

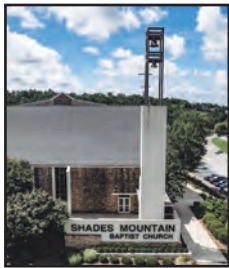
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INSIDE



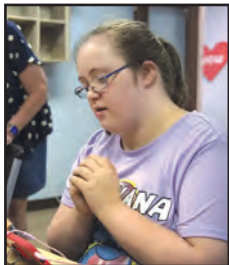
Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting set for Nov. 15–16

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New curriculum ministers to adults with special disabilities, their families

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“Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.”

2 CORINTHIANS 9:10

Photo by Alex Lewis

Siblings Liam and Millie Lewis enjoy a trip to The Great Pumpkin Patch in Hayden with their mom's life group from NorthPark Baptist Church in Trussville.

Hurricane cleanup still massive effort in Florida

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

John Hayes says there's still a lot of work to be done in Arcadia, Florida, and it's going to take a lot of people to do it.

Hayes, who's currently serving as the white hat in charge

of Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief efforts in Arcadia, said their site has taken in more than 1,000 requests for help with tarping, chainsaw work, cleanup and mudout in the wake of Hurricane Ian, which made landfall Sept. 28.

Volunteers have worked to fulfill those orders for the past several weeks, and so far they've finished several hundred, Hayes said.

He estimated that it might take two more months to complete the work.

“The sad part is most of the people here retired down here,” Hayes said. “Probably everything they've got just about is in their home, and when it's wiped out, insurance won't cover flood damage. It's a sad situation.”

Meeting needs

Scott Bush, pastor of Southcrest Baptist Church in Bessemer, said the people of Arcadia are “profoundly affected.”

His team leader, Keith
(See ‘We always,’ page 17)



Photo by Scott Bush

Tim Enloe of Westwood Baptist Church in Alabaster removes debris at a home in Arcadia, Florida.



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Historical TAB issues now available to view online

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Working on a research project? Thanks to a new resource at Samford University's Special Collection, you can now view whole pages of every existing issue of The Alabama Baptist published from Feb. 4, 1843, through 1902.

"We are so excited to have these historical papers accessible online," said Jennifer Taylor, chair of Special Collection and the university archivist at the Samford University Library.

The 1,463 available issues can be browsed by date or by a keyword search. Because the search reads images, it isn't always perfect, but it can be very helpful, Taylor said. "Some of the images are old, and the paper was old. So the keyword doesn't get everything, but it's still a useful tool to help people find the info they're looking for."

There's also a partial index available to help with locating specific topics.

Working together

Taylor worked with Lonette Berg of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and TAB's Jennifer Davis Rash to determine the scope of the project to digitize the microfilm reels.

TAB and ABHC helped fund the work, which began in 2021 and was completed by Creekside Digital, a

Maryland-based company specializing in still-image digitization.

When Taylor's team got the images back from Creekside, they edited each page, cleaning up the image and cropping it if needed.

"We have touched every page at least twice," she said.

Taylor and her team initially thought the funds given would cover the paper's early issues through 1902, but after the digitization was complete, they realized they still had funds left.

"So we're working on a project from 1903 to 1914 now and hope to have that up by next summer," she said.

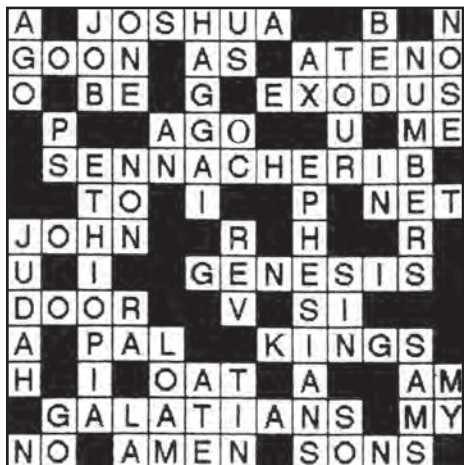
As a whole, the digitization project "is a big project, but it's a great project," Taylor said. "I think it will be super useful for researchers."

She said she often tells Samford students that even if they aren't researching a topic specific to Alabama Baptists, TAB often has a wealth of helpful information on topics such as child labor or immigration from a certain time period.

"It's such a great resource, and we are glad to have it freely available online," Taylor said.

To access the digital library of historical TAB issues, visit <https://library.samford.edu/digitallibrary/tab>.

In addition to the digitized archives of historical issues, current TAB content is also searchable at Samford's library at <https://library3.samford.edu:447>.



The crossword puzzle can be found on page 15.

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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RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

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



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@RashionalThts

Pastor's recent arrest reminder for churches to 'protect the vulnerable'

Longtime Alabama Baptist pastor Ken Daniel's arrest Oct. 19 shocked the congregation and many across the state. It especially captured the attention of those serving on the state convention's Sexual Abuse Task Force.

"I was heartbroken to hear the news," said task force chair Craig Carlisle. "It hit so close to home because everything is fresh in our mind as a task force. To see something happen right ahead of the report (which will be presented Nov. 15 at the upcoming state convention annual meeting) is a reminder of why we did what we did and are doing what we are doing."

Daniel, pastor of First Baptist Church Chalkville, was charged with "facilitating solicitation of unlawful sexual conduct with a child" and will remain in the Blount County Jail until his early November hearing date.

According to multiple media reports, the alleged victim is 7 years old and was inappropriately touched by Daniel, 64, on several occasions since January 2020. The girl reportedly said the incidents happened on church property as well as at Daniel's home and during a pool party.

Reports indicate Daniel's arrest came after the girl told her grandfather, who both live in

Blount County, what had been happening.

Daniel, who lives in Alabaster, has served full time as pastor of FBC Chalkville since Jan. 7, 2018. He previously served as bivocational pastor of Friendship Baptist Church in Clanton (Nov. 3, 2011–May 11, 2017) and Lake Highland Baptist Church in Birmingham (Jan. 7, 2005–May 10, 2011). He also has served other churches in Alabama and South Carolina.

Daniel is a graduate of Samford University in Birmingham and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He and his wife, Susan, have two children.

Following the release of the SBC Sexual Abuse Task Force report in May, Daniel posted on social media: "I have served on staff in churches within the SBC over 38 years. I agree ... this is tragic to victims and heartbreaking. Cases needed to be investigated. My question is about ... releasing more information than necessary. ... There is sexual misconduct in every profession, even churches. How do churches benefit from over exposure of poor leadership? Churches are struggling to keep doors open. How are we to evangelize and bring people to Christ?"

FBC Chalkville has an average worship attendance of fewer than 50 people and is a member

of Birmingham Metro Baptist Association, where Chris Crain serves as executive director.

"In cases where there are allegations of abuse, our churches must be ready to support any alleged victim and also to report and comply with the authorities," Crain said. "Our prayers are always with any victim and with the congregation."

Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, echoed sentiments of concern and prayer.

"This is both a sad and terrible situation," he said. "It saddens all of us to hear about someone who has been hurt in this way, especially a child."

"This situation is a reminder that all churches need to be as prepared as possible to protect people and prevent incidents such as this."

Ways to be prepared

SBOM partners with the group MinistrySafe to help churches with training "as to how to protect people and prevent incidents of predatory activity," Lance said, noting SBOM has scholarships available for the first 1,000 churches to sign up.

Carlisle added, "A big part of our emphasis as a task force will be church prevention and prepa-

ration. We are very concerned about our churches taking this seriously.

"We desire so much for our pastors to listen and heed and do all they can to make sure their churches are protected," he said. "There's too much assumption that we know everybody ... but those days are gone. We have to take every precaution no matter what — no matter what community we are in and no matter how long we've known someone."

The associational leaders are the ones to lead the way, said Carlisle, who serves as DOM for Etowah Baptist Association in the northeastern side of the state.

"We are the guys who are going to be on the front lines of this. If our churches are going to take it seriously, then we are going to have to be the ones who do so," he contends. "While we can't make them, we can strongly encourage them. ... The DOMs are the closest to the churches."

The current news "is just another reminder what we are up against," Carlisle added. "Alabama Baptists are trying to do all we can to help protect the vulnerable as well as the churches in our communities."

To sign up, go to ministrysafecom.com/alsbom. Click on the Sign Up Now button and use the coupon code "alsbom."

Your Voice



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

Tips for supporting our church leaders

The high calling of pastoring the local church is emotionally, spiritually and even physically stressful at times.

So what can we do? How can we support the leaders of our local churches? How can we show them our appreciation and encourage them as they fulfill their calling? How can you encourage your pastors and church leaders?

1. Pray for them.

What better way is there for you to uplift your pastors and church leaders than through approaching the throne of grace with confidence?

The Lord hears the prayers of His people, and He cares for the leaders of His people. Take time regularly to pray for the men and women on your church staff. Pray for their emotional well-being, their physical strength, their spiritual wellness and any specific needs you know. And let them know you are praying. This is definitely the simplest and perhaps most impactful way you can support your church leaders.

Before you do any of the following, be sure to pray.

2. Encourage them.

Being approached after a sermon and hearing how the Lord convicted or encouraged people through the Word is great. So are texts. But letters of encouragement, especially handwritten ones, are true treasures.

What should you write?

▶ Thank your leaders for their time outside the typical workday.

▶ Share Scripture that may be encouraging to them.

▶ Tell them how the Lord has been using their ministry to make you more like Jesus.

▶ Write about how you saw a friend come to Christ.

Your pastors and church leaders will appreciate any encouragement.

3. Serve willingly.

Churches are always looking for more volunteers. Willing hands and warm hearts are so needed in the local church, especially when it comes to children's or nursery ministries.

How can you encourage your church leaders by serving?

▶ Start by asking your leaders where they need help.

▶ Spend a couple of months being a greeter.

▶ Sign up to be on the monthly rotation for parking lot duty.

▶ Volunteer to hold and pray for babies while their parents worship.

Any service you offer will be helpful for your church leaders. Simply ask where help is needed and be willing to be faithful.

4. Give generously.

Giving is usually a pretty sensitive topic in church, isn't it?

The pastor doesn't want to appear to be campaigning for a higher salary, and the church is sometimes wary to give more than is comfortable.

Pastors aren't in the ministry for the money. If they are, they will be sorely disappointed! You can show

your appreciation for your pastors and church leaders by giving generously and viewing your gifts as an act of worship, not merely ministry maintenance.

5. Encourage their families.

We've known the toll leading a church can take on the pastor, but the pastor's family often feels it as well.

Occupational ministry is a family affair, even if the pastor is the only family member working in the church. Late nights, working weekends, phone calls in the middle of the night — the demands of ministry affect the whole family. Encourage the families of your church leaders like you encourage your church leaders: prayer, notes and acts of kindness.

6. Speak well of others.

It is discouraging to leaders when they hear the people of God talking bad about others in the church. Don't gossip about the bride of Christ. The body of Christ is a wounded body because it is made up of wounded people. Don't add salt to its wounds. Speak of the bride of Christ as you would like someone to speak of your spouse.

October is Pastor Appreciation Month. Don't just give a card — be an encourager.

EDITOR'S NOTE – Adapted from an article originally published by HomeLife magazine, reprinted with permission.

“It was clearly of the Lord. We could not have orchestrated these events in any other way, there's no other way you could explain it but that it was just the greatness of God,” said **Derek Staples, pastor of First Baptist Church Jacksonville**, on being a perfect match to donate a kidney to Jennifer Borders, a member of the congregation.

“We are in a world where we consume so much — we consume social media, entertainment, movies and sports,” said local **artist Tracy Jarrells**, whose art is on display at Patricia S. Bendall Art Gallery at Brookwood Baptist Medical Center in Birmingham. “It's really fun for me to be able to create something beautiful and give back.”

“We were serving. Not just me, but my music was being used ... to bring comfort ... I realized that the message of the music could really impact [others], and God was using me at that moment,” said **Janeth Pacheco**, who traveled with a missions team to Peru to aid in a church's ministry alongside International Mission Board missionary Amy Fisher.

“It was so much more than just having instructions to walk around and pray,” said **Melanie Arnold of Lineville Baptist Church** on prayer walking in western Europe.

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“What America needs is more disciples. ... Too many churches have ... observers.”

RICHARD BLACKABY

Author and Bible teacher

I suppose it's true that the church has had several issues thrust upon us in recent years without invitation. The most disturbing is the abuse of children.

Years ago this issue wasn't on the front burner. We know the problem was there, but I can't remember churches dealing with this or even discussing it. Maybe we lived in blissful denial. But today we see this issue with new clarity.

Churches must have policies in place to protect boys and girls. We want to be the happiest and safest place on earth for them.

There are enduring consequences for those who've been credibly accused or convicted of harming children, even when they've paid their debt to society and repented before

God. They cannot be near children, and they cannot be unaccompanied in church buildings.

Surely one of the most difficult things churches may be called to do is befriend offenders like these and foster a human connection.

Churches work hard to be welcoming and affirming, but today churches cannot afford to be complacent.

Pastor Michael Brooks
Siluria Baptist Church, Alabaster

Except for a few very large churches with corresponding financial resources, most churches cannot compete with the show put on by top entertainment producers. Mid-size and certainly smaller churches cannot replicate what people experience

at entertainment venues and even larger churches.

As a result, some of them [believe] they are out of date and out of step with what it takes to provide meaningful ministry to people today. That's simply not true.

Churches have two incredible advantages: content and community.

We don't need a show on Sunday. We have the gospel to celebrate.

We don't need the energy of an anonymous crowd to sustain us. We have Christian friends.

Jeff Iorg, president
Gateway Seminary

God uses His children throughout their entire lives if we let Him.

Amy Hacker
the-scroll.com

From the *Twitterverse*

@ricklance

Giving through the Cooperative Program makes an eternal difference in the lives of an untold number of people. I am grateful Alabama Baptists continue as pacesetters in Cooperative Program giving.

@jenniferwilkin

Spiritual disciplines nurture steadfastness.

What we repeat in times of ease, we will recall in times of hardship.

@ethicist

Sin is exhausting; holiness is life-giving.

@DanielDickard

If Jesus is in your heart, He will come out of your mouth; and when Jesus consistently comes out of the mouths of believers, the Church grows.

So, church growth born out of a move of God is good; church

growth birthed out of a tried-and-true formula is not.

@PaulTripp

The gospel means you don't have to hide in shame. You can confess your sin to a perfectly holy God and receive forgiving and empowering grace.

@shane_pruitt78

The dangerous part of ministry leadership is when our gifts & talents take us further than our character can sustain us.

@LysaTerKeurst

Father God, I know that You're more interested in preparing me than keeping me comfortable. No part of me wants to experience any discomfort or pain. But I know I can trust Your heart for me. Keep shaping me. Keep strengthening me. I know the work You're doing in me is good.

@howertonjosh

Politics as religion will disciple you into a person of hatred.

@nathanafinn

My definition of an elitist: somebody who was raised with small town traditional family values, but now thinks he is too good to drink coffee from a gas station.

@mhenslee

Preach as though they almost didn't come. Preach as if they may never come again.

Preach as though eternity hangs in the balance.

Thoughts that aren't meant to add guilt, but remind us to preach with desperation. ... Be faithful to the text, point to Jesus and trust Him to move.

@brocraigc

"Christ in the heart is better than corn in the barn." —Spurgeon

Impact of 'Experiencing God' study

By James Long

Retired minister of education

While God has blessed me with several men through the years who have significantly influenced my daily walk with Him, Henry Blackaby is the one who has had the most profound impact on my personal discipleship.

Blackaby has been my primary mentor through "Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God," along with Claude King and Richard Blackaby. I will always be grateful for their investment in my life.

Henry and Richard Blackaby state in "Experiencing God Day By Day" that investing in the life of a fellow Christian "is the purpose of discipleship."

The "Experiencing God" study is not a program; neither is it a formula. It is a guide for daily walking in a growing intimate love relationship with God that is real and personal.

"Experiencing God" enables Bible students to see and understand to some degree life from God's point of view.

It is an experience like no other. It equips followers of Jesus to experience God revealing Himself, His purposes and His ways.

To experience God working in our lives this way requires daily denial of ourselves, absolute surrender to the will of God as revealed in His Word and obedience to Him in all areas of our lives.

It is all about God working in us and through us for His glory, and for our good and the good of others around us. It is really all about Him.

EDITOR'S NOTE — We'll share more from James Long next week. We'd also love to know how the "Experiencing God" study has helped you in your walk with the Lord. Email us at news@thealabamabaptist.org to share your story.

‘Celebrate’

State convention annual meeting set for Nov. 15–16 in Birmingham

By Grace Thornton

The Alabama Baptist

Rick Lance said the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting every November is like a family gathering.

And this year, that gathering is kicking off a year of celebrating 200 years of being a family.

“We want to highlight the cooperative ways we are working together to fulfill the Great Commission through God’s people who are the local church, through state convention entities and through the ministries of your Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions,” said Lance, SBOM executive director. “We have so much to celebrate.”

This year’s meeting — set for Nov. 15–16 at Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Birmingham — will be the state convention’s 199th, and “Celebrate” will be the theme as Alabama Baptists look toward their bicentennial.

Buddy Champion, state convention president and pastor of First Baptist Church Trussville, said the theme will be fun to unfold during the gath-



Photo by Sam Evans/The Alabama Baptist
Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Birmingham will host this year’s state convention annual meeting Nov. 15–16.

ering. “I sense a positive outlook for the future of Alabama Baptists,” he said.

Over the past year as Champion has met with ministries and entities around the state, “it’s been incredibly impressive to see their focus

and hard work and diligence,” he said.

He noted it’s also been encouraging to welcome some “great new team members” to SBOM.

“It’s exciting to see the quality of missionaries that we have,” he said. “I think that will increase the footprint of our ministry around the state and the world.”

Encouraging

Champion also believes it will be encouraging for messengers to hear the report of the Sexual Abuse Task Force and learn how SBOM and Alabama Baptist entities have “worked so hard reviewing their policies and procedures.”

“They have a great report prepared that will demonstrate the diligence of our entities and all they’re doing to protect the innocent,” Champion said. “There’s an overarching optimism in the state of Alabama in how we’re approaching ministry and the future.”

During the meeting, messengers will also elect convention officers and adopt the Cooperative Program budget for next year.

Lance said messengers will have an opportunity to hear some “superb speakers” including Willie McLaurin, interim president of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee; Robert Smith Jr., professor of Christian preaching and the Charles T. Carter Baptist chair of divinity at Beeson Divinity School; Champion as he gives

his president’s address; and Joel Carwile, pastor of First Baptist Church Athens, who will give the convention sermon.

“The biblical theme of Psalm 100 will likewise be celebrated as we ‘make a joyful noise unto the Lord’ in times of musical praise,” Lance said.

“Hopefully many churches

in our state convention family will elect messengers and join the celebration in November at Shades Mountain Baptist Church.”

For more information, to learn how to be a messenger or to see a full schedule, visit alsbom.org/convention.

Meetings set to coincide with upcoming state convention

Alabama Church Planter Network — The Alabama Church Planter Network will hold a dinner Nov. 13 at Raleigh Avenue Baptist Church in Birmingham, 5–9 p.m. For more information, visit plantalabama.org/event/church-planter-network-dinner-3.

▶ **Alabama Baptist Conference of Associational Leaders annual meeting** — ABCAL members will meet Nov. 14 at Shades Crest Baptist Church in Hoover, 8–11:30 a.m.

▶ **Unite: A Gathering of Alabama Baptist College Ministry Leaders** — The Unite event will be held Nov. 14 at Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Birmingham, Dobbins 535, 4–8 p.m. The theme will be “Calling — Preparing our students for leveraging their lives for the gospel.” Guest speaker will be Jeff Iorg, president of Gateway Seminary. For more information or to register, visit bcmlink.org/event/unite-2.

▶ **Timothy Initiative** — This group will meet Nov. 14 at Shades Mountain Baptist

Church in Birmingham, Dobbins 644, 11 a.m.–4 p.m.

▶ **Alabama Singing Men/Women** — Alabama Singing Men and Women will hold a fellowship banquet Nov. 14 at First Baptist Church Birmingham, 6:15 p.m.

▶ **Community Ministry Meeting (formerly ANCCM)** — This group will gather Nov. 14 at Birmingham Metro Baptist Association, 10 a.m.–5 p.m. Contact Kristy Kennedy at 334-613-2311 or kkennedy@alsbom.org to reserve a spot.

▶ **Passion Tree** — This group will hold a luncheon Nov. 15 in the student building worship room at Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Birmingham, 12–1 p.m. For more information, email robert@crossroads.family.

▶ **New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary** — New Orleans Seminary will hold an alumni luncheon Nov. 15 at Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Birmingham, Dobbins 614, 12–1 p.m. Bo Rice, NOBTS graduate dean, will share reports and testimonies. For more information or to register, visit brushfire.com/nobts/alabamaalumni/538277.

nobts/alabamaalumni/538277.

▶ **Samford University** — Samford University will hold an alumni fellowship breakfast Nov. 15 at Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Dobbins 614, 7–8 a.m. Samford President Beck Taylor will be the speaker.

▶ **ALCAP** — Alabama Citizens Action Program will hold a lunch for pastors Nov. 15 at Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Birmingham, fifth floor commons area, 11 a.m.–1 p.m. Contact ALCAP at 205-985-9062 to reserve your spot.

▶ **Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary** — SWBTS will hold an alumni and friends luncheon Nov. 15 at Dawson Memorial Baptist Church in Birmingham, 12 p.m. For reservations or information email Bill Johnston at bill.johnston1955@gmail.com.

▶ **GuideStone** — GuideStone will hold a Preparing for Retirement breakfast seminar Nov. 16, at Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Birmingham, Dobbins 614, 7–8 a.m. (Grace Thornton)

Alabama news

AUTAUGA ASSOCIATION

► **Lauren Matson** is the new communications director of **First Baptist Church Prattville**. A graduate of the University of Alabama with a degree in telecommunications and film and a concentration in broadcast journalism, Matson previously worked as a political reporter for a Montgomery news station before moving to the Alabama Department of Homeland Security as public affairs director. In 2010, Matson was led into full-time ministry as part of the student ministry staff at Frazer Church, where she and her family were members at the time.



MATSON

The Lord moved their family to FBC in 2016, and Matson became its first communications director in 2020. She left the position in 2021, but she has now returned.

She and her husband, John, have two children.

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

► **Jared Wilks** is the new creative producer for **Valleydale Baptist Church, Birmingham**. The son of a pastor (Bill Wilks, NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville), Wilks dedicated his life



WILKS

to Jesus after high school while serving at a Colorado camp. He studied communications and film at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He took a semester off his junior year to lead worship at a Colorado church. After returning to finish his degree, he served as youth minister and director of communications of North Valley Church, Odenville, for three years. He also owns S&S Productions where he produces films (weddings, short films, missions documentaries, and videos for athletes).

Mac Brunson is pastor of Valleydale.

EAST CULLMAN ASSOCIATION

► **Daniels Chapel Baptist Church, Eva**, celebrated its 75th anniversary Oct. 9 with preaching by Pastor Jeremy Cal- loway (left). Music director Olivia Oaks led congregational singing and a choir special. Karen Bor- den and Amanda Campbell sang solos. Camp- bell was accompanied by her dad, Terry Hunter. Jerry Armor (right) of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and Randy Makemson, as-



Photo courtesy of Jerry Armor

sociational missionary for East Cullman Baptist Association presented certificates.

“It was very special because a few years ago members thought the church would close,” Cal- loway said. “Having to bring in chairs for the large crowd attending the celebration was a tremendous blessing.”

MOBILE ASSOCIATION

► **First Baptist Church Theodore** celebrated its 125th anniversary Oct. 2 with former pas- tor Lonnie Byrd as guest speaker. The church’s choir, along with several groups and individuals shared songs. Lonette Berg of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and Thomas Wright, executive director of missions for Mobile Bap- tist Association, presented certificates.

“Our purpose was to bring honor and glory to the Lord for all He has done through 125 years,” said Ellan Debrow. “We saw Him in every part of the planning and celebration.”

MORGAN ASSOCIATION

► **Parkview Baptist Church, Decatur**, cele- brated its 75th anniversary Sept. 25 with preach- ing by pastor Jimmy Meek. Congregational singing was led by Tyler King, minister of mu- sic, and the Parkview praise team. The church’s choir also shared special music.

“We wanted to emphasize the main thing: Je- sus and His faithfulness,” Meek said. “We want to continue to be on mission for Jesus in the future.”

Member Christina Hayden presented a plaque on behalf of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission.

SAND MOUNTAIN ASSOCIATION

► The Inspirations Quartet from Bryson City, North Carolina, will sing at Grace Tabernacle, New Home Bible Camp in Henagar on Nov. 10, 6:30 p.m. The camp is a ministry of **New Home Baptist Church, Pisgah**. David Smith is pastor.

SHELBY ASSOCIATION

► **Southercrest Baptist Church, Bessemer**, will host Holy Destiny gospel trio Nov. 4. A meal will be served at 6 p.m., and the music be- gins at 7 p.m. Scott Bush is pastor.

► **Wilton Baptist Church, Montevallo**, cele- brated its 138th homecoming and also paying off its mortgage note Sept. 25. In January, the church had started a Burn the Note drive to pay off its \$45,000 balance.

Guest speaker Dave Roper delivered the homecoming message with special music by Latter Rain Trio.

After the service, everyone gathered at the front of the building and circled around the cross. They sang “We Are Standing on Holy Ground” and prayed before deacon Randy John-

son (right), along with a couple of their old- est members, Margie Hatcher (left) and Betty Walker (center), burned the note for the build- ing.



Photo by Laurel Burns

“This is huge for a small church whose pastor left in May and is still recovering from the pandemic,” said Laurel Burns, church treasurer and WMU director. “God is alive and working at Wilton. Having the building paid for will al- low us to use incoming funds in meeting the needs of the community.”

TALLAPOOSA ASSOCIATION

► **Comer Memorial Baptist Church, Alex- ander City**, celebrated its 100th anniversary Oct. 2 with guest preacher Lynn Hughston, who was called, licensed and ordained at Comer Me- morial Baptist. Former ministers of music, Gor- don Welch and Johnny and Connie Wyche, led the congregation in hymns and shared memories of their time at Comer Memorial. Roger New- berry, current minister of music, led other con- gregational music as well as a choir special.

Calvin Milford of the Alabama Baptist Histor- ical Commission presented a certificate. Former pastor Bruce Willis shared memories of his time at the church. Members of Comer Memorial United Methodist attended to help celebrate.

“Facts and statistics don’t make history,” said Sandra Harris, who presented the history of the church. “It is what the Lord has done in the hearts and lives of people that matter.”

The church recognized its oldest member, Earnestine Burkhalter, and longest attending member, Inez Scroggins.

“We celebrated the Lord’s faithfulness and how He has used this church to change lives in the past and how He will continue to do the same in the future,” said Tim Harris, pastor.

► **Wayside Baptist Church, Alexander City**, celebrated its 75th anniversary Oct. 9 with a message from James Smith, director of mis- sions of Tallapoosa Baptist Association. Muriel Patterson led congregational singing from the piano and provided special music with David Patterson and family. Interim pastor Larry Cum- mings and his family also sang.

“The celebration reminded the people of how God has used this church in the past to touch the lives of many people and how He will continue to use this church in the future,” Cummings said.

Calvin Milford of the Alabama Baptist Histor- ical Commission presented a certificate to eight members who had been at the church more than 50 years.

SHOWING THE LOVE OF JESUS

Tuscaloosa clinic ministers to community, offers free medical and dental care

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Lynn Armour said her heart is full of stories of patients who come through the doors of Good Samaritan Clinic in Northport.

Like this one: a man who got out of prison and started working as a forklift driver, whose vision started interfering with his ability to do his job.

“He had developed cataracts, and we were able to get a local ophthalmologist to provide the surgery,” recalled Armour, who serves as the clinic’s executive director.

Treated without charge

She also remembered vividly a man in his late 50s who came in complaining about a knot in his mouth.

“Unfortunately, it was cancer,” Armour said.

Because he was a patient of Good Samaritan, a free clinic for people ages 19 to 65 who have limited financial resources and no medical insurance, the local Manderson Cancer Center treated him without charge.

“Treatment caused all his teeth to fall out, but once he was finished

with treatment, he would come into the clinic for regular checks on his progress,” Armour said. “As I got to know him and would visit with him, he was so thankful we had caught his cancer. The only thing he regretted was being unable to chew a steak.”

‘A blessing’

She shared that with her staff, and they began looking for denture specialists.

“A dentist in my church who did dentures agreed to provide them for free,” said Armour, a member of First Baptist Church Tuscaloosa. “What a blessing to our patient, and what a blessing to all of us who were involved — people calling on the body of Christ to share their gifts and talents not only with one another, but the stranger in need.”

Sadly the man’s cancer eventually came back, and he died earlier this year, Armour related.

“But I will never forget his beautiful smile and the joy he received from being able to chew again.”

She said she will remember the opportunities she had to talk about life and faith with him, noting that he always asked her to pray for him and his family. That type of ministry



Photo courtesy of Good Samaritan Clinic

A visitor to Good Samaritan Clinic receives access to medical, dental and social services to help them navigate life. Many churches in Tuscaloosa County and Pickens Baptist associations support this ministry.

is why the clinic exists, Armour asserted.

“That’s what we are here for — we want to help people and show them the love of Jesus.”

The nondenominational Good Samaritan Clinic was established in 1999 by a group of Baptist pastors in the Tuscaloosa area. The idea came from Linda Boyd, a local nurse who was concerned about the growing need for health care among the working poor.

More than two decades later the ministry is going strong, providing medical and dental care along with medications like insulin for those who can’t afford it.

The clinic is housed in Tuscaloosa County Baptist Association’s Christian Ministry Center and supported by the association as well as Pickens Baptist Association and churches and individuals in the area.

Jeff Knight, lead mission strategist for Tuscaloosa Association, noted the clinic “is a blessing for so many families in the Tuscaloosa area.”

“We get to partner with a first-class ministry that offers hope and physi-

cal healing to those in our community who just need a little help during a difficult time in their life,” he said.

Armour added the clinic is “a wonderful place” served by volunteer providers from all over the area, including medical and dental professionals, retired nurses and physicians and residents from the Capstone Family Medicine Center at the University of Alabama.

They meet physical needs but also spiritual ones, Armour emphasized.

“We are able to pray with our patients and share with them as they will allow.”

Helping others in need

Many express gratitude for the help they receive and ask the staff how they’re able to provide it for free.

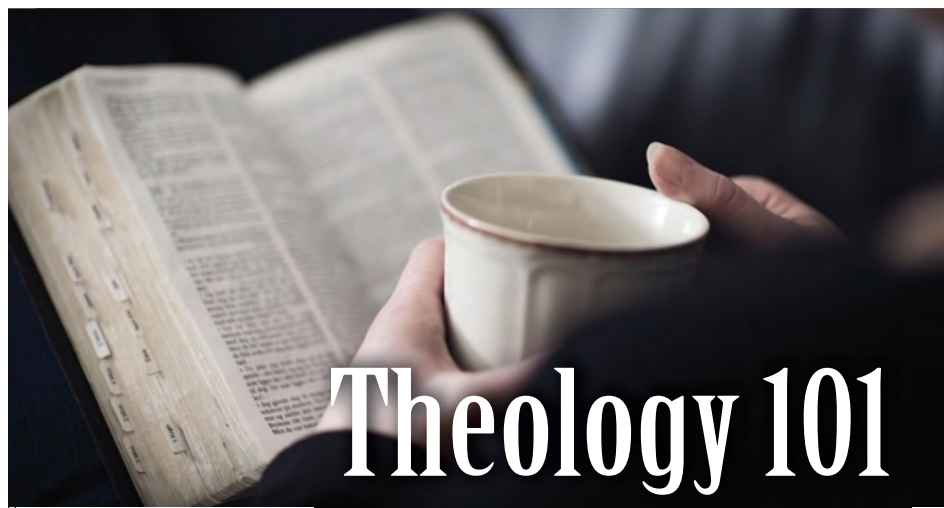
“We tell them, ‘There are a lot of people who have experienced the love of Jesus that want to help their neighbors in need,’” Armour said.

“‘Even though you have never met them, they want you to not only have a healthy life but an opportunity to know and love Jesus for a long time.’”



Photo courtesy of Good Samaritan Clinic

Dental care remains a top request of those seeking help through Good Samaritan Clinic. Many people, even if they have medical insurance, do not have coverage to help alleviate the financial strain of dental care.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

The Holy Spirit

The Spirit of Giftedness

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
The Alabama Baptist

Last week, Theology 101 focused on Galatians 5:22 which directs us to seven basic qualities of the spiritual fruit the Holy Spirit seeks to produce in believers. This fruit has to do with the persons we are, such as joyous, loving and kind.

The Bible also directs us to what it terms gifts of the Spirit. These gifts have to do with the service the Holy Spirit desires to enable in believers.

A basic passage about the giftedness the Spirit enables is 1 Corinthians 12:1–11. Other passages include Romans 12:6–8 and Ephesians 4:7–12. A close reading and study of these passages is important for understanding Spirit-given gifts. Space permits only a limited look.

The Romans passage focuses on gifts for Christian ministry such as teaching, giving, exhorting, showing mercy and leading. When God calls people to serve Him, He supplies the necessary giftedness. God is concerned with the manner in which the gift is employed, such as liberality in giving, diligence in leading and cheerfulness when showing mercy.

The Ephesians passage emphasizes that the Spirit-enabled giftedness of evangelists, pastors and teachers has one goal: the equipping of other believers for the work of ministry. The further goal is that of edifying the whole body of Christ.

This is sometimes described as “multiplication ministry.” Those

who are taught by gifted leaders are in turn to teach others. The overall goal of the faithful employment of this giftedness is for the whole body to attain “the unity of the faith” and to spiritually mature toward attaining “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,” which is demonstrated by no longer being like immature children who are “tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine.”

Marvelous variety

The lengthy passage in 1 Corinthians declares that God does not want His children to be ignorant concerning spiritual gifts. In making this declaration, the passage reminds us of the marvelous variety God enables in the church.

The purpose of the variety of gifts is not for the benefit of the ones gifted, but for the profit of the whole body of Christ. There follows a sampling of nine specific gifts bestowed by the one Spirit, who distributes gifts to each individually “as He wills.” Since all ministering gifts have their origin with God’s Spirit, none are to be discounted and none are to be exalted.

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.



Blackaby invites believers to ‘turn world upside down’

By Dianna L. Cagle
The Alabama Baptist

After so many pastors and churches struggled through the COVID-19 pandemic, Richard Blackaby stresses that making disciples is more important than ever.

“Pastor, the fact that you preach on Sundays does not mean you’re making disciples,” said Blackaby, president of Blackaby Ministries International. “Preaching is important. That’s not making disciples.”

Blackaby delivered the message during Shelby Baptist Association’s annual meeting Oct. 16.

Over the last couple of years, Blackaby said, with all of the heated discussions taking place both online and off, “I just got to the point that I really just needed to seek the face of God. I was tired of listening to the news, quite frankly.

“I’m not telling you that you should not be informed,” he added. “I’m just telling you that there’s Someone who knows a lot more than any news station does, and I needed to spend time in His presence so I sought His face.”

Various entities

The meeting, which was hosted at North Shelby Baptist Church in Birmingham, also featured various entities across the state, nation and world (in person and via video). Participants were able to learn about ministries and educational opportunities throughout the association, state and beyond.

Blackaby focused on the theme verse — Psalm 27:8 — about seeking God’s face.

“Christianity is about a whole lot more than a set of beliefs,” said Blackaby, noting it’s about more than church attendance or a worldview. “Christianity in its essence is a relationship with a Person.”

Blackaby, who was raised Southern Baptist, noted that we all need to be making disciples.

“Who are you discipling right now?” he asked. “The Christian life is an active life. The Christian life is a going life.”

Making disciples

Referring to the New Testament disciples, Blackaby noted they “made disciples one by one, and they turned the world upside down.”

“We need to get back to the simple command of Christ that every person is expected to be making one disciple,” he said.

What is referred to as the Great Commission — Matthew 28:19–20 — should also inspire believers to dig into His word to learn all that He commands to share with those they are discipling.

“You have not made a fully functioning disciple until they are making a fully functioning disciple,” he noted.

On a more personal note, Blackaby

spoke of his mother, Marilyn, who died Sept. 29 after a short battle with liver cancer.

He mentioned all five of her children are serving in full-time ministry as are most of the adult grandchildren. He asked for prayer for his father, Henry, who has not been alone since they were married 62 years ago.

Henry Blackaby released his “Experiencing God” Bible study series in 1990, and Richard played a part in the recent re-release of the study along with other materials, including videos to pair with the popular Bible study.

EDITOR’S NOTE — The Alabama Baptist has asked readers to share their Experiencing God stories via email: news@thealabamabaptist.org.



Photo by Dianna L. Cagle/The Alabama Baptist
Richard Blackaby speaks during the Shelby Baptist Association annual meeting Oct. 16 at North Shelby Baptist Church in Birmingham.

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

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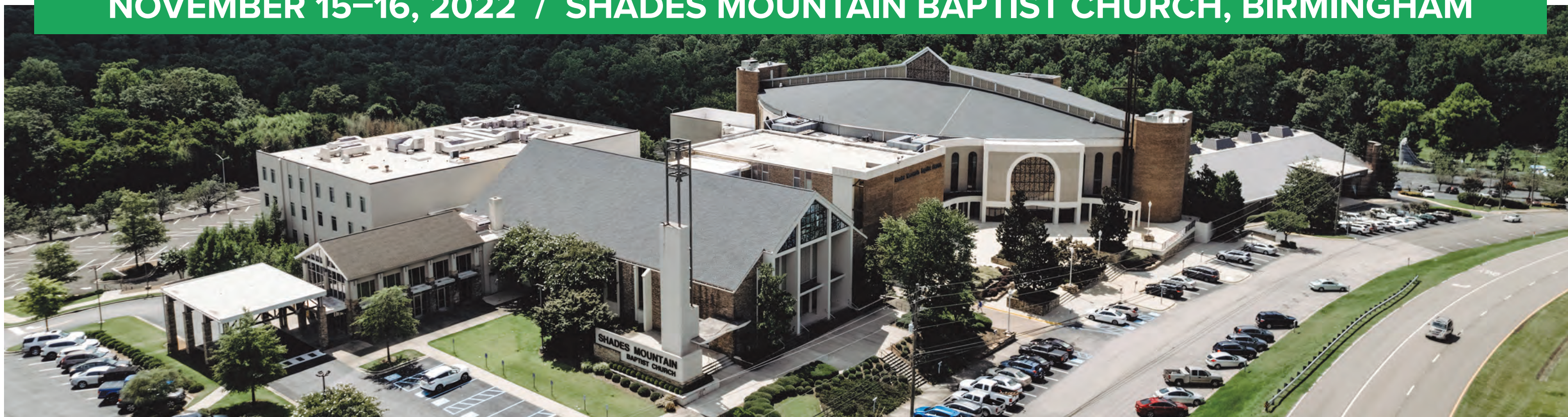
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SPEAKERS INCLUDE



ROBERT SMITH
Professor of Christian preaching and Charles T. Carter Baptist Chair of Divinity, Beeson Divinity School (Tuesday evening)



BUDDY CHAMPION
Pastor, First Baptist Church, Trussville (Tuesday morning)



WILLIE McLAURIN
Interim president/CEO, SBC Executive Committee (Tuesday afternoon)



JOEL CARWILE
Pastor, First Baptist Church, Athens (Wednesday morning)



And don't miss the **PASTORS CONFERENCE** also at Shades Mountain on Monday, November 14!

Speakers include Ken Adams, Mark Clifton, Jeff Iorg, Sterling Lee and Fred Luter.

Visit albaptistpc.com for details.

Interpretation for the Deaf will be provided for each session of the Pastors Conference and the Annual Meeting.

OTHER CONVENTION-RELATED MEETINGS AND GATHERINGS

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 13

- **CHURCH PLANTER NETWORK DINNER**
5 p.m.
Raleigh Avenue Baptist Church, Homewood

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 14

- **UNITE: A GATHERING OF ALABAMA BAPTIST COLLEGE MINISTRY LEADERS**
4 p.m.
Shades Mountain, Dobbins 535

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 15

- **SAMFORD BREAKFAST**
7 a.m.
Shades Mountain, Dobbins 614
- **ALCAP LUNCH FOR PASTORS**
Noon
Shades Mountain, 5th floor commons
- **NOBTS ALUMNI & FRIENDS LUNCHEON**
Noon
Shades Mountain, Dobbins 614
- **SWBTS ALUMNI & FRIENDS LUNCHEON**
Noon
Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham
- **PASSION TREE LUNCH**
Noon
Shades Mountain, Student Building

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 16

- **GUIDESTONE PREPARING FOR RETIREMENT SEMINAR BREAKFAST**
7 a.m.
Shades Mountain, Dobbins 614

See page 6 for a complete list and reservation details

Medical marijuana commission preparing for next steps in state

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

Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey signed the state's medical cannabis law into effect May 17, 2021, but the process to license various elements of the production and sale of medical marijuana has been slow — until recently.

No licenses have yet been granted, but on Sept. 1, the Alabama Medical Cannabis Commission began accepting requests for license applications related to the production, processing, transportation and sale of medical marijuana.

Applications were sent to requesters Oct. 24. A timetable provided by the commission sets June 12, 2023, as the target date for the first granting of licenses. A 30-day public comment period from April 14 to May 14 precedes the June 12 target date.

'Opt-in' situation

Alabama's law requires cities and counties to authorize medical cannabis-related operations within their borders — essentially an "opt-in" situation, said Greg

Davis, president and CEO of Alabama Citizens Action Program.

"Every single city and county in Alabama is automatically opted out of having a dispensary," Davis told The Alabama Baptist. "Your city council and/or county commissioners must vote to 'opt in.'"

And as of Oct. 13, the commission had received resolutions from 16 cities and four counties authorizing medical cannabis operations within their borders. The list includes large cities like Birmingham, Tuscaloosa and Montgomery; smaller cities like Foley, Opelika and Killen; and Macon, Houston, Butler and Cullman counties. The commission does not keep track of cities or counties that vote down authorization.

Debate has been fierce in some cases, with opponents and supporters arguing the social merits of allowing medical marijuana sales.

For example, Fairhope was expected to decide Oct. 24 (after press time) whether it would authorize medical cannabis.

Ahead of the meeting,

Fairhope council member Kevin Boone expressed what many feel. He told AL.com that "anytime we [make] a decision based on something, it's the opinion that we condone it."

Opposing voice

Davis said concerned Alabamians should contact their city council members and/or county commissions now and urge them not to opt in to allowing medical marijuana in their jurisdictions.

"Please do not delay in educating your congregation and surrounding communities," Davis said. "Urge as many people as possible to contact their local leaders to say 'not in our town.'"

"And please make regular contact with your state representatives and senators and demand changes to the legislation."

Davis and Christine Carr, an advanced practice nurse specializing in critical care, anesthesia and pain management who also works with Drug Free Alabama, have written an op-ed letter (see below) to share their concerns about the new law and its implementation.

Open letter urging Alabamians to speak against marijuana in their communities

By **Greg Davis**
and **Christine Carr**
Alabama Citizens Action Program

Whether you, your congregation or your local leaders sympathize with the concept of using whole-plant marijuana as a medical therapy or not, please consider these concerns:

1. Pregnant mothers can purchase marijuana. This year's legislative session saw the defeat of pro-life and pro-child efforts to prevent the purchase of marijuana by pregnant mothers. We need to close this loophole before

any licenses are granted.

2. Homes could become drug houses. The generous daily doses allowed under the law mean a family of four could have access to hundreds of doses of marijuana. We need to reduce the number of conditions allowed and forbid the use of marijuana by a caregiver.

3. Young adults will suffer the most. Multiple studies show the detrimental effects of THC exposure on developing brains. Brain development is not complete until about 25 years of

age. The risk of schizophrenia and violent psychoses (which leads to mass violence) increases when exposure to marijuana occurs at a young age. Addiction rates, suicide and cardiovascular risk also increase. Overall life span and IQ decrease. And many young people turn to harder drugs.

Before we allow the cannabis industry into our state, we must raise the legal age of access to 25 and protect the brain health of our youth.

Read more at alcap.com.

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

Place a classified ad below for \$1 per word. For more information call 205-870-4720, ext. 200, or email ads@thealabamabaptist.org. To place an online classified ad for \$9.99/month, visit thealabamabaptist.org/classifieds.

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

Church located in Mobile County, Alabama, seeks a full-time pastor or possible bivocational pastor. Prior pastoral service desired. Submit resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, First Baptist Church of St. Elmo, P.O. Box 159, St. Elmo, AL 36568.

PASTOR

Sweet Home Baptist Church in Guntersville, Alabama, is in search of a pastor. Interested candidates may send a resumé to: sweethomesearchcommittee@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Dunns Creek Baptist Church in Echola, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking a bivocational pastor. Please send resumé to: jaanderson@live.com.

MUSIC MINISTER

Pine Grove Baptist Church, Heflin, Alabama, is a small congregation prayerfully seeking a part-time music minister. Please email resumé to: pinegroveheflinal@gmail.com.

MINISTER OF MUSIC

Faith Baptist Church Midway, located in Lawrence County, Alabama, is currently searching for a bivocational minister of music. This individual will be responsible for leading worship for the congregation as well as rehearsing and directing the choir. The minister of music must be willing to present a well-blended program of music that will promote worship and exalt our Savior. Please submit resumé by email to: secretary@fbcma.com.

SONG LEADER

Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, 6057 County Road 50 in Moundville, Alabama, is searching for a song leader to lead congregational singing on Sunday morning only. Please send resumé to: jbshaw@mound.net or call 205-454-0035.

MUSIC LEADER/PASTOR

Wadsworth Church in Deatsville is looking for a paid part-time music leader/pastor. A church profile, job description and application can be found at wadsworthbaptist.com/music. Additional compensation for travel may be considered.

MINISTER OF WORSHIP & FAMILIES

First Baptist Church of Atmore, Alabama, is realigning ministry positions. The church is

seeking a full-time minister of worship and families to lead the worship ministry and serve as "second chair" to the pastor in a church undergoing an exciting revitalization. The church is also seeking a vocational minister to students. Resumés may be sent to: keving@fbcatmore.org.

MUSIC MINISTER & YOUTH MINISTER

Verbena Baptist Church is seeking both a bivocational music minister and a bivocational youth minister. Please email resumé to: verbenabaptist@att.net.

STUDENT PASTOR

Concord Baptist, Anderson, South Carolina, is seeking a student pastor (grades 6-12). Degree required from an accredited seminary and minimum of three years church/ministry experience. Submit resumé via email to: jjames@concordbaptist.com or to: Concord Baptist, 1012 Concord Road, Anderson, SC 29621, ATTN: Dr. Don Cox. Church website: concordbaptist.com

OTHER POSITIONS

PIANIST

First Baptist Church Vincent is seeking a part-time pianist. This position would include playing for the Sunday morning worship service and Wednesday night choir practice. If interested, please call Pastor Robbie Weems, 205-617-1277, or the church at 205-672-2512.

SIGNS

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Planting more seeds

Taylor Road Baptist preschool worship minister exemplifies impact of caring for those in need

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

On Sunday mornings when Barbara Lay cares for the preschoolers at Taylor Road Baptist Church in Montgomery and teaches them about Jesus, she thinks about what happened in her life 30 years ago: The church took care of her children when they needed it most.

At that time Lay regularly went to work with a black eye or busted lip, thinking that was normal.

“Everyone in my life, they fought — my uncles, my parents, my grandparents,” she remembered. “I thought it was normal for couples to fight physically.”

But one day Lay — a registered nurse — realized her patients were getting uncomfortable with her wounds. And around that same time she saw a sign with a number to call for help getting out of a violent situation.

‘It wasn’t normal’

“It made me realize it wasn’t normal,” Lay said. “So I called. My children were little then — my youngest wasn’t a year old yet.”

She told her husband they were going to the store and

put the children in the car, leaving everything behind, including diapers and milk. She drove two hours to a shelter in Montgomery in the middle of a tropical storm.

“When we got there we were soaking wet, and my kids were looking so pitiful,” Lay recalled. “They said, ‘Mommy, are we going to stay here?’ and I said yes. And they said, ‘Have we left our daddy?’ And I said yes. And they said, ‘Yay!’”

Confirmation

That eased her mind a little about the decision she’d made, along with what was on TV that night at the shelter — O.J. Simpson’s Ford Bronco chase. Lay felt like it was confirmation she had gotten out just in time, before something worse happened.

But she still felt uneasy and didn’t know what to do next. That’s when Taylor Road Baptist Church showed up.

“These wonderful people came and talked with me and my children,” Lay remembered. “They asked me about Mother’s Day Out and said, ‘We will watch your kids for you while you go out and try to get life started again.’”

“While I did whatever I



Photo courtesy of Taylor Road Baptist Church
Barbara Lay greets a child at Taylor Road Baptist Church. Lay leads the preschool worship ministry there. It is called the Praise Garden because she wants to spread the seed around.

needed to do, like look for a job or housing, they would take the kids to the movies, the zoo or fishing.”

And while the children were there, they learned about Jesus too.

“They were ministering to them, because they would come back and tell me things they had said,” Lay related. “I thought, ‘My kids are reading the Bible; I’m going to open up the Bible and see what I see.’”

She opened it to Colossians 3:19 and read, “Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.” That was the last confirmation she needed that she had done the right thing.

So she and her children

restarted their life in Montgomery.

Over the next few decades, she would occasionally pass the Taylor Road Baptist sign and think about the kindness they had shown her and her children when they were at their lowest. One day in 2021, after being involved in other churches off and on over the years, Lay decided to “see if these people were as nice as they were then.”

She found they were. She prayed to receive Christ and was baptized at Taylor Road. And she remembers the oldest deacon in the church coming up to her, shaking her hand and saying, “Welcome home.”

“Nobody had ever said

those words to me in my life,” Lay recalled. “Tears just started to well up and leap out of my eyes. I’ve been at home ever since.”

She started serving as a greeter right away, welcoming people into the church like she had been welcomed. And while she did, she kept looking at the children’s booth near the door and realized no one was ever standing at it.

So one day Lay dusted it off and started standing there herself, welcoming people to the children’s ministry.

Now, a year after her baptism, everyone knows Lay and her passion for Jesus and love for children — and the children’s ministry director asked if she would lead the preschool worship ministry.

Pastor Daniel Atkins called it “a miraculous story.”

Used by God

“You don’t know when or how God is going to use the seeds that are planted now — sometimes it might take 30 years,” he said.

And Lay is constantly planting more seed. Her new husband, whom she married in 2019, also has come to faith in Jesus recently, and she shares her love of Christ with preschoolers every week.

“We call our preschool worship the Praise Garden, and I just want to spread the seed around,” Lay said, noting that on Sundays she acts out Bible stories and uses her own drawings to communicate with the kids.

“I want to let people know who God is.”

As for the church that’s now her home, she said, “Thirty years after they served me and my children, I get the blessing of serving their children. It’s amazing to me.”

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Ministering to unique needs

New curriculum ministers to adults with disabilities, their families

By Tobin Perry
Lifeway Christian Resources

Andy is the kind of guy everyone enjoys being around. When he enters a room at Longview Heights Baptist Church in Olive Branch, Mississippi, everyone knows he's there. Andy loves people, and people love Andy.

An illness when Andy was young left him with brain damage, which means a typical adult Sunday School classroom would not meet his needs.

That's one reason Longview Heights developed Sunday School classes for people with disabilities. While Andy is in his class, his parents are able to attend their own Sunday School class.

"They had never been introduced to the gospel," said Lisa Wilson, the church's special needs ministry director. "[Having a class for adults with disabilities] introduced [the family] to the gospel."

Bible study

Lifeway's Access curriculum, specifically designed for adults with unique learning needs, helps the church facilitate those Bible study classes.

Wilson says having a curriculum like Access is critical to the church's ability to minister to the unique needs of adults like Andy and their families.

Wilson notes that adults with disabilities usually enjoy hands-on activities that might not work in other adult classrooms.



Photo courtesy of Lifeway

Savanna (right), a student at Longview Heights Baptist Church in Olive Branch, Mississippi, prays before a morning snack during the worship service extended teaching care.

"They also need friendships with others," Wilson said. "That's a part of our ministry and our Sunday School experience. That's their peer group. ... It provides them with a place to be themselves."

Alice Stegemann, who edits the Access curriculum for Lifeway Christian Resources, developed a lifelong passion to minister to disabled people through her relationship with her brother.

Helping her brother

Born in 1959, Stegemann's brother is blind, autistic and developmentally delayed. Stegemann took on the challenge to help her

little brother learn how to do many activities non-disabled kids could do — from riding a tricycle to learning musical notes.

By the time she was in high school, Stegemann knew she wanted to be a special education teacher. Today she has both a seminary degree and a post-graduate degree in special education. She believes it's important for churches to think of the spiritual needs of adults with disabilities as they're planning their Sunday School programming.

While these adults often have little trouble understanding their need for a Savior, understanding

the Bible can be a challenge.

"You're neglecting their spiritual growth if you're not providing for them in a way they can understand the biblical message," Stegemann said.

Hands-on activities

To meet this need, the Access curriculum includes hands-on activities that fit the Bible lessons, so students can learn in a tactile manner.

Written simply, the content strives to fit the students' learning needs and life experiences.

"When you're looking at curriculum, you do want to look at something that's age appropriate. ... But you also want something that's appropriate to the kind of life circumstances an adult with special needs would have, so the adult would be able to relate to it, and more clearly see how it applies to their lives."

Stegemann says churches of any size can benefit from the curriculum.

"From a teacher standpoint, it has ease of use," Stegemann said. "When the curriculum asks for materials to use, we try to use things that are readily at hand, so it doesn't create an extra expense. And as far as preparation, it depends on how much you want to go into it.

"You can spend a lot of time preparing, but if you're limited in time, you can pull back on it and do a simpler approach."

SCWC Notable Book Awards competition accepting entries

The 2022 SCWC Notable Book Awards, an annual competition sponsored by the Southern Christian Writers Conference, are now open for submissions. The awards recognize outstanding published work by Christian authors during the previous year, and include categories for both self-published and traditionally published works of fiction, nonfiction, children's and young adult books, devotionals and ebooks.

Three finalists in each category will be announced Jan. 14, 2023, with winners announced in a formal ceremony Feb. 4. The deadline to enter a book in the competition is Dec. 28.

SCWC coordinator Cheryl Wray said the

awards, which debuted in 2018, offer a unique way to recognize authors.

"We wanted to do something to recognize quality books that have been written and published by both traditional publishers and authors themselves," she said. "There are a lot of wonderful books being written today, and we want to draw attention to them."

Wray's organization, which works in partnership with TAB Media, was founded in 1991 as a way to both educate and encourage writers of faith throughout the Southeast. Its book awards extend that goal of encouraging writers.

"This is our way of validating authors' calls

from God to serve and witness through their writing," Wray said.

All Christian authors are encouraged to enter, and SCWC membership is not required.

Books are judged by SCWC staff members and professionals in each contest category. Winners receive a cash prize, certificate and marketing kit to promote their writing. All finalists and their families are invited to attend the SCWC Notable Book Awards Ceremony.

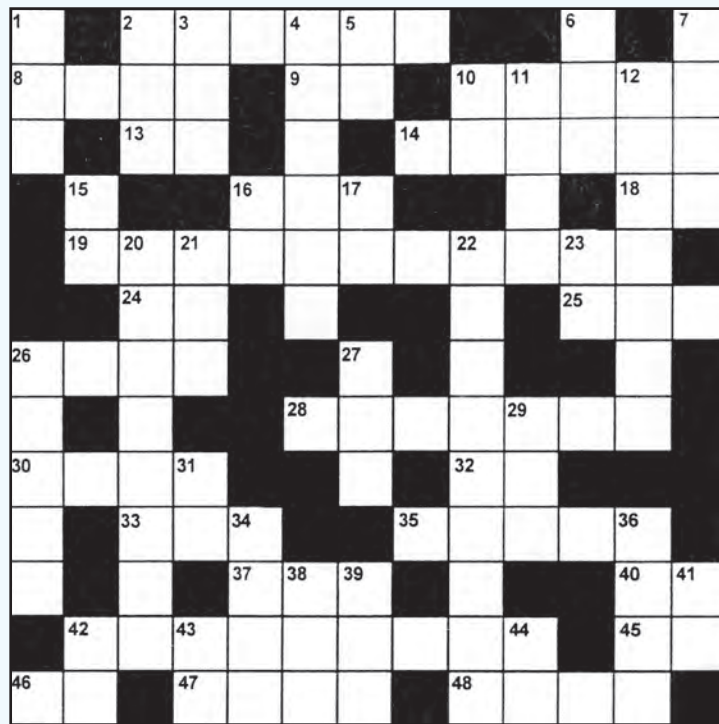
Books can be submitted by either authors or publishers.

For more information, contact Cheryl Wray at scwritersconference@gmail.com. (SCWC)

CHRISTIAN CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 2. Charge ____, and encourage him. (Deut. 3:28)
- 8. Terrorist.
- 9. Ye shall be ____ gods. (Gen. 3:5)
- 10. I ____ pleasant bread. (Dan. 10:3; two words)
- 13. To ____ or not to ____.
- 14. Second book of the Bible.
- 16. Past.
- 18. He shall cry unto _____. (Ps. 89:26)
- 19. The Lord saved Hezekiah ... from ... _____. (2 Chron. 32:22)
- 24. Ascending up ____ Jerusalem.
- 25. I will let down the _____. (Luke 5:5)
- 26. ____ the Baptist.
- 28. First book of the Bible.
- 30. Rolled back the stone from the _____. (Matt. 28:2)
- 32. Yes. (Spanish)
- 33. Buddy.
- 35. Old Testament books of the Bible.
- 37. A grain often used for cereal.
- 40. I ____ that I ____.
- 42. O foolish _____. (Gal. 3:1)
- 45. ____ Lord and ____ God.
- 46. Made himself of ____ reputation. (Phil. 2:7)
- 47. So be it.



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- 48. These are the three _____. (Acts 8:27)
- 21. Prefix for "not."
- 22. Tenth book of the New Testament.
- 23. That I am ____ the Father. (John 14:10)
- 26. A son of Leah. (Gen. 35:23)
- 27. Last book of the Bible. (abbr.)
- 29. ____ no more. (John 5:14)
- 31. Egyptian sun god.
- 34. Rich soil.
- 36. Belonging to Sam.
- 38. They ... ____ the sacrifices of the dead. (Ps. 106:28)
- 39. A metal.
- 41. ____ name is Legion. (Mark 5:9)
- 42. ____ thy way; thy son liveth. (John 4:50)
- 43. Note on the scale.
- 44. Yet ____ as by fire. (1 Cor. 3:15)

All Bible verses are KJV unless otherwise specified.

Famous Christians from previous centuries

Heroes of the Faith

Bede's vital work on emergence of Christianity in England praised

The Venerable Bede or St. Bede (approximately 672–735) was the greatest of the Anglo-Saxon scholars.

Born in Northumberland, northeast of England, he joined the monastery of Wearmouth-Jarrow when he was seven. In 682, he moved to Jarrow where he benefited from an extensive library. Some accounts suggest the monastery had 200 books.

In 686, the plague broke out in Jarrow. Records indicate that all of the Benedictine monks died except two — Ceolfrith and Bede. The two led all worship services until others could be trained.

Around 692, Bede was ordained a deacon and about 10 years later became a priest at the age of 30. He lived his life in Jarrow, and his days included prayer, study of Scriptures, observance of monastic discipline and writing.

Considered the most scholarly man of his time, he wrote or translated around 40 books on topics such as theology, history, nature, science, music and poetry.

Known as the father of English history, his most popular book tells of the establishment and spread of Christianity in England and the emergence of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. The work, "The Ecclesiastical History

of the English People," has provided an understanding on a period of English history that would have otherwise been unknown.

He wrote many biblical commentaries, which focused on his reading and interpretation of Scripture.

Bede was diligent even on the day of his death: May 25, 735. Cuthbert, a fellow monk, reported Bede was busy dictating a translation of the Gospel of St. John on that day.



BEDE

When Wilbert, the boy scribe writing for him, had written the last sentence, he told his master that it was finished.

Bede answered, "It is finished." Then sitting upon the floor of his cell, after he sang, "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost," he peacefully breathed his last breath.

St. Bede was referred to as "Venerable Bede" after his death. He is buried in a tomb in Durham Cathedral in England. St. Bede is the patron saint of scholars and historians.

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).

6 tips for naming your church Christmas event

By Mark MacDonald
The Alabama Baptist

The proper naming of your church Christmas event can determine its success. People attend Christmas events for many reasons (secular and spiritual), and the name will be the first thing to get their attention. A strong name will hopefully compel community members to come. At the least, a catchy name will allow your event to stand out from other seasonal events.

Christmas is one of the times that non-churchgoers will consider attending a church. Let's give them an event that's high quality, friendly to families and focused on the gospel.

Taking notice

Here are six tips for naming your church Christmas event so more people will notice and attend:

1. Decide who you want to attend. Is it mainly for your members, people from other churches or community members who have never considered church? These questions are broad, but naming your church Christmas event will attract a particular audience.

If you make it sound overly religious, then you may limit the range of attendees. Christmas is celebrated by many in your community but few see it as the religious celebration it is. Allow your event to introduce the real reason for the season.

2. Use words they'll search for. If it's mainly for your church members, your event will easily attract that audience. If you want to bring in people who have never been to your church (or any church), choose a name for your Christmas event they might discover inadvertently online.

Imagine words they'll be searching for, and use those words in your name. For



Unsplash.com

example, "Christmas for the Family" or "Christmas Family Fun" or "Christmas Music for the Season." When someone's searching for a Christmas event on Google or social media, they'll find your church event.

3. Add an event descriptor. Use a clear, short subtitle to describe what kind of Christmas event it is. Use words your community would search for, like "Musical Evening" or "Light Show" or "Choir Cantata." The subtitle should answer the first question they will have upon discovering your event title. In the description, tell them if it's free or a ticketed event.

4. Include your community name. Use your city or region in your title. By

using your location as part of the full event title and repeating it on your website and social media, potential visitors will discover the local event in their searches. A location helps people understand who is invited and where the event will take place — questions they are likely to have as they decide whether or not to attend.

5. Be honest in the description. Naming your Christmas event well will get people's attention, help Google take notice of your webpage and encourage people to stop scrolling on social media. A good description will keep their attention, but be honest, specific and open about what they'll experience if they attend.

6. Once you've named your event and promoted it online, prepare for visitors. October is a great time to walk your campus, look over your website and review your social media strategy to make sure all are friendly to guests.

Welcoming space

Create a more welcoming space by adding signage that helps visitors navigate around your church.

Consider adding an online service to your social media page or downloadable audio of a service to your website. An online service is a stepping stone

to getting community members to attend in person.

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

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Like *The Alabama Baptist*, Jimmy covers our state helping seniors improve the quality of their lives.

‘We always need more’

Volunteers still needed to help those ‘profoundly affected’ by Hurricane Ian

(continued from page 1) Brown, said the older homeowners are “just overwhelmed with so much yard work, trying to get the trees cleaned up and are not physically able to do all they have to do, so they’re so thankful to have the help.”

At press time, Brown and Bush were working as part of an eight-person chainsaw and skid-steer cleanup team from Shelby Baptist Association.

Their team was part of the larger ABDR volunteer group housed at First Baptist Church Arcadia — around 180 people from Alabama and South Carolina.

Bush said the scope of the effort is “really just remarkable” with “just rows

and rows of equipment” and “people cooking food, handling laundry and taking care of the bathroom trailers.”

“It’s an unbelievable team, just incredible,” he said.

Hayes said FBC Arcadia has been a gracious host, as has the local Calvary Baptist Church, which hosted the mass feeding unit while it was operating.

But he asked for prayer for FBC and their pastor, Sam Letson, as they are stretched thin like the community around them. In addition to church members cleaning up their own properties and helping their neighbors, the church itself has roof damage to address.



Photo by Scott Bush
Fred Fregel of Oak Grove Baptist in Birmingham helps at a home in Arcadia, Florida.



Photo by Scott Bush
Keith Brown, church and community ministries director for Shelby Baptist Association, removes a fallen tree at a home near the Peace River in Arcadia, Florida.

As contractors have been repairing that this week, the 180 disaster relief volunteers have shuffled around the church to sleep in whatever rooms are available.

The arrangement hasn’t slowed anyone down though, Hayes said. “The

teams are getting a good bit of work done.”

But they still need more help.

To support Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief or to learn more about training to be a volunteer for future callouts, visit sbdr.org.

With potentially two months of work remaining, more teams are needed, he said. “We al-

ways need more.”

Bush said he has enjoyed being a part of the volunteer effort in Arcadia. This is his second deployment, and he said he is “very impressed with the impact of the ministry

and the people who do it.” “It’s a real culture here,” he said.

“People bring their skills and energy, and they know each other from other deployments. It’s like a community.”

It’s a community that wants to meet needs and share the hope of Jesus, Brown said.

Since Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief began working in Arcadia, 29 people have made first-time professions of faith.

“We prayed with a couple in their 80s today — the wife has terminal cancer,” Brown said.

So grateful

He said the husband isn’t a follower of Jesus, but he was so grateful for the work the team had done that he was open to them praying with him. While they were praying, the next-door neighbor came to listen.

“We all looked up and he was very moved, teary eyed, not just from the work but the prayers,” Brown said.

“It’s been great to do the work and get to help and talk with the people here.”



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Jeremy Jones, pastor
Bethsalem Baptist Church
Billingsley, Ala.

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Photo by Stan Stepleton
Lynn Stepleton, a member of Southcrest Baptist Church in Bessemer, serves with the shower and laundry team, a job that’s especially challenging as mudout work begins.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For October 30

Explore the Bible

By Robert Olsen, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



THE SIN HARVESTED Hosea 10:5–15

False religion (5–8)

The prophet Hosea continues in his condemnation of Israel, the northern kingdom. Israel had erected two golden calves as gods when Jeroboam became the first king of the northern tribes. Prophesying about the future destruction of Samaria, Hosea points out how the calf itself will be given to the king of Assyria as tribute, while the king of Israel will be like sea-foam, useless and unable to do anything to stop the oncoming attack. Because of the future destruction, the people were obviously concerned the idols would be taken. The Israelites had an incorrect understanding of God.

One problem with making idols, or physical representations of God, is the representation cannot capture God in all His glory and thereby demeans Him. If you ask people how God is usually pictured, they may say like an old man or perhaps a lion. Age is meant to represent wisdom, and the lion is meant to depict strength. However, neither of these captures every aspect of who God is.

The Bible uses illustrations to convey aspects of God's character but never reduces God to a single picture. Making a physical idol also tends to associate God with a single spot or location. If the idol can be taken, it is as if God Himself has been removed. The God of the Bible is not limited to a singular location but instead rules over the entire universe at all times.

Misplaced trust (9–10)

Through Hosea, God reminds the people of Israel they have sinned since the days of Gibeah (Judges 19), when Israel had a civil war between the tribe of Benjamin and the rest of Israel. The northern tribe thought it could appeal to their idol and have reprieve, but their trust is in the idol and useless religious activities.

This has relevance for us today. It is easy for people to look for God's blessing in things other than in God. For example, one might think

that because they have been reading their Bible daily and going to church regularly, God will answer their prayers in the way they want. Christians need to trust in God because He is our loving Father and wants what is best for us, even when we can't understand it.

What could have been (11–12)

God tells Israel that instead of seeking idols and festivals, they should sow righteousness. The metaphor Hosea uses here of Israel as a calf being yoked illustrates how Israel should act: as a calf being trained to do work. In this case, the work they are to train for is God's work: sowing righteousness.

As is typical in prophetic books, God desires the people to return to Him. When they do, God takes them back. This is a major theme in the book of Hosea, beginning with Hosea taking a wayward wife to show God's compassion in accepting His people back when they turn to Him. This is encouraging for believers because it shows that none of us is ever too far from God. If God can take back even these Israelites, surely He can take us back when we repent of sin and turn to Him. However, this also indicates we need to be willing to forgive our enemies, just as God forgives us.

Sowing unrighteousness (13–15)

Instead of turning back to God, the northern kingdom persisted in its wickedness, and Hosea explains God is going to destroy it.

God must punish sin since He is holy. Each person is guilty of sinning against a holy God, and they can choose to pay for this sin on their own, which means they face eternal separation from God in hell, or they can trust in Christ's perfect sacrifice for their payment.

God has paid the price for our sin in Christ's death, burial and resurrection. All we have to do is accept this payment by believing in Christ, and we can spend eternity in the presence of God.

Bible Studies for Life

By Rony Kozman, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies, Samford University



STUDY GOD'S WORD 2 Timothy 2:14–19, 22–26

Be diligent in studying God's word. (14–15)

In 2 Timothy, Paul instructs and exhorts Timothy about his ministry of the gospel. He exhorts Timothy to remain faithful to the gospel he received from Paul and to transmit and entrust that same message to faithful people who will then in turn teach others. Paul is concerned with the faithful preservation and transmission of the gospel of Jesus.

Paul tells Timothy, "Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David — that is my gospel." This is the message for which Paul suffered, and it is the message Paul wants Timothy to preserve and transmit.

In fact, the saying that Paul recounts in 2:11–13, emphasizes the need to endure with Christ. Timothy is to warn those to whom he entrusts the gospel that they should persevere in the message of Christ and avoid wrangling over words that are unprofitable and ruin the hearers. Timothy must show himself as an approved worker, one who is faithful to the gospel that Paul entrusted to him and one who rightly explains this word of truth.

Ministers of the gospel ought to be faithful to preserving, transmitting and teaching the gospel message, and they must avoid unprofitable matters that are unrelated to the gospel of Christ and the kingdom of God.

Faithful study of God's word keeps us grounded in the truth. (16–19)

Timothy must remain faithful to teaching the gospel. If he swerves from it in his teaching, he will lead people into impiety. For Paul, those who have swerved from the truth are turning towards wickedness, but

those who believe the gospel and call on the name of the Lord turn away from wickedness.

Fidelity to the gospel goes hand in hand with a life of piety and virtue. The good news that Jesus is the resurrected Son of David means those who are in His kingdom are characterized by a life of righteousness.

Obeying and sharing what we learn from God's word benefits God's kingdom. (22–26)

This union of gospel fidelity and virtue is why Paul instructs Timothy to "shun youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace." Timothy must exhibit the behavior that befits the kingdom of God.

Again Paul warns Timothy against stupid and senseless controversies that breed quarrels. Timothy is to remain a faithful teacher of the gospel. Paul gives us a clear picture of how the minister must teach and correct. And this is how we should expect our ministers today to conduct themselves as they teach the gospel and as they engage those who oppose the gospel.

Ministers of the gospel must not be quarrelsome or harsh. Rather, they must be kind, gentle and patient as they teach and as they correct their opponents. Those entrusted to teach the gospel must be exemplary in gentleness.

As Timothy corrects those who are departing from the truth of the gospel, he does so in the hope that God may rescue them from the devil. It is not the harsh, rude or angry vitriol of the preacher (either in the pulpit or on Twitter) that Paul encourages; rather, it is the kind and gentle spirit God uses to bring opponents of the gospel into the Kingdom.

"So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."

2 Timothy 2:22

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Michael Foust

The Alabama Baptist

Great American Family offers something for everyone

My family was vacationing at a condo a while back when I stumbled upon a shocking fact about my young sons: They enjoyed Hallmark movies.

They were 10 and 6 at the time and were drawn to the cheerful storylines, scenic landscapes and always-happy endings. I also enjoyed them, but for another big reason: Hallmark movies promoted the biblical values of chastity, selflessness and love.

That was three years ago. Since then, Hallmark has followed the culture's lead in promoting unbiblical relationships as normative. ("The Holiday Sitter," its first movie about a same-sex romance, debuts in December.)

Available alternatives

This brings me to the subject of alternatives to Hallmark. I've tried several different Hallmark-like services in recent months before settling on my favorite: Great American Family (formerly GAC Family).

Launched in 2021 by former Hallmark executive Bill Abbott, Great American Family's romantic movies have the same look and feel of Hallmark movies — they always



'A CHRISTMAS ... PRESENT'

Screenshot

have a happy ending and are family-friendly. They also have many of the same actors and actresses like Candace Cameron Bure, Danica McKellar, Jen Lilley, Daniel Lissing and Trevor Donovan.

As for the movie quality, Great American Family films are as good as those on Hallmark, if not better. They're also original. Great American Family debuted new movies this summer and fall and launches its Great American Christmas holiday programming event Oct. 21, with new Christmas-themed movies premiering every Saturday and Sunday through the end of the year.

Abbott has bemoaned the lack of family programming on television.

"If you look in the last 20 years, it'd be real hard to find a show that you can watch in its entirety with your family and not have some point that would make you uncomfortable if you're with a 10 year old," he said during an interview on the podcast Up Next with John Contratti.

Abbott wants Great American

Family to help fill that void and to be "relentlessly family friendly."

So far, it is.

Great American Family is available on DirectTV, Dish, cable outlets and streaming services such as FRNDLY. Visit GreatAmericanFamily.com to learn more.

Also worth watching

► **The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power (Prime)** — The prequel to "The Lord of the Rings" movies and books follows a young elf named Galadriel in her quest to rid Middle Earth of evil. Scheduled for five seasons, "The Rings of Power" is based on the appendices in J.R.R. Tolkien's novels. So far it's mostly family friendly. Due to frightening images and violence, it's likely best for older children. VidAngel and Clearplay offer filters.

► **Patterns of Evidence: Journey to Mount Sinai, Part 1 (Theaters)** — Filmmaker and Christian explorer Tim Mahoney visits the Middle East to examine the bibli-

cal, geographical and archaeological evidence for the Israelites' exodus to Mount Sinai. (Mahoney affirms biblical inerrancy.) Part 1 launched in theaters Oct. 17–18, with Part 2 opening in theaters in February. Visit PatternsofEvidence.com to learn more.

► **Legacy Peak (Pureflix)** — An adventurous man attempts to impress his girlfriend's children with a trip to a remote location, only to find himself in survival mode after his small plane is forced to make an emergency landing. "Legacy Peak" stars Lucas Black ("NCIS: New Orleans" and "The Fast and the Furious" series), who told me he hopes the film encourages and inspires men to be better fathers.

► **Pinocchio (Disney+)** — A woodworking widower creates a marionette to resemble the son he wishes he had, only to see the puppet come to life upon a visit from a fairy.

This live-action film is a re-creation of the 1940 classic and includes solid lessons about love, family and individual conscience. I told my kids, the law indeed is written on our hearts — Romans 2:15 — although our hearts are also tainted by sin and not infallible. Rated PG for peril/scary moments, rude material and some language.

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.

MEET THE REVIEWER

Michael Foust covers the intersection of faith and entertainment as a media reviewer for The Alabama Baptist. He also is the husband of an amazing wife and the father of four young children.

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*with Brian Rosner, principal of
Ridley College in Melbourne Australia*

Tuesday, Nov. 15

Event schedule:

10 a.m. *Wright Center, Sermon,
"Jesus, Paul and the Self-Made Self"*

11:30 a.m. *Clergy/Faculty Lunch and Learn:
"You Do You: The Bible and Identity Formation."
▪ Rotunda Club ▪ Register via bridgewa@samford.edu*

3 p.m. *Brock Forum, Lecture, "Be Yourself:
A Christian Response to Expressive Individualism"*

CONVO CREDIT

Finding hope

By Laura Lee Leathers
The Baptist Paper

Tony Martin encourages broken believers to ‘return to wholeness’

Complications from a concussion would change Tony Martin’s life trajectory, and he shares his story through a new curriculum, “Return to Wholeness.”

Martin suffered a concussion in June 2018. In the aftermath, he experienced severe headaches, sensitivity to light and sound and cognitive issues.

“It’s like my brain was shrouded in fog,” Martin recalled. “Worst of all was the deepest, darkest emotional funk you can imagine. Anxiety, depression and what I characterized as ‘a sense of impending doom’ became realities.”

In a follow-up visit with his specialist in internal medicine, she ordered additional medical tests. The diagnosis was post-concussion syndrome (PCS). The treatment for PCS is time, patience and medication.

His migraine headaches continued 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

‘Taking a toll’

“They were taking a toll on my life,” Martin said. “The neurologist tinkered and experimented with several drugs, and now ... it may occur only three times a month. It often hits with a vengeance, not constantly, but it’s more manageable.”

While he was encountering the repercussions from the concussion, he and his wife, Teresa, watched as torrential rains and city drainage issues brought two feet of flood water

into their home in Jackson, Mississippi. They were displaced for seven months.

Next, Tony had two surgeries and a cancer diagnosis. Then their elderly Boston terrier died.

Trial upon trial

Like the flooding of their home, trials seemed to flood their daily lives, Martin remembered. It was challenging to have a good attitude and remember, “Count it all joy when you encounter various trials” (James 1:2–3).

But Martin acknowledged their faith in God was taken to new depths as they trusted His purpose.

When asked why he wanted to share his difficult experiences, Martin said, “Simple. My story is your story.”

Martin’s lifelong experiences, professional background and God giving him the idea created “Return to Wholeness,” he said.

“Through my service in Christian ministry for 40-plus years, I’ve seen many believers stall out in their faith — they spend their days frustrated, defeated and even desperate,” Martin writes in the curriculum. “They are broken, in other words. The fulfilling Christian life that others seem to experience eludes them.

“There is a path to feeling better (actually, being better), and it’s a spiritually and scripturally based journey.

“I created ‘Return to Wholeness’ because I am heartbroken at how many Christians ... are living defeated lives of quiet desperation,”



TONY MARTIN

Photo courtesy of Tony Martin

continued Martin, who also serves as associate editor of the Baptist Record, the online newsjournal of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

“That scripturally promised abundant life simply isn’t a reality for them.

“And in this fallen and toxic world, so many seem to be abandoning hope. It doesn’t have to be that way. It doesn’t matter who you are, what has happened in your past or the degree of anxiety you have about the future. You can return to the wholeness you once experienced and felt as a new believer.”

Through personal conversations and posts on social media, Martin began to hear and see recurring themes: “I’m struggling; life isn’t turning out as I expected; mentally I’m suffering with all of life’s challenges; this Christian thing isn’t working for me.”

He said it begs the questions,

“Why are Christ-followers dealing with these thoughts? Is it a lack of discipleship? Is there not enough teaching about what the Bible says about suffering, faith, God’s purpose and perseverance?”

Everyone is broken, Martin acknowledged. No one has “arrived” in their physical, emotional or spiritual life.

But by God’s grace, believers can move forward to return to the first love of Jesus and a deeper understanding of His redemptive power.

Martin also said the goal of the curriculum is “to help broken Christians feel better, become whole and experience supernatural peace.”

One way is through learning from the broken people of Scripture.

Also woven throughout this “heavy stuff” is an emphasis on keeping it light, Martin said.

As participants walk through the materials, the hope is that they will build fellowship and support and experience incremental breakthroughs.

Martin insisted this is not a “self-help, motivational program,” but the main objective is to encourage people to go to Scripture first. It’s about learning how to apply God’s truth principles to life, he explained.

The following are included in the course:

- ▶ 7 steps to wholeness
- ▶ 31 days to restoration
- ▶ a personal journal
- ▶ an assessment instrument
- ▶ a directional finder.

There also is a “restoration group,” a private Facebook page Martin said is for mutual encouragement, celebration and grief.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, EMAIL TONY AT TONY@YOUCANHAVEHOPE.COM OR FOLLOW HIM ON FACEBOOK AT FACEBOOK.COM/GROUPS/TRANSFORMATIONAL.ENCOURAGEMENT.



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More than numbers

By Michael J. Brooks

The Baptist Paper

‘New Scorecard’ to measure small group success

Ken Braddy loves golf, but he has often been disappointed in his scorecard. By watching the Golf Channel and reading “Golf Digest,” he learned other measurements are important too.

“I discovered that ‘fairways in regulation,’ ‘greens in regulation’ and ‘number of putts’ are significant, and tell us about improvement in our game,” said Braddy, director of Sunday School for Lifeway Christian Resources.

“In the same way, we’ve traditionally measured Bible study group success by attendance,” he noted. “This is important because people are important. But my thesis is there’s more to success than attendance.”

Braddy directed a webinar titled “Breakthrough — Creating A New Scorecard for Group Ministry,” which is also the title of his newest book released in August.

In the waning days of the COVID-19 pandemic, Braddy said Lifeway heard churches report 60–65% of their members had returned.

“Now we’re hearing many are at 90%,” he said. “This is encouraging, and we need to look at other measures of health as we regroup and go forward.”

Braddy used the acrostic LIFE to explain the four measures of success:

Learn

“We believe in all the Bible for all of life. And obedience, according to James, is as important as hearing the word of God,” he said.

The verb walk is often used in Scripture to describe a life of obedience, Braddy said. He mentioned that according to Lifeway Research



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signposts of the Christian walk include daily engagement with Scripture, seeking God in prayer and worship, denying oneself, sharing Christ and serving God and others.

“Our Bible studies must be well-prepared and engaging,” he noted. “Last-minute preparation does not lead to excellence.

“I have a post on [kenbraddy.com] that explains how 30 minutes a day can fully prepare a teacher for a helpful lesson on Sunday without the scramble of Saturday night.”

Braddy quoted Christian educator Robert Pazmino who said, “Preparation can be viewed as an act of love and as a form of worship that seeks to give glory to God.”

Groups also need apprentices who learn the trade of teaching and prepare to lead groups themselves, Braddy said.

“I call it ‘the churn,’” he said. “This means we lose 10% of our people every year through death, relocations [and other issues], so we must constantly look to start new groups.

“It’s also true that we have what I call the ‘LEGO’ factor. New people find no open relationship connection parts in established groups.

New groups are the key since they are welcoming and bring excitement and growth.”

Invite people to become disciples

“One measure of discipleship is the focus of our prayers,” Braddy said.

“The three kinds of prayers include class and community prayers in which we pray for our group and people we know, but commission

prayers mean we pray for the lost.”

Discipleship means following Jesus who ate with sinners and tax collectors, Braddy said.

“Disciples make friends and share their faith,” he said. “They initiate gospel conversations.”

Form deeper relationships

“Jim Putnam in ‘Disciple Shift’ noted that [Jesus] ‘primary method was life-on-life,’” Braddy said. “We are His disciples when we engage with others in relationships and share the gospel.”

Braddy said connection and content must be balanced in Bible study groups.

“I think we’re probably better with content, but people can find content in many places today,” he said. “The church specializes in connection. We must be organized to care for people and practice biblical hospitality, which means treating strangers like friends.”

Engage in acts of service

“Successful groups encourage members to serve in their churches,” he said. “The Sunday School ministry is the primary pool for volunteers for other ministries. I’ve often suggested that groups aren’t a storehouse but a clearinghouse. Members can share in leadership in the small groups, and they must be encouraged to serve in other ministries too.”

Braddy said one significant ministry is praying for and supporting the pastor and staff.

“These folk have been beat up these past two years,” he said. “They got beat up over COVID-19 masks or no masks and beat up in the last [divisive] election cycle. They need the support of church members to help them as we press forward.”

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