin Boruga of Sighisoara, Romania, while he is in the state in early April visiting churches and ministry leaders.



Photo courtesy of Sabin Boruga

Romanian Baptist and Brethren church volunteers deliver food and supplies to a drop-off site in Ukraine. The resources are taken to the site each time a van is filled up. The supplies are purchased with funds donated by U.S. churches.

adapt ministries to care for the overwhelming immediate needs of the more than half a million Ukrainians flowing through Romania, Boruga explained.

“It is exhausting ... but God is using us and we don’t want to complain. ... God is using Romanians for such a time as this. We are to be the hands and feet of Jesus, but we also have to use our mouths to share the gospel and make disciples,” he shared. “God can use this time for many people to know Jesus Christ. ... And Ukrainians are coming to Christ and being baptized.

“God brought missions to our doorsteps. ... This is our time ... and He gives hope in the dark times. ... God is going to give us the wisdom for how to do it. We want to be found faithful.”

Boruga serves as vice president of education for Sibiu Baptist Association, the association in partnership with Alabama’s Madison Baptist Association.

Ron Lynch, church ministries director for Madison Association,

works with associational missions partnerships and has known Boruga since a team from the association first visited Romania nearly a decade ago.

“We have taken teams to do various projects and retreats for the pastors and churches of this central Romania area for the past eight to nine years,” Lynch said, noting the next team headed to Romania in late April will assist with ministry to Ukrainian refugees.

Ways to pray

When asked how Baptists can pray, Boruga shared these requests:

- ▶ For wisdom
- ▶ For God to help us reach the people for Christ
- ▶ For opportunities to share the gospel with the refugees
- ▶ To be a light in the darkness
- ▶ For the health of the pastors and volunteers.

EDITOR’S NOTE — To read this story in its entirety, visit tabonline.org/Sabin-Boruga.

To learn more about Boruga and his ministry, visit goronow.com.

The Alabama Baptist

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

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JENNIFER DAVIS RASH
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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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



@RashionalThts

Taking time to recenter provides clear eyes, full heart, refreshed spirit

A hhhh, do you sense it too? The refreshing, life-giving reset and recentering of our souls coming out of Easter weekend. Lungs filled with deep breaths and eyes clearly seeing the possibilities ahead.

A boost of energy and settled heart ready to put itself out there again. Confidence to face the heaviness from this world another day.

Easter is a time when all creation acknowledges the risen Savior, and while some may not realize it or intend to do so, every aspect of the season points to Him.

Emerging from Easter-related activities also provides an opportunity for those of us who are believers to refocus our eyes on Him beyond the celebratory Resurrection Sunday sunrise services, special musicals, spring outfits and dogwood blossoms.

Grasping the magnitude and reality of what our Lord Jesus Christ did for us on the cross surely changes everything for us. He deserves our full focus and complete surrender.

No matter what we've done, where we've been or who others say we are, Jesus is ready to wipe our slate clean and scoop us up in His arms, arms with a

reach so massive no one is too far away.

Life will still be difficult in seasons and the brokenness of this world will always leave points of pain in and around us, but walking the journey with our Lord is the only way that makes sense to me.

He provides the strength we need to face each day and offers wisdom, grace, peace, mercy, love and hope. All we have to do is reach for it and trust Him.

I'm not sure why we sometimes make it seem so hard to come to Jesus, and I'm always

astounded at how easy it is to take my eyes off Him.

It's also interesting to me how much time we spend evaluating each other's commitment to Christ rather than keeping intense watch over our own hearts and seeking every opportunity possible to share with those who don't know Him.

We all matter; we all have value. The Lord died for all of us, and we are called to be His image bearers, to represent Him as we ebb and flow through our daily lives.

Scripture is clear that our top

priority is to love the Lord with all our heart, mind, soul and strength (see Matt. 22, Mark 12, Luke 10 and Deut. 6). From there, all other aspects of our faith journey will flow naturally.

We won't have to stress ourselves out determining when to do what, attempting to find humility in all things and learning to love those we don't like so much because we trust the Lord to work in us and through us.

His light will shine through us and the world will only be able to see love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, as described in Galatians 5.

What is the Lord impressing on your heart today?

"May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to You, Lord, my rock and my Redeemer."

PSALM 19:14

ROMANS 8:31-39

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

He Who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all — how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?

Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.

Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died — more than that, Who was raised to life — is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

As it is written: "For Your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Your Voice



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

First person: Pearls with a purpose

By **Julie Donovan**
The Alabama Baptist

Who is the greatest storyteller of all time? Of course the answer is Jesus Christ. We know Jesus could captivate thousands when He told stories; He sometimes used objects around Him to hold people's attention and relate to them.

Jesus uses His creation to stress certain truths in the Bible. I wear pearls to reach the same goal.

While I was in college at Jacksonville State University, I wore pearls every day. Pearls go with everything from a T-shirt to a Sunday dress.

At first I wore pearls as a simple way to look classy, but then one day I read Matthew 13:45–46:

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

As I read this verse, the Lord showed me how to use pearls as an instrument to share the gospel.

I now wear them daily because they remind me of these five truths:

1. Heaven is the treasure.

Do you collect anything? Maybe baseball cards, comic books or stamps? What if you found the rarest comic book of all time?

Would you sell all your other comic books just for that one, knowing you had been searching for it for years?

In Matthew 13:45–46 the merchant finds a pearl, just one pearl.

Knowing its value, he sells everything to buy it, understanding nothing else is worth more.

When you understand the value of heaven, you should hold tight to its truth and never let go.

When I wear my pearls, it reminds me heaven is the only treasure worth seeking. Heaven is where you spend eternity worshipping the Father and Creator.

2. My eternal home is paid for.

Sin separates God's most loved creation from Him. Because of God's love for us, He sent His one and only Son, Jesus Christ, to fill this gap (John 3:16). All you have to do is accept the gift through repenting of your sins, believing Jesus is God's Son and confessing Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

When I wear pearls, I am reminded my eternity is paid for through Christ's death, burial, resurrection and ascension. I do not deserve this gift, but I gladly accept it.

3. Die to yourself daily.

Scripture constantly tells us to die to ourselves and live for Christ. Luke 9:23 says, “And He said to all, ‘If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.’”

Other verses that instruct Christians in this truth are Galatians 2:20, Luke 14:33, 1 Corinthians 15:31, Philippians 1:21, Romans 6:1–11 and Romans 12:1, to name a few.

As I wear my pearls I'm reminded to die to my own ways and the ways of the world and live for Christ.

4. Some will not value the gospel.

Matthew 7:6 says, “Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.”

Just as pigs or dogs will not appreciate pearls, some people will not appreciate the gospel.

Christians are instructed to share the good news of the gospel. Sometimes the good news will not be accepted or will be mocked; then we should pray and move on to others who will appreciate the good news. You may know and understand the value of heaven, but not everyone will.

5. Hold heaven close to you.

“And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass” (Rev. 21:21).

I have no idea what the gates look like, but it is a comfort having a glimpse into the eternity of glory as I wear my pearls.

You might not use pearls as a tool to share the gospel, but I hope you find something to use daily to open the door and share with others.



DONAVAN

I have all of these songs in me. Children are in need of a way to connect with the Father, and music is such an awesome way to connect.

Linda Harper
Songwriter

Every day we have enough faith to carry on doing what we are doing. God renews that faith every single day. The reason we have strength is because we know His faithfulness.

Yaroslav Pyzh, president
Ukrainian Baptist
Theological Seminary

Love is a decision, a commitment that we make to each other. As Christians, that's how we were first known — they were known by their love.

Mike Hardin, provost
Samford University

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

Pastor Ryan Whitley
CrossPoint Church
Trussville, Alabama

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“May our cooperative work and witness grow for the glory of God.”

BEN CURLEE

Pastor, Lineville Baptist Church

“I’ve had several who stopped, full gear, still sitting on their motorcycle, lean over and give me a hug and start sobbing. Grown men that you would not want to see in a back alley, just sobbing on your shoulder, not saying a word. But you know exactly why they’re sobbing. It’s the coolest thing,” said **RaceLine Ministry** chaplain **Mark Merical**, who has spent the last 10 seasons ministering to pro motorcycle riders on the WERA and MotoAmerica pro motorcycle road racing circuit.

In the beginning, God worked. And then He rested. ... If God worked for six days when He created the world and rested on the seventh day, why are we not also

resting on the seventh day?

In the Old Testament God’s people were told in the Ten Commandments to keep the Sabbath holy — free from work, even from ordinary house chores.

To clarify, rest is not laziness. Laziness is allowing inactivity to take priority over work. Rest is a reward for your work in Christ. There is joy and purpose in fulfilling your calling through work, but we need rest to renew ourselves in order to be able to do more good work.

Selah Vetter

“Rhythms of rest”
the-scroll.com

“I encourage church leaders not to fall prey to the temptation to jump into the latest programs im-

mediately but have what restaurants call a ‘soft opening.’ That way we can make our rookie mistakes and work them out and then have a better ministry,” said **Scott Cormode**, Hugh De Pree 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.

“We all know that God has brought the nations ... to our country so that we can share the gospel with them without even leaving our neighborhood,” said **Ramón Osorio**, ethnic-linguistic church planting director for the **North American Mission Board**.

Power of a surrendered life

By **Terry Long**

Choctaw Baptist Association

The message that grips our hearts and saves us from our sins is not the message of Jesus taking the little children up in His lap or healing the blind or walking on the water or feeding the 5,000. It is the message of the cross: The message of his suffering and death; the preaching of His love and life poured out unto death for every sinner. THAT is the power of the gospel to save!

Take away Gethsemane. Take away the crown of thorns. Take away the scourging. Take away the blood. Take away the death on the cross. What do you have left? A world dying in their sins!

It is only when a person lays down his life, his possessions, his money, his reputation, his desire, all he is and all he possesses that he can be used of God. Why?

Because it is then and only then that he can be filled with the Holy Spirit of God.

If programs could save the world, the SBC would have won the world to Christ years ago.

If plans, organizations, education and vision statements could save the world and bring in the Kingdom, then the wolf and the lamb would be living together in the Holy Land today.

But personality and pomp and all the rest is as a sounding brass and clanging cymbal if the breath of God is not on it.

The greatest danger you will ever face is losing the touch of God upon your church!

The strength of our witness, the measure of our devotion and the determining factor in whether or not we have revival in the church lies in the degree of surrender in the lives of the men and women that make up the membership of our church.

From the *Twitterverse*

@KristinKellen

What are you struggling with today? Loss? Failure? Uncertainty?

The Lamb stands poised and ready in victory, seated on His throne and triumphant over His enemies.

Rest. In. That. Victory.

Appreciate this reminder from Rev. 14 from @kellum_s @SEBTS.

@richardblackaby

Pastor, preach today as if ... lives, marriages, and futures hang in the balance. For they do.

@drjamesmerritt

The primary purpose of praying is not to get gifts from God: It is to give glory to God.

@trillianewbell

I’m so grateful that knowing Jesus as our Lord and Savior isn’t complicated. We never graduate from the simple truth of the gospel. I’m also glad that we will explore the riches

and depths of our great salvation for a lifetime.

@w_strickland

If we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His. Romans 6:5

@GaryFenton07

Prayer is practiced and commanded in the Bible, but never fully explained. We trust the One to whom we pray and not our words.

@MichaelCatt

When you sling mud, you’re always losing ground.

@DavidCCrowther

Just as nothing but hewn timbers held back the floodwaters of God’s judgment from Noah & his family, nothing but the old rugged cross of Christ will hold back the flood of God’s judgment ... today.

@DrStevenJLawson

Grace is greater than the corruption of our sins. It is stronger than the evil of this world. It is mightier than the seductions of the devil.

@LysaTerKeurst

We may not know what someone is walking through. But one thing I do know is that we all have tear stains on our pillow. And your unusual kindness, patience or grace may be the thing God uses to reach inside their desperation and help them believe He hears their prayers.

@MattSmethurst

“No, Lord” is a contradiction ...

@DrLoritts

One of the most dangerous kinds of people are the ones who are extremely gifted and occupy broad platforms of influence who have never had their hearts broken. They lack sympathy.

3 stories you should know



PERSECUTED CHURCH

Photo courtesy ADF International

A court in Finland has dismissed all charges against Dr. Paivi Rasanen (right), a Parliament member accused of “hate speech” for expressing her biblical views on marriage and human sexuality. The unanimous ruling, which said it is not for the district court to interpret biblical concepts, upheld the freedom of speech right of Rasanen, a Lutheran physician. ADF International called the ruling “an important decision” for freedom of speech in Finland. (TAB)

Overcommitment a struggle for pastors

Half of U.S. Protestant pastors say avoiding overcommitment and finding a better balance between work and family time are among their biggest challenges.

The latest release in the Greatest Needs of Pastors study from Lifeway Research found 51% of pastors surveyed said time management is an aspect of life that needs their immediate attention.

Forty-three percent specifically pointed to developing a better balance between work and home.

Younger pastors (age 18–44) especially struggle with work-life balance. They’re also among those most likely to say they need to invest specifically in their children (45%) and marriages (32%).

Read more from the survey at tabonline.org/needs-of-pastors. (Lifeway Research)

Rembert, Quinn selected for SBC committee

Two Alabama Baptists will serve on the 2022 Committee on Committees at the 2022 Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting June 14–15 in Anaheim.

Dewayne Rembert, pastor of Flatline Church at Chisholm in Montgomery, and Tommy Quinn, associate pastor of worship at First Baptist Tillman’s Corner in Mobile, are among the 68 appointees announced by SBC President Ed Litton on April 13. The group “intentionally includes men and women of diverse backgrounds” from all areas of SBC life, Litton said.

The Committee on Committees is tasked with nominating members to serve on the 2022–2023 Committee on Nominations and will meet prior to the Annual Meeting to prepare its report to the convention. (BP)

New awards recognize disciple-making leaders in Alabama

The Discipleship Network of Alabama presented three awards at their 2022 annual meeting.

► **The Andrew Smith Legacy Leader Award**, in memory of Smith, a pastor and mentor to many, who grew up at Chisholm Baptist Church in Montgomery and was the first pastor of Heritage Baptist Church in Montgomery.



Photo courtesy of SBOM

Joe Armour presents Eleanor Wells with her husband, Carl’s, posthumous award.

Smith began serving with the Alabama Baptist Sunday School office in 1986 and became director in 1996.

The award was presented posthumously to Carl P. Wells, who served 40 years on the pastoral staff of First Baptist Church in Tuscaloosa. Wells began his ministry there in 1963 and retired in 1996, re-

turning in 2002 to serve another seven years as minister of senior adults. Wells died in 2020.

Joe Armour, minister to adults and outreach at FBC Tuscaloosa, presented the award to Wells’ wife, Eleanor.

► **The Topper Reid Emerging Leader Award**, in honor of Reid, who was a minister of education for 28 years. From 1991 to 2004, he served at Hunter Street Baptist Church in Hoover, where his Sunday School grew from 900 to more than 3,200 in attendance, with enrollment topping 8,000. During that time he helped start more than 260 Sunday School small groups.



Photo courtesy of SBOM

Topper Reid (left) and Kris Henderson.

The award was presented to Kris Henderson, discipleship pastor at Macedonia Baptist Church in Ranburne, a former missionary and pastor in Honduras.

Henderson focuses on disciple making in the local church context and is helping start new small groups and develop a culture of evangelism at Macedonia.



Photo courtesy of SBOM

Jay Gordon (left) and Daniel Edmonds.

► **The Daniel Edmonds Disciple Making Leader Award**, in honor of Edmonds, who has served at the helm of the SBOM’s office of Sunday School & discipleship nearly 26 years and was instrumental in starting DNA.

The award was presented to Jay Gordon, adult and small groups minister at the Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham. Gordon leads small groups, equips others to lead and connects with leaders across the state to equip and encourage them.

Read more about the new awards and DNA at tabonline.org/dna-awards. (Grace Thornton)

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

▶ **Todd Evans**, pastor of First Baptist Church Abbeville, died April 7. He was 57.

Evans was a graduate of Samford University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in religion and English. He earned a master of divinity degree from New Orleans Seminary and a doctor of ministry degree from Beeson Divinity School.

He served as pastor of Parkview Baptist Church, Decatur, from 1997 to 2018. Before that, he was pastor of Corinth Heights Baptist Church, Haleyville, for seven years. He had served at Abbeville since February 2021.

He is survived by his wife of 27 years, Meia, and five children.

BETHLEHEM ASSOCIATION

▶ **Glenn Eubanks** retires April 24 as worship pastor and associate and senior adults pastor from **First Baptist Church, Monroeville**. He has served at the church since 1983, serving in youth and music ministries in his early years.

"My time at FBC Monroeville has been an incredible experience," Eubanks said. "Staying and serving in the same church for so many years has given me the beautiful opportunity to meet and love so many families."

He studied at Mobile College (now University of Mobile). He holds a master's degree in church music from New Orleans Seminary. In ministry for 50 years, Eubanks also served at FBC Robertsdale; FBC Theodore; Travis Road Church, Mobile; and Pine Grove Baptist Church, Livingston, Louisiana. He and his wife, Sherri, have three sons and six grandchildren.

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

▶ **Eric Spivey** is the new senior pastor of **Vestavia Hills Baptist Church**. He previously served as the senior pastor at First Baptist Church Gainesville, Florida, and FBC Cornella, Georgia. He also served in multiple roles at The Baptist Church of Beaufort, South Carolina, and held ministry positions with the Savannah and Birmingham Baptist associations. He received a bachelor



SPIVEY

of arts in human relations at Samford University, a master of divinity from Southwestern Seminary and a doctor of ministry from Gardner Webb University, Boiling Springs, North Carolina. Spivey and his wife, Marcia, have two daughters.

CHOCTAW ASSOCIATION

▶ **Scott Wheeler** is the new pastor of **Ebenezer Baptist Church, Pennington**. Wheeler previously was pastor of Grace Christian Fellowship, Crossett, Arkansas. He and his wife, Brooklin, have two children.

COFFEE ASSOCIATION

▶ **Church on Boll Weevil Circle, Enterprise**, will host a benefit for the Coffee County Community Church Mobile Food Pantry on May 7, 9 a.m. until noon. The pantry currently serves around 300 families. Applications for food will be available. Donations to the food pantry will be accepted. There will be free barbecue plates and activities for children. Call Coffee Association at 334-894-6411 for more information.

RUSSELL ASSOCIATION

▶ **Scott Boyte** is the new pastor of **New Beginning Baptist Church, Phenix City**. A native of Phenix City, he grew up a couple of blocks from New Beginning Baptist. He graduated from Carolina University with a bachelor of arts degree in biblical studies and has served in various leadership roles including deacon, teacher, evangelist and pastor. He and his wife, Lisa, have two children and two grandchildren.



EUBANKS



BOYTE

TALLAPOOSA ASSOCIATION

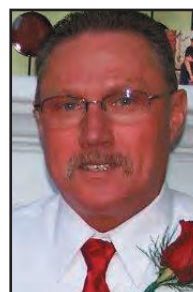
▶ **Dawson Self** is the new youth director of **Hillabee Baptist Church, Alexander City**.

He previously served on the youth committee and helped teach youth Sunday School and children's classes at Orr Street Baptist Church. He is currently enrolled at Samford University's Ministry Training Institute.

▶ **Marty Dunlap** is the new pastor of **Perryville Baptist Church, New Site**. He previously served as pastor of Huguley Baptist Church, Lanett, for six years. He has been involved in the construc-



SELF



DUNLAP

tion business and currently repairs recreation vehicles. Dunlap and his wife, Sandra, have five children, 15 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

TUSCALOOSA COUNTY ASSOCIATION

▶ **Rick Mitchell**, co-pastor of **Forest Lake Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa**, retired March 27. He previously served as pastor of Holt Baptist Church, which merged with Forest Lake in 2018. He also served other churches in Alabama (Vance Baptist Church; Taylorville Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa; Calvary Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa), Louisiana and Mississippi. He is a graduate of the University of Alabama and New Orleans Seminary. He and



MITCHELL

his wife, Carol, have two children and three grandchildren.

TUSKEGEE LEE ASSOCIATION

▶ The Detty Sisters will be at **Union Grove Baptist Church, Opelika**, April 22, 6:30 p.m. A love offering will be collected. Russell DeLee is pastor.

WALKER ASSOCIATION

▶ **Michelle Howell** is the new director of children's ministry for **Glory Fellowship Baptist Church, Jasper**. She has been at the church since 2009 serving with both children and youth. Her previous ministry experience was at First Baptist Church Cordova and Locust Grove Baptist Church, New Market, where she served in both children's and youth ministries. She previously served as a special education administrator, teacher, coach and athletic trainer in Walker County.

She has a bachelor's degree in athletic training and a master's degree in special education from the University of West Alabama. Howell and her husband, Buster, have two children.



HOWELL

WEST CENTRAL ASSOCIATION

▶ **Nicholas Gandy** is the new pastor of **Elkdale Baptist Church, Selma**. He previously served as pastor of Friendship Baptist Church, Springville, and London Baptist Church, Castleberry.

In May, Gandy will finish a master of divinity from New Orleans Seminary. He is married to Mary Rhea.



GANDY

Finding a way forward

Mississippi's Vicksburg offers rich history of resiliency, architecture, food

By **Connie Pearson**
The Alabama Baptist

Dig into the history of Vicksburg, Mississippi, and you will discover a town whose people showed resilience and consistent determination in the face of adversity.

The history of Vicksburg is closely connected to the town's strategic location on the Mississippi River.

During the Civil War, Vicksburg was a coveted prize that Union troops desperately wanted. The tug of war for control culminated in a 47-day siege by Union troops and surrender by Confederate generals on July 4, 1863.

Vicksburg and its people were exhausted, emotionally and physically wounded, starving and totally humiliated. They had the formidable task ahead of rebuilding their demolished, shell-ravaged town under terrible circumstances with scarce resources.

Independence Day held such bad memories that the people of Vicksburg did not celebrate the Fourth of July with the rest of the country until the end of World War II in 1945.

During its slow climb back to being a viable town, the unthinkable happened. On April 26, 1876, the Mississippi River changed course overnight. Suddenly Vicksburg lost its port. It was left high and dry in one day's time. The Army Corps of Engineers arrived to help, but it would be 25 years before Vicksburg had access to the Mississippi River again via the Yazoo River.

In 1878, a yellow fever epidemic swept across the U.S., hitting Mississippi with more than 4,000 deaths, 1,149 of which were in Vicksburg.

In April 1927, levees along the Mississippi River broke after weeks of heavy rains. In Vicksburg, the river crested at 56.2 feet and swelled to a width of nearly 80 miles. It took a couple of months for the waters



Photo by Connie Pearson/The Alabama Baptist

Vicksburg National Military Park officials have turned the park's focus toward the art on display. The Art of Commemoration Tour is recommended to see the 1,400 monuments in what is often called "The Art Park of the World."

to recede, and hundreds began rebuilding their homes and lives once again.

Is it any wonder the people of Vicksburg are loyal to their town and committed to making it strong and vital? In addition to their tenacity to survive, I found many other reasons to recommend a visit.

Variety of accommodations

If you prefer a chain hotel, you will find about 20 from which to choose. But why stay in a predictable place when you can spend the night in a home with charming hosts and historical significance?

Anchuca, built in the late 1820s and best known as the home of Joseph E. Davis, the brother of Jefferson Davis, has a variety of accommodations from single rooms to a three-bedroom guesthouse. A full breakfast is served in the Garden Room, and an on-site restaurant serves dinner Monday through Saturday and brunch on Sunday.

The Duff Green Mansion was spared from destruction during the Civil War when it was designated as

a hospital for Union and Confederate troops. Both Jefferson Davis and Ulysses S. Grant once danced in its ballroom. There are eight guest rooms, and a three-course breakfast is served in the formal dining room.

Oak Hall, built in 1910, was formerly known as Stained Glass Manor. Guest rooms are huge, and the stained-glass windows are stunning. A continental breakfast is delivered to your room on weekdays, while a hot breakfast is served on weekends.

Dining choices

The Tomato Place started out as a series of vegetable stands along Highway 61 but eventually merged into one larger stand now famous for its fresh tomato sandwiches. Locals and visitors drive from miles around for the food. My personal favorite was the Fried Green Tomato BLT, but you also can order Po' Boys, catfish, ribs, burgers, soups, salads and hot dogs.

Walnut Hills Restaurant is in a home built in 1880. Its most famous dish is fried chicken with a touch of cayenne pepper, but Walnut Hills

also serves great seafood, Southern-style sides and incredible house-made desserts.

Beechwood Restaurant & Lounge started serving customers in 1956, and ownership has passed from uncle to nephew to uncle to nephew ever since. Steaks are the stars of Beechwood's menu, but the seafood dishes are outstanding as well.

Historical district

If possible, take a walking tour of several blocks in Vicksburg's historic district led by Bertram and Carol Hayes-Davis, owners of Vicksburg Old Town Tours.

Tours highlight historic neighborhoods, churches, cottages and mansions, sharing the stories and the history from the past to the present.

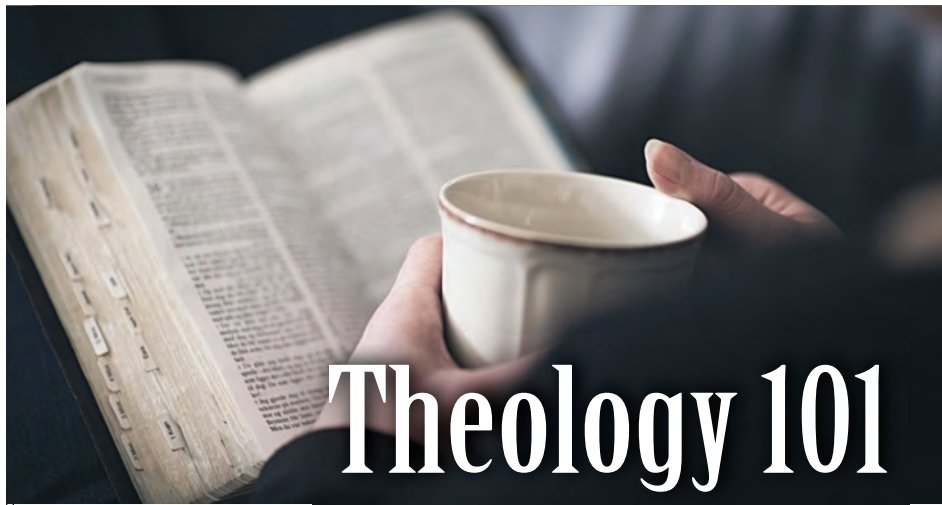
Be sure to reserve a spot early. Approximately 400 riverboats stop in Vicksburg each year, and the walking tours are popular with those visitors.

Carrying on the art emphasis in Vicksburg, allow time to explore the downtown area.

The Vicksburg Riverfront Murals, depicting noteworthy events in town, grace an area along the Yazoo Diversion Canal where the riverboats dock. By walking the main thoroughfare of Washington Street, you will find attractive boutiques, art galleries and several museums including Biedenharn Coca-Cola Museum in the building where Coke was first bottled.

Vicksburg's resilience is admirable, its art impressive, its historic inns stunning and its regional delicacies delicious. The city's people would love to show off their town.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Go, Taste & See is a regular travel feature in The Alabama Baptist, highlighting cities and destinations within a day's drive of most of Alabama and offering suggestions from Hartselle-based travel writer Connie Pearson, who previously served as a missionary to Ecuador.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

The People of God

The Shepherd of God's Flock

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
The Alabama Baptist

Last week, Theology 101 dealt with the imagery of God's people as His flock, which suggests we should give thought to the Shepherd of the flock.

Jesus termed Himself the Good Shepherd, saying in John 10, "I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep" (v. 11). Three verses later He repeats this self designation: "I am the Good Shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own" (v. 14).

The Good Shepherd imagery reminds us we are God's people by virtue of Christ's self-giving, self-sacrificing life, not because we deserve such a Shepherd. As members of God's flock, we owe an unpayable debt to the Good Shepherd.

Later in the New Testament, we encounter another adjective that describes the Shepherd. In Hebrews 13, we read a benediction that describes Jesus as the Great Shepherd: "May the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant make you complete in every good work to do His will" (vv. 20-21).

As the Good Shepherd, Jesus gave His life for us. As the Great Shepherd, He arose from the dead and lives to work in us that which is pleasing in His sight. As God's flock, we are to live with the basic commitment of doing His

will. The Great Shepherd makes possible every good work.

In 1 Peter, a third adjective attaches to the image of Christ as the Shepherd of God's flock, associated with the future return of Christ: "When the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away" (5:4). With this image the picture of Jesus as the Shepherd of God's flock is completed.

As the Good Shepherd, Jesus died for us. As the Great Shepherd, He rose again. As the Chief Shepherd, He will come again. This third aspect of Jesus' shepherding role gives God's flock its blessed hope (Titus 2:13).

Missionary mandate

On that first mentioned occasion when Jesus pictured Himself as the Good Shepherd, He added an idea when He spoke of having sheep beyond His own people, the Jews. He put it like this: "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd" (John 10:16). Herein we hear overtones of His missionary mandate to the Church.

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.



Topics addressed by bills draw continued debate

Alabama lawmakers passed two bills related to transgender and sexuality issues on the last day of the 2022 session, April 7. And both came under fire immediately with criticism and lawsuits.

Senate Bill 184, known as Alabama Vulnerable Child Compassion and Protection Act, bans certain medical therapies for transgender minors.

And House Bill 322 is a measure that requires people in public Kindergarten through 12th grade schools to use the bathroom of the gender listed on their birth certificates.

The bill also includes a provision that prohibits teachers and others from teaching or discussing sexual orientation or gender identity in public Kindergarten through fifth grade classrooms "in a manner that is not age appropriate or developmentally appropriate for students in accordance with state standards."

Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey signed both bills into law April 8.

Two families and two doctors are suing the state of Alabama over SB 184, which goes into effect May 8.

The Human Rights Campaign has publicly criticized both new laws.

Alcohol bills pass

Legislators also approved several bills loosening restrictions on alcohol sales. House Bill 119 allows the sale of beer and wine at drive-thru windows throughout the state, and House Bill 234 allows for food trucks in Birmingham to sell alcoholic beverages when they are parked in existing entertainment districts.

House Bill 395 allows certain Alabama universities and community colleges to teach brewing and distilling practices as part of their hospitality education programs.

Several gambling expansion bills failed to progress, however.

Greg Davis, president of Alabama Citizens Action Program, called the failure of the bills "good news" but said he expects pro-gambling forces to renew

their push next year after newly elected legislators take office.

ALCAP and others continue to warn of the dangers of gambling, emphasizing the social costs outweigh any financial benefits such an expansion might produce.

Jack Galassini, president of the Alabama Council on Compulsive Gambling, noted the major cause of gambling addiction is a person's inability to gamble responsibly.

"Ninety-five percent of people who gamble do so for fun and recreation," he said.

"Five percent struggle with addiction."

Gambling help available

ACCG, which considers itself a gambling-neutral organization, offers assistance to those who struggle with gambling and helps train professional counselors to become certified problem gambling counselors.

Galassini said young people are increasingly drawn to gambling.

"It all becomes the thrill of the win, and in many cases it is not about the money aspect," he said. "Sadly, we are starting to see younger people getting addicted to gaming and that is the perfect precursor to other types of gambling."

"In the past 10 years that our council has been in existence, internet betting, sports betting and online casinos have joined the other ranks of gambling," Galassini said.

Leads to addiction

Besides online gambling, casinos, card rooms, sports betting, fantasy sports, dog tracks and the lottery all can lead to addiction.

"The signs of compulsive gambling are the person is unable to set limits," Galassini noted.

"They gamble with money they cannot afford to lose and they lie to cover up gambling."

For more information on the Alabama Council on Compulsive Gambling visit alccg.org. (Hamilton Richardson, Carrie B. McWhorter)

Christian principles



Unsplash.com

Faith-driven investments pursue 'redemptive impact' across economic sectors

By Margaret Colson
The Alabama Baptist

In 1999, 24-year-old James Wessel, a volunteer firefighter with the Brindlee Mountain Volunteer Fire Department in Union Grove, Alabama, proudly drove the department's newly purchased used fire truck to its first alarm.

En route, the engine lost power and shut down. Nothing could be done to restart it, and the warranty was not honored as anticipated.

In the following days, Wessel sensed God leading him to launch a used fire truck business, Brindlee Mountain Fire Apparatus.

He purchased his first truck with a \$10,000 loan from his mother.

Since then, Wessel has made it his mission to serve fire departments throughout the nation and world by selling used fire trucks, with warranties. Christian principles guide him and his company.

During a recent seminar, Wessel credited investors with providing necessary capital for him to fulfill his mission, which has expanded into gathering firefighters to respond to wildfires and seeking ways to take the gospel to 1.2 million firefighters.

Baptist Foundation efforts

Wessel's story was one of many shared at the Oak City Redemptive Institutional Investing Retreat in Asheville, North Carolina — an event sponsored by The Baptist Foundation of Alabama.

John Ashworth, president of TBFA, said, "The retreat offered a time for ministry partners of Baptist Foundations in Alabama, Florida, Missouri and South Carolina to

learn how their funds can and should be used as a tool to redeem the world for Christ, not just from the returns they generate but through the way the money is invested.

"The discussions revolved around how the gospel should affect the way Christian ministries and churches shepherd the capital God has entrusted to them. Participants learned how God is using faith-driven investments for His glory.

"At the Baptist Foundation, we help churches and ministries use their cash reserves to do ministry, even before they spend it on missions or programs," Ashworth explained. "This is possible through the faith-driven investments we offer that seek to produce a financial and a spiritual return."

Oak City Consulting, founded in 2012 and based in Wake Forest, North Carolina, works with Christian organizations to develop investment processes that align with their beliefs and serve stakeholders.

For Christians "the gospel should affect every piece of our lives, including the way that we invest the capital that God has entrusted to us," said Brett Danforth, Oak City's director of client development.

While not a new idea, the concept of faith-driven investments has "gained some momentum" in the past several years, he noted.

Faith-driven investments focus not only on certain industries to avoid, known as "negative screening," but also on "Christians pursuing redemptive impact with their capital," Danforth explained.

Such investments include real estate, biotechnology, health care, education, banking, responding to human trafficking and child labor, and more.

For Christians "the gospel should affect every piece of our lives, including the way that we invest the capital that God has entrusted to us."

Brett Danforth
director of client
development, Oak City
Redemptive Institutional
Investing Retreat

Christie Baucom, Oak City's director of compliance, was drawn to faith-driven investments when her youngest son was diagnosed with cancer at 13 months old.

The treatment was "intense, quick and brutal," she said. He survived but will have lingering side effects that can be "life-altering."

"None of us left that time unscathed," Baucom related.

When she discovered some investment firms focus specifically on researching medical treatment options and breakthroughs that don't conflict with Christian values, she was moved deeply.

"Real people with real stories are impacted by the work we're doing," she said.

Elisabeth Armstrong, director of health care initiatives for Eventide Asset Management in Elkhorn, Nebraska, reflected Baucom's passion.

"Our health care system is broken," the bioethicist said, adding in-

vestors can "leverage their power" to speak to today's pressing health care challenges such as gene therapy, neural data and drug pricing.

"Everyone can and ought to engage in bioethics, take a seat at the table," Armstrong declared.

"This is a pivotal time. How we do it today will impact tomorrow."

Fair wages, safe work

Another business developed out of a dream to make a difference is Next Door Photos, which takes pictures and video of real estate.

Founder Taylor Blom said the company has grown to now have hundreds of team members, with many representing vulnerable, rescued and at-risk populations throughout the world, including the Philippines, Kenya and Nepal.

Employing these individuals with fair wages and safe work environments has freed many from the bondage of human trafficking.

"The Holy Spirit wants to move in your investments," Blom asserted.

"The work of the Holy Spirit can always be measured in freedom."

From selling used fire trucks to addressing health care challenges to hiring individuals rescued from human trafficking, money matters, investment managers contend.

Many systems in the world are "broken by sin," Danforth said, but he believes investing in solutions that "bless people" helps improve those systems.

"All investing is impact investing," agreed John Coleman, managing partner with Sovereign's Capital in Raleigh, North Carolina. "Asset management touches almost everything in the world."

Finding hope and help

Pregnancy resource center volunteers meet expectant parents with love

By Erin Roach
The Alabama Baptist

Parents facing unintended pregnancies are finding hope and help at Alabama pregnancy resource centers.

Sav-A-Life is known for providing pregnancy tests, sexually transmitted disease testing and ultrasounds which are credited with saving thousands of unborn lives annually. Pregnancy resource centers also serve parents through education programs.

“One of the criticisms of a pregnancy resource center is that we just get them to keep the baby and then turn them loose and they’re on their own,” said Lisa Hogan, executive director of Sav-A-Life centers in Vestavia and Fultondale. “Nothing could be farther from the truth.”

The Birmingham area Sav-A-Life centers also serve expectant parents through education programs such as The First Nine Months and The Gift of Birth.

Education programs

The First Nine Months helps parents know what to expect and be better prepared for the baby to arrive, Hogan said. For each session, participants earn “baby bucks” to spend at the center’s baby boutique, and by the end of the class the expectant mothers earn car seats.

“Everything is priced very reasonably,” Hogan noted. “There are clothes, diapers, bath items, health and safety kits, shoes, books, toys — just about everything you would need for a child up to three. All of those are donated, new or gently used.”

A class called The Gift of Birth is for women in their late second trimester, and it’s one many hospitals teach to prepare parents for childbirth, breastfeeding and beyond. The class meets four nights, and for a fifth meeting the resource center partners with a local church



Photo by Tracy Riggs/The Alabama Baptist
Guests open presents at a Gift of Birth Baby Shower at North Jefferson Women’s Center/Sav-A-Life in Fultondale. Sav-A-Life serves more than 4,000 clients in its two centers each year and nearly 2,000 new parents per year through education programs.

to host a baby shower for up to 10 mothers at a time.

“We have a class called Mommy and Me designed for moms of toddlers up to age three, and they learn to bond with their babies and toddlers, and they build community among other moms who have children of similar ages,” Hogan said. “In that class they sing, tell Bible stories, read books and do crafts.”

In the Earn While You Learn Program, mothers can meet one-on-one with mentors to discuss topics of their choice, including breastfeeding, practical parenting and life skills.

At Mom’s Night Out and Dad’s Night Out, Sav-A-Life provides a meal and an hour of classes guiding participants in their parenting journeys.

Spiritual needs

“One of the things we try to do with every class is introduce a spiritual component,” Hogan noted. Typically a mentor or teacher will spend the last 10 minutes of each

session talking about prayer requests and how God has answered.

“A lot of times that serves as a reminder that God is in the mix and God is at work in their lives. Our mission is to share the truth of God’s word with them,” she explained. “The way we do that is to address the physical need and ultimately get to the spiritual need as well.”

The original Sav-A-Life center started in downtown Birmingham in 1980 as a place where women could go to feel safe and cared for when they found themselves facing an unplanned pregnancy. After that, several centers using the same name opened throughout the state with a similar goal, though they operated under different leadership.

Two years ago the original center, which moved to Vestavia in 1997, merged with the Fultondale center, and soon a third will open in Crestwood under the same umbrella.

“We’re going to absolutely need some more people who are willing

to volunteer,” Hogan asserted.

The centers are staff-led but volunteer-driven, she noted. Volunteers include receptionists, the first people the women encounter; client advocates who talk with them one-on-one; and even some of the medical professionals.

Well-prepared

Each Sav-A-Life center leads volunteers through an application and training process so they are well-prepared for the task at hand, she said.

“We have need for what we call one-on-one mentors. If you would like to establish a relationship and have a consistent opportunity to speak into someone’s life, then that’s a great opportunity for you to get involved.”

Sav-A-Life also needs board members to spread the word about the ministry, as well as churches to host baby showers. They use volunteers to work in the boutiques at both locations, processing donations, packaging diapers and arranging items.

Sav-A-Life also cares for women who choose abortion, offering a post-abortion recovery program.

“That’s one of the most precious programs we offer because we see the transformation of a woman who is hurting from a past abortion as she goes through that study and finds healing and restoration,” Hogan said. “It’s one of those hard things for women to step up and do, but it’s a powerful study that is extremely important to what we do.”

She estimates that last year more than 450 abortion-minded women entered either the Vestavia or Fultondale location, and like most years, about half chose life for their children with the support of volunteers. Sav-A-Life serves more than 4,000 clients in its two centers each year and nearly 2,000 new parents per year through education programs.

For more information, visit savalife.org.

**APRIL IS PARKINSON'S
DISEASE AWARENESS MONTH.**

Accepting 'why not me?'

How one Alabama woman is making a difference in the fight against Parkinson's disease

By Carolyn Tomlin
The Alabama Baptist

When Katie Fordham was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 2019, it was a relief.

At last she knew why she was often fatigued and experienced depression, emotional changes and physical issues not usually related to someone as young as 36. It took months of medical appointments and testing to get a diagnosis.

Fordham, wife of Sam Fordham, pastor of Oak Bowery Baptist Church in Ohatchee, said people had begun to notice her tremors, and her three children realized "momma didn't act the same." She also couldn't do some of the things she was accustomed to doing in the church where her husband had served since 2014.

Realizing there currently is no cure for Parkinson's, the only hope is in Jesus, Fordham said: "I pray that Jesus will impart to doctors the knowledge of how best to treat me and others."

She said she made a choice fol-



Photo courtesy of Katie Fordham

Katie Fordham, pictured with her husband, Sam, and their three children (l to r) Micaiah, Olivia and Evelyn, was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 2019. Fordham is now an advocate for Parkinson's and shares her experience with others.

lowing her diagnosis — she could withdraw and shut others out, or she could become an advocate for Parkinson's. Fortunately for others and their caregivers, she chose the latter.

Fordham takes several approaches to sharing her experience. Her husband developed a YouTube channel, *Kamping with Katie*, which shares videos highlighting their family travels and some of the medical care Fordham is receiving.

The videos help children understand the ins and outs of living with Parkinson's.

The Fordhams' three children, ages 14, 12 and 8, have definitely

been impacted by the condition, especially the oldest.

"Two brain surgeries in less than two years has been difficult," Fordham acknowledged. "But they get to see blessings of me being better."

'Learning experience'

"Not only has it been a learning experience for our family," she noted, "but for our precious church. Oak Bowery Baptist runs about 80 in worship services. These sweet people have prayed over me and supported our family in so many ways. The church family fed us for three weeks after my last surgery."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

These groups provide vital information for those diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and their caregivers:

▶ **Parkinson Association of Alabama**
parkinsonalabama.com

Annual symposium — May 14, Barber Vintage Motorsports Museum in Leeds

▶ **Davis Phinney Foundation/Every Victory Counts Manual**
davisphinneyfoundation.org/every-victory-counts-manual/

"It's a blessing to be part of a church community. We had to walk the grief with our congregation before we could grieve ourselves."

'Power in knowledge'

"God made me a teacher," Fordham, a third-generation educator, continued. "There is power in knowledge. What good is it if I don't share my journey with others?"

"My prayer has been that God will receive the glory. If just one person comes to know Him, it will be worth it."

Fordham keeps a printed supply of the e-book, "Every Victory Counts," distributing them to new patients, along with a caregiver's guide.

After being diagnosed Fordham asked, "Why me?" she admitted. "I have three children to raise. I'm a pastor's wife." She later came to realize, "Why not me?"

By being an advocate for Parkinson's in Alabama, Fordham speaks at conferences and provides education about the condition. But more importantly, she shares that God has a plan for each life.

SUGGESTIONS FOR COPING WITH PARKINSON'S

Being diagnosed at an early age, Fordham understands the stress that accompanies Parkinson's disease and offers suggestions:

▶ Don't ever give up. This is not the end of the road, just a difficult path.

▶ Find a Parkinson's specialist.

▶ Exercise daily, the only proven activity to slow Parkinson's.

DATA ON PARKINSON'S DISEASE

▶ April is Parkinson's Disease Awareness Month and April 11 is World Parkinson's Disease Day

▶ Parkinson's affects an estimated 1 million Americans, with approximately 60,000 diagnosed annually.

▶ Parkinson's is the fastest-growing neurological disease in the world.

▶ There are more people with Parkinson's than ALS, MS and Muscular Dystrophy combined.

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Baccalaureate services incorporate faith into graduation traditions

By Lanell Downs Smith
The Alabama Baptist

As part of traditional American commencement celebrations, many high schools and universities hold a baccalaureate ceremony, a religious service dating back to the 1400s.

The first baccalaureate service is believed to have been held at Oxford University in England in 1432, when students were asked to deliver religious sermons in Latin as part of graduation exercises.

American universities and high schools adopted the tradition and adapted the speaker segment to be someone specifically selected to inspire graduates as they embark on the next step in their life journey.

Special for families

Today, most baccalaureate services are planned by parents of graduating seniors and are optional activities for graduates.

Still, baccalaureate services are as much a tradition in most schools as graduation exercises, noted Michael McLendon, executive director of the Alabama Independent School Association.

“They vary in how they are conducted, and tradition plays a role,” he said.

Faith Academy in Mobile holds its annual baccalaureate service on the Sunday before graduation.

According to principal Barry Pickering, the service includes praise songs, a message for graduates from a local pastor and a rose ceremony in which graduates honor their parents.

“This is the one end-of-the-year event that is designed to be for graduates and their families only,” he said. “It is usually the most special time for our families.”



Unsplash.com

Faith Academy shares a campus with its parent church, Life Church, and holds services on-site. But, according to McLendon, many schools don't have the indoor space to host large gatherings, and schools often work with a local church partner to host baccalaureate services and graduation ceremonies.

Glenwood School in Smiths Station has partnered with Golden Acres Baptist Church in Phenix City for more than 14 years, holding baccalaureate services in the sanctuary, followed by a reception in the church gym.

Kayla Boyer, upper school counselor at Glenwood, said senior class officers pray, lead the Pledge of Allegiance and introduce special guests. Parents are invited up front and presented with a handwritten card from their graduate.

When possible, the school invites a speaker from among local pastors who are closely related to the graduating class, she added.

Showcasing Jesus

Gina Harper, Golden Acres minister of administration, finance and connect groups, worked with students at the church when the partnership began with Glenwood and also Central High School.

The partnership provided opportunities for her to minister to students and families at both schools.

“I believe any way you are able to sponsor or work closely with schools in the community allows families to have a bird's-eye view of who your church really is up close,” Harper said. “Every opportunity we get to show people Jesus, who we are and Who we serve is an opportunity to draw people to Christ.”

‘Great precursor’

Highland Home School invites local pastors to deliver words of encouragement at an optional baccalaureate service on its campus.

Many pastors present the gospel message, along with a challenge for students as they prepare to face life's challenges.

“[It provides] that extra encouragement to get out there and make [good] choices and do the right thing,” said Kate Foreman, upper school counselor.

“I think that's just a great precursor to graduation, so that they really realize it's going to happen in a couple of weeks. They're about to go into the world, and it's time to start making grown-up, good decisions that [they're] going to be accountable for.”

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR

Jemison First Baptist is accepting resumés for senior pastor. Visit tabonline.org/FBC-Jemison to see the job listing.

PASTOR

Thomaston Baptist Church, Thomaston, Ala., is seeking a full-time pastor. Please email resumé to: thomastonbaptistchurch@gmail.com.

PASTOR

Full-time or bivocational pastor. Oak Grove Baptist Church, Frisco City, Ala. Please email resumés to: oakgbaptist@gmail.com.

MUSIC MINISTER

Fayette First Baptist Church is seeking a full-time music minister to utilize the gifts and talents of our church to guide the church toward meaningful worship. Resumés can be sent to: scottdavis@fayettefbc.org.

BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH MINISTER

Macedonia Baptist Church in the Coats Bend community of Gadsden, Ala., is prayerfully seeking a bivocational youth minister. Please send resumés and or questions to Ken Blakney at ktblakney@yahoo.com.

BIVOCATIONAL CHILDREN'S MINISTER

Government Street Baptist Church, Mobile, Ala., is prayerfully seeking a bivocational children's minister. Applicants should subscribe to the Baptist Faith & Message. Please send resumé to: governmentstreetbaptist@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL CHILDREN'S MINISTRY DIRECTOR

Macedonia Baptist Church in the Coats Bend community of Gadsden, Ala., is prayerfully seeking a bivocational children's ministry director. Please send resumés or questions to Lori Johnson at macedoniachildrensministry@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL CHILDREN'S MINISTER

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

OTHER POSITIONS

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.

RESIDENT SUMMER STAFF

We are currently praying for and seeking out Jesus-loving, servant-hearted young adults to join us in facilitating our summer ministry. The RSS program provides work and ministry opportunities, a place for spiritual and personal growth and an amazing Christ-centered community to be a part of. Students are paid a summer salary and receive meals and lodging. We'd love to have your students join us this summer! All this information, a video and the application can be found at www.shocco.org/summerstaff.

SOCIAL SERVICES MANAGER

Youth-focused nonprofit seeking full-time (40 hours) social services manager to oversee daily operations. Located in the Birmingham area. Salary \$47,000-\$52,000 annually. Health and dental insurance eligible. Call 205-994-1439 from 7 a.m.-4 p.m.

SIGNS

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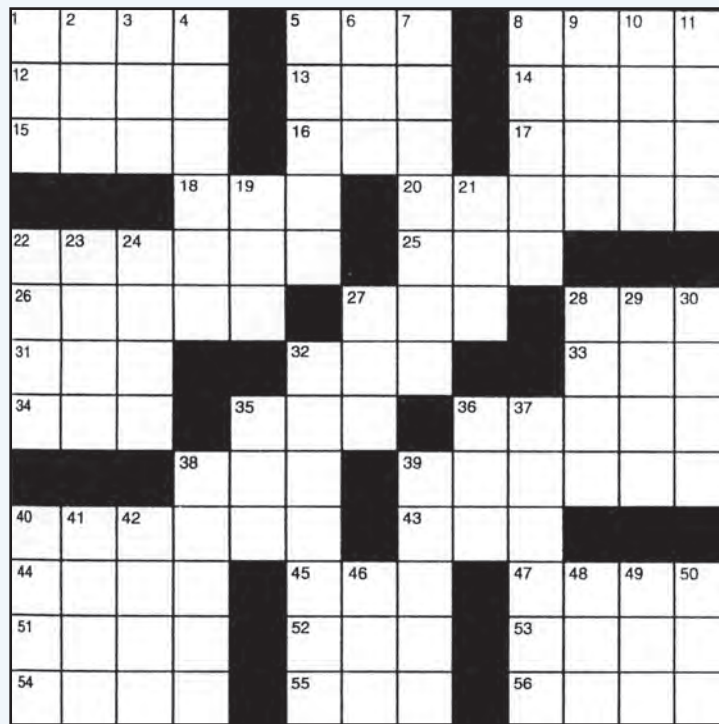
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CHRISTIAN CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1. They took them wives of the women of _____. (Ruth 1:4)
5. Expression of disgust.
8. We have seen His _____ in the east. (Matt. 2:2)
12. Domed projection of a church.
13. Because there was no room for them in the _____. (Luke 2:7)
14. _____ and see the works of God. (Ps. 66:5)
15. Doth the eagle ... make her _____ on high? (Job 39:27)
16. There is a cup, and the wine is _____. (Ps. 75:8)
17. Curved moldings.
18. Leaders. (abbr.)
20. From his shoulders and _____ he was higher. (1 Sam. 9:2)
22. Let us go ... three days' journey into the _____. (Ex. 5:3)
25. Belonging to an Egyptian sun god.
26. And _____ thine heart to understanding. (Prov. 2:2)
27. My tongue is the _____ of a ready writer. (Ps. 45:1)
28. Bore his _____ through with a thorn? (Job 41:2)
31. Tumeric.
32. Why is thy spirit so _____? (1 Kings 21:5)
33. In the manner of.
34. Evening. (poetic)
35. Make lace.
36. The children of ... _____. (Neh. 7:47)
38. Machine part.
39. But out of a branch of her roots shall one stand up in his _____. (Dan. 11:7)
40. And the cart came into the field of _____. (1 Sam. 6:14)
43. Insect egg.
44. Jesus cried out in a loud voice, '_____ ...' (Mark 15:34)
45. Route. (abbr.)
47. He ... saw others standing _____ in the marketplace. (Matt. 20:3)
51. How will you escape being condemned to _____? (Matt. 23:33)



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

52. _____ He that liveth, and was dead. (Rev. 1:18; 2 words)
 53. Whither have ye made a _____ today? (1 Sam. 27:10)
 54. Pre-owned.
 55. Is _____ merry? Let him sing. (James 5:13)
 56. Even unto the _____ of the year. (Deut. 11:12; plural)
- ## DOWN
1. Will a _____ rob God? (Mal. 3:8)
 2. Unlock. (poetic)
 3. Thy King cometh unto thee: ... riding upon an _____. (Zech. 9:9)
 4. _____: but the name of that city was called Luz. (Gen. 28:19)
 5. But seek ye _____ the kingdom of God. (Matt. 6:33)
 6. Chemical suffix.
 7. Who for the joy that was set before Him _____ the cross. (Heb. 12:2)
 8. Flat-bottomed boats.
 9. Roman attire.
 10. Of U.S. origin. (abbr.)
 11. A crown ... upon His head, and a _____ in His right hand. (Matt. 27:29)
 19. And will make Nineveh ... _____ like a wilderness. (Zeph. 2:13)
 21. Temple vessel: fire _____.
 22. For a good man some would even _____ to die. (Rom. 5:7)
 23. Fencing sword.
 24. Meted out heaven with the _____. (Isa. 40:12)
 27. Butter serving unit.
 28. And the sons of Onam were, Shammai, and _____. (1 Chron. 2:28)
 29. Large quantity. (2 words)
 30. Opposite of "wax."
 32. Then Philip went down to the city of _____, and preached Christ unto them. (Acts 8:5)
 35. Greek T.
 36. Greek letter.
 37. Clothing.
 38. Unto us a _____ is born. (Isa. 9:6)
 39. Because mine _____ doth not triumph over me. (Ps. 41:11)
 40. _____ the Antiochite. (1 Chron. 12:3)
 41. Corrida cheers.
 42. Smote Job ... from the _____ of his foot. (Job 2:7)
 46. Sunbathe.
 48. Put on.
 49. Boy.
 50. Eight kings of England.

Famous Christians from previous centuries

Heroes of the Faith

Beloved professor Hodge honored by Princeton 150 years ago

Charles Hodge (1797–1878) was a conservative Presbyterian scholar and a professor at Princeton Theological Seminary for more than five decades.

He was born Dec. 27, 1797, in Philadelphia to Hugh and Mary Hodge.

His father died seven months later from complications of yellow fever in the epidemic of 1795; his parents lost three sons in epidemics in 1793 and 1795.

Hodge and his brother, Hugh Lenox, were brought up by relatives in the Presbyterian tradition.

Their mother took in boarders to help them get an education.

The family moved to Somerville, New Jersey, in 1810, where Hodge attended a classical academy.

At 14 he enrolled at Princeton College and three years later became a Christian during a campus revival, joining the local Presbyterian church.

Entering Princeton Seminary in 1816, Hodge decided to study for the ministry. His studies were rigorous.

He graduated in 1819 and was licensed to preach the following year. He served as an interim preacher in Philadelphia and Woodbury, New Jersey.



HODGE

Hodge became an assistant professor of biblical languages at Princeton Seminary in 1820.

When he published his first pamphlet in 1822, he was appointed full professor of Oriental and biblical

literature, and held a chair of theology from 1840 to his death.

He married Sarah Bache, Benjamin Franklin's great-granddaughter, in 1822, and they had eight children. When she died in 1849, he married Mary Stockton, one of Sarah's friends.

Prolific author

A prolific author, Hodge wrote an influential three-volume "Systematic Theology" as well as many biblical commentaries.

He founded the "Biblical Repertory," later named the "Princeton Review," and for 46 years edited the journal.

A faithful Christian and caring husband and father, he also was devoted to his students.

When he died on June 22, 1878, all of the town of Princeton closed down to honor him.

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).



Thursday, April 28, 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
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For more information and to register, visit alsbom.org/lift. Lunch will be provided. Questions? Contact Karen Gosselin, kgosselin@alsbom.org, (334) 613-2318.



Worship Resources
 Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

“Delight yourself in the Almighty and lift up your face to God.” Job 22:26 (CSB)



PRAY FOR THE HURTING

IMB workers offer specific ways Southern Baptists can pray for Christians in Russia

(continued from page 1)

“Particularly as you are praying for them, pray for safety and that they will make wise decisions,” Felts said. “Each one of them has decisions to make that are going to be hard.”

IMB workers on the ground in Russia are echoing the plea for prayers for the Russian churches and people. While the world’s spotlight is, understandably, on the destruction the Ukrainian people are facing, IMB workers like Lamar and Aubrey Shubert say their hearts are breaking not only for Ukrainians but also for the Russian people.

‘They are hurting’

The Shuberts lead workers among both Ukrainian and Russian people groups. As the war continues and the world is polarized, the Shuberts want to remind the Church in the United States to be in prayer for churches in Russia, because they are hurting too.

“The Russian Church and most of the Russian people are not the ones at war with

Ukraine. It’s the Russian regime,” Lamar Shubert said.

Ways to pray

The Shuberts offered specific ways Southern Baptists can pray for Christians in Russia during this time — specifically for Christ followers and national partners inside the border.

► *Pray for those who have yet to hear the gospel in Russia.*

Less than 2% of Russia’s population of 145.8 million identify as evangelical. Pray believers that remain in Russia will be dedicated to the task of reaching this vast unreached people group with the gospel. Pray they would be reminded the world’s greatest need is lostness, even when other felt needs are increasingly pressing.

► *Pray for the Russian church in the face of persecution.*

The Shuberts pray for a peaceful resolution to the conflict, but while war still rages, those inside Russia who are vocally opposed to the war face impending



IMB photo

IMB workers Lamar and Aubrey Shubert look with confidence to the Kingdom impact Russian Christians can make within their own country and beyond the nation’s borders as some begin to flee to other places.

persecution. Lamar says churches anticipate the government focusing on and singling out people in their culture who are “causing tension.”

He believes this will inevitably include the Russian evangelical church. Churches foresee a “religious purging,” he said.

“It’s just hard to listen to friends and colleagues who, for their elders’ meetings, are asking questions like, ‘What’s our political statement going to be so that when they come to arrest us, we can be the best witnesses we can be?’ That’s where the Church is right now. They’re preparing for those arrests and the coming persecution,” Lamar shared.

► *Pray for the Russian Church as part of the body of Christ.*

As necessary sanctions rise to halt the efforts of the Russian regime, it’s the people of Russia, rather than government leaders, who are feeling the most pain right now. The price of milk has risen five or six times more than it was weeks ago. Car parts are scarce, and most flights are

unavailable. Still, churches are doing what they can to help Ukrainian refugees who have fled to Russia.

‘Personally suffering’

“They are personally suffering,” Lamar said. “It’s not just the potential of persecution. They’re suffering in a way we as Americans don’t understand, and we have seldom seen in our American history. Pray for them as they suffer and as they suffer willingly.”

► *Pray for IMB workers among Russian people groups.*

Russians remain one of the largest unreached people groups, despite the growing church in Russia. With this statistic in mind, the burden to continue the work among Russian people groups is heavy.

“They’re [IMB workers] suffering also, but they’re waiting to see where Russians start to migrate to as

they come out. They want to be there and seize the gospel moment,” Lamar said.

As the Shuberts expressed their concern for Russian believers, they also look with confidence to the Kingdom impact the Russian Church

“There’s a great Church in Russia. The Church in Russia is strong, is sound, is growing and is vibrant.”

Lamar Shubert
IMB worker

can make within its own country and in other places as some begin to flee.

“There’s a great Church in Russia. The Church in Russia is strong, is sound, is growing and is vibrant,” Lamar said. “We want to hold to trust in Christ that if

persecution does break out, it’ll be something that the Church grows through. And our brothers and sisters in Russia believe that wholeheartedly. They’ll stand and pay whatever cost it takes because they know that God will use it to raise up the kingdom.” (TAB’s Carrie McWhorter, IMB)

EDITOR’S NOTE — Names have been changed for security reasons.

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For April 24

Explore the Bible

By Ben Stubblefield

Visiting assistant professor of Christian studies, University of Mobile



RETURNING 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11

If you lived through the 1980s, you might remember the book “88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988.” My guess is a few of you have a copy on your bookshelf.

We’re all interested in “end of the world” speculation. The problem occurs when our speculation becomes specious. We get off-kilter and start to believe bad things about good theology.

Paul is dealing with that kind of issue in these verses. The church has gotten really disoriented on end-time theology. And he writes to urge them back to right belief.

Warning Issued (1–3)

Has anybody ever started to teach you something by saying, “Now, you already know all of this, but ...”? Scholars refer to that as “paraleipsis,” and that’s what Paul is up to here.

It’s a way of confirming for people they already know what they need to know, and they ought not get unsettled by other kinds of knowledge. He says, in effect, “You already understand the events of the last days, but ... let me remind you of what they are.”

He describes the “day of the Lord.” That is a little phrase deeply rooted in the judgment predictions in the Old Testament. But it also gets linked to the ministry of Jesus to describe the time when He will come to punish the wicked and vindicate His followers (Matt. 24:30).

This day will come suddenly, like a thief. There may be warnings or “signs of the times,” but ultimately, for those who reject the gospel, the day of the Lord will arrive unpredictably (Luke 12:39; Rev. 3:3).

Those destroyed in the flood had decades of preparatory signs, much like an expectant mother approaching full term, but the waters surprised them because they failed to believe it would actually happen.

It’s worth pointing out New Testament scholar Jeffrey Weima’s insight on the phrase “Peace and safety” quoted by Paul.

Weima shares that in Roman propaganda, on coinage and on select monuments, citizenry paid homage to deities or civic leaders by thanking them for bringing pax (peace) and securitas (security) to the empire.

Paul adopts that common phrase meant to memorialize the best Roman salvation that wealth, might and empire can offer, and he exposes it for what it is: false confidence.

Apart from faith in Jesus, we will be caught in judgment unprepared.

Alertness Required (4–8)

Now that Paul has settled some of the details of the one and future day of the Lord, he wants the Thessalonians to remain focused on living the rest of their days for the Lord.

The phrase “So heavenly minded you’re no earthly good” comes to mind here. It’s tempting to get so hyperfocused on theologically speculative ideas that the Lord’s people fail to live out faith, hope and love.

Paul urges us to be alert, sober and armored as we anticipate the judgment of all things.

Future Defined (9–11)

The Thessalonian crisis revolved around the fear God had abandoned them and might not raise them to future glory.

Paul shatters that misconception. He reminds the believers the same Jesus who died for them will live with them eternally because God has through Jesus appointed them for salvation.

And I cannot imagine a more encouraging word for a discouraged people in our discouraging time.

Friends in the Lord, do not allow the devil to tempt you to despair, doubt or discouragement.

Paul teaches us that God has chosen you (1:4), called you (2:12), governs your seasons of trial (3:3), secures your salvation (5:10) and will see you through to the end (5:24).

Bible Studies for Life

By Will Kynes

Associate professor of biblical studies, Samford University



STAND STRONG TO THE END Matthew 24:1–14

The last two years have offered ample opportunity to imagine the end times may be upon us: A global pandemic, fires, hurricanes, political division, riots, the rumblings of World War III. But when seen in the perspective of history, these afflictions are not as unprecedented as they may feel when we live through them.

Rather than signs of the apocalypse, they are more likely symptoms of the brokenness of a fallen world.

It is OK to wonder about the end times. (1–3)

The temple was God’s house, where He came to dwell with His people (1 Kings 8:10–11). But after pronouncing prophetic woes against Jewish religious leaders for their hypocrisy, pride and violence (Matt. 23), Jesus declares, “Your house is left to you desolate” (v. 38).

Significantly, then, this passage begins, “Jesus left the temple” (Matt. 24:1). The disciples still see significance in the temple building’s physical presence. There was a time when the towers, ramparts and citadels of Zion, God’s holy city, testified of His presence (Ps. 48:12–14), but Jesus says no longer. As in the Babylonian exile, the temple in the midst of a rebellious nation will be destroyed (v. 2; cf. Ps. 74:2–8; 2 Kings 25:9, 13–15).

The disciples naturally wonder when this will occur. They understand it to be “the end of the age.” Jesus entertains their question, but His evasive answer suggests that they haven’t asked the right one.

Don’t let the traumatic events of the world deceive you. (4–8)

Instead of telling them when the end will come, Jesus describes the devastation and division that will come between now and the end: The deception of false messiahs, wars, famines and earthquakes. These are not end-time events, but the endemic effects of sin in a broken world. As Jesus says, “Such

things must happen, but the end is still to come.”

Jesus intends to give His disciples hope to endure, as He does in His last words to them in John 16:21–22. Jesus employs the metaphor of a woman in labor to encourage the disciples to persevere through present pain in pursuit of a greater joy.

Don’t let persecution keep you from sharing the gospel of Christ. (9–14)

Along with wars and natural disasters, Jesus prepares His disciples for the persecution they will face. He does the same in John 16:1–4, even claiming people will think killing the disciples is an offering to God.

Paul, who demonstrates this “murderous” opposition before his conversion (Acts 8:1; 9:1), paints a similar picture of the persecution Christians will face “in the last days” (2 Tim. 3:1). But his description, like Jesus’, could apply to most of human history: “People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God — having a form of godliness but denying its power” (2 Tim. 3:2–5, 4:3–4).

Yet the response he endorses also conforms with Jesus’ and likewise applies across time and cultures: Stand firm and declare the gospel (2 Tim. 3:14, 4:2; Matt. 24:13–14).

As in the temple and in the world as a whole, rejection of God leads to the departure of God’s presence and the suffering that accompanies sin. As a result Jesus says in John, “In the world you will have tribulation.” But he doesn’t stop there. Instead, anticipating His crucifixion and resurrection, He continues, “But take heart; I have overcome the world” (16:33).

In the midst of suffering, even suffering of apocalyptic proportions, we can have hope.

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Lanell Downs Smith

The Alabama Baptist

Kids and anxiety: Why saying 'it's OK' not always helpful

As one who has battled anxiety and depression and is the mother of two girls, Christian communicator and author Caris Snider is passionate about teaching children and teenagers about anxiety and how to cope with it in healthy ways.

Snider is author of "Anxiety Elephants: A 31-Day Devotional to Help Stomp Out Your Anxiety," a book for adults. In a recent "Amplify" podcast, Snider shared with host Maggie Evans how God led her to write devotional books for younger people dealing with anxiety.

"[After writing 'Anxiety Elephants'] I had begun talking in schools and talking to kids about anxiety and sharing my story: how those anxiety symptoms and what it felt like showed up as early as first grade," Snider recalled. "A third grade boy raised his hand and [asked], in all seriousness and vulnerability, 'How do I deal with social anxiety?'"

"I remember talking to my own daughters, and they said to me, 'Mom, can you write a book, like the adult one you wrote, with words kids can understand?'"

"Anxiety Elephants" offers hope and tools for overcoming anxiety.



Unsplash.com

Through Scripture, real-life stories and advice on handling triggers, the book reminds readers they are not alone on their mental health journey. God is with them in the battle against fear and despair.

As God began to work in Snider's heart, she said she felt Him asking, "Why are we waiting until [children are] adults to teach them?" and leading her to equip them with tools for dealing with anxiety they could carry into adulthood.



SNIDER

Resource for tweens

Snider's "Anxiety Elephants for Tween Girls" and "Anxiety Elephants for Tween Boys" help children understand anxiety and depression by infusing mental health education with Bible truths and providing tools for coping with their feelings.

The books are not meant to give medical advice, Snider cautioned, but each outlines the importance of seeking medical advice for mental

health conditions. They are a proactive tool, she explained, designed to help children know how to deal with anxious thoughts.

According to Daniel Pine with the National Institute for Mental Health, 1 in 5 children will experience some kind of anxiety.

The pandemic has contributed to the problem, Snider added, disrupting routines and activities. For children who experience troubles at home, it has removed the haven they found at church or school.

Snider, who suffers from a mild form of cerebral palsy, experienced childhood bullying because of her condition. The stress the bullying brought on caused her to suffer bouts of anxiety that eventually escalated to debilitating depression.

As an adult, doctors explained to Snider how the brain's chemistry impacts the body's response to stressors and the need to seek necessary medical treatment to restore mental health. Looking back, she

believes understanding the complexities of mental health as a child would have helped equip her to cope better with anxiety and depression.

"I wish I would have known that I didn't have to hide, that I didn't have to push through [and] try to do it all on my own and that I was loved and accepted," Snider reflected. "I didn't have to hide and overly be a perfectionist so no one would make fun of me ever again."

Physical manifestation

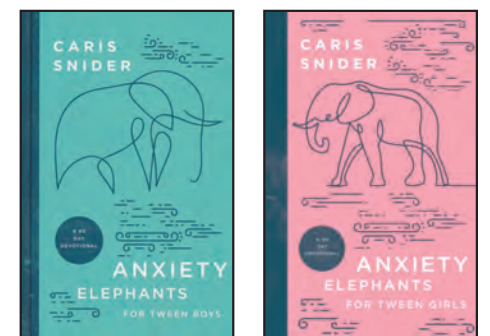
Some teens feel anxiety because of pressure to perform in academics or in sports, Snider noted. Many withdraw or hesitate to take risks out of fear of failure. Some also develop physical symptoms like migraines, stomachaches, insomnia or increased heart rate.

Parents should be careful not to silence their child's voice by always reassuring him or her there is no pressure to perform or everything is "OK," Snider said. Children may feel inward pressure to achieve, and parents can help by offering them a safe outlet to express those feelings.

To hear more from Snider and others on coping with anxiety issues, check out the TAB "Amplify" podcast at thealabamabaptist.org/podcasts.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Reviews of films, books, music or other media that appear in TAB are intended to help readers evaluate current media for themselves, their children and grandchildren in order to decide whether to watch, read or listen. Reviews are not an endorsement by the writer or TAB Media.



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