

The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.



Photo by Grace Thornton/The Alabama Baptist

Volunteers unload boxes of frozen chicken at the ministry house of FBC Alabaster. The church has run a food ministry for 20 years.

Food insecurity

Alabama Baptist churches help put food on the table for people in their communities

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Michelle Weaver said people used to associate hunger with homelessness, but from where she sits, she feels that just isn't the case anymore.

As community ministry director at First Baptist Church Alabaster, Weaver sees people from all walks of life wait in line every second and

fourth Monday to get food from their drive-thru food pantry.

"In this day and in this economy, there are families we have met who are nurses, bankers, teachers and college students," she said. "It's a diverse population right now needing food assistance because groceries have gone sky high, medical bills aren't being covered, or they can't afford medical insurance or their hours are being cut at work."

And not only are the lines full of a broad spectrum of people, they're also getting longer, Weaver said. Their ministry has tripled in the last three years and takes between 30 and 40 volunteers to run.

Growing ministry

"We used to start out with 15 to 20 cars in our drive-thru and can get 100 cars now, some with multiple families in the car," she said. "We

feed between 500 and 600 people every Monday we do our food ministry."

FBC Alabaster's food pantry started 20 years ago with boxes of food stored in a closet and has grown over the years and adapted to meet people where they are. In years past, people could come to the ministry, talk to the volunteers about their financial need and then receive food.

(See 'Hunger,' page 13)



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Unforsaken Ministry — Walking with those in addiction and their families through the journey of recovery.

Looking toward the future

Siloam Baptist wraps up yearlong 200th anniversary celebration

Leaders and members of Siloam Baptist Church in Marion continue to showcase a resiliency and determination for how God will use them going forward, despite economic and population uncertainties in Perry County.

They are looking with anticipation for what's next, and historian Elizabeth Wells is determined to bring the church's recorded history up to date and be ready for what comes next.

'I believe'

During a special service Jan. 22, guest preacher Thomas Fletcher challenged the members.

"What kind of future are we praying for? Does this church believe there is a future for Siloam Baptist Church, for Perry County?"

"God's left us to prepare, invest and disciple," he said. "If you don't believe God can do something with the Black Belt, I know my Savior and I believe." (Jennifer Davis Rash)

Right: Betsy Ellis serves as organist for Siloam. **Below:** Also participating in the service were (l to r) Jennifer Davis Rash, Lonette Berg, Elizabeth Wells and Debbie Campbell.



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/The Alabama Baptist
John Nicholson, pastor of Siloam Baptist Church in Marion, welcomes members and guests to the Jan. 22 service focused on wrapping up a yearlong 200th anniversary celebration and looking to the future with anticipation.



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/The Alabama Baptist



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/The Alabama Baptist

Below: Thomas Fletcher, pastor of FBC Livingston and former youth intern at Siloam, shared a sermon from Colossians 3:1-4. Fletcher also serves as a chaplain for the Army National Guard.



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/The Alabama Baptist



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/The Alabama Baptist

To see a gallery of photos of Siloam Baptist Church's 200th anniversary, visit tabonline.org/siloam.

The Alabama Baptist

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

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The crossword puzzle can be found on page 15.



RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

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



jrash@thealabamabaptist.org



@RashionalThts

Imagine the ripple effect with God's face shining on all of us

When Pastor David Eldridge prayed Numbers 6:24–26 over our TAB Media Group team last week during our annual staff retreat, I couldn't help but smile.

Several mentors have prayed that same passage over me through the years, and a few months ago, my friend, Pam, gave me a beautiful magnet with the Scripture printed on it.

Each time I open my refrigerator at home, I'm reminded of her prayer for me — and it always calms my spirit.

The reason Pam even had the magnet to give me also inspires me. "It's my ministry," she explained, noting she keeps several on hand and waits patiently on a prompting by the Holy Spirit for when and to whom to give one of the magnets.

Another friend makes small wooden crosses and hangs them on a rope the perfect length for a necklace. He and his wife use the crosses as their ministry to share hope with those they meet as well as to open the door for a gospel conversation.

As I was thinking about all of these friends and voicing a prayer of gratitude for each of them, I was reminded of the countless stories about similar individual ministry efforts

"The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make His face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn His face toward you
and give you peace."

NUMBERS 6:24–26

our team has been privileged to share through the years. Each week in the print edition and through a continuous flow of content online, you'll find story after story of how God is

working through His people. The content we share also demonstrates how each of us can pinpoint our calling as well as where we can spend our energy as we all work together toward

the ultimate goal of loving Jesus and making Him known.

When we are in that space, we can then fully understand the summary note the Lord impressed on Moses to share with Aaron and his sons in Numbers 6. The concluding verse of that chapter (verse 27) says, "In this way they will pronounce my name over the Israelites, and I will bless them."

According to the commentary notes in my Experiencing God Bible (a big thank you to Ric Camp and Shelby Association for the incredible gift), "Blessing marks you as belonging to God. Is it clear to others that you belong to God?"

New way of sharing information about events sponsored by State Board of Missions launches in this week's issue

Flip over to pages 14 and 15 to check out our new style for sharing information about events sponsored by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

We are excited to partner with SBOM to provide details for upcoming workshops, conferences and other activities in a simple, easy-to-read format.

Events have traditionally been promoted on full-page ads provided by SBOM.

While ads with special mes-

sages from SBOM will continue to appear in The Alabama Baptist from time to time, the event promotions will now mainly be found next to the classified ads and crossword puzzle — two extremely popular sections of our publication.

Wide range of topics

We are able to report on at least six events per week with this new format, which means 300 promotional announcements per year will focus on SBOM events.

If you haven't checked out resources and events offered by SBOM lately, then be sure to take a peek at the listings each week.

A calendar of events also can be found at alsbom.org/events.

You'll find workshops on leadership, disciple-making, evangelism, VBS training, ministers' tax preparation and so much more.

Conferences are available for church staff, lay leaders, bivocational ministers, senior adults and many others. —Jennifer D. Rash

Your Voice



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

Weighty questions point to necessity of prayer

By Art Toalston

Writer and retired editor, Nashville

Who do you think you are?" It's a question that, for some reason, I've been asking myself in recent days.

And it has pushed me to other pointed questions during quiet moments away from the rush of life and sometimes in the midst of it.

Here are some that I've been grappling with:

"Are you nonchalant in the presence of the Creator of the universe? Do you ever ponder the intricacy of your soul and your body? Are you less than respectful of the greatest royalty ever known?"

It's not a fire-and-brimstone in-

ner interrogation, just a calm flow of weighty questions.

"Are you dismissive of the supernatural courage of Christ's early followers? Are you dismissive of the martyrs' faith through the ages, even today in lands of turmoil, repression and violence?"

"Are you apathetic about the magnitude of Jesus' call to love one another? Are you too sheepish to tell others about the transformative faith you've experienced time after time?"

"Are you giving short shrift to God's forgiveness through Christ's death and resurrection? Are you

too earthbound to ponder the prospect of heaven?"

There's a wealth of Scripture that's relevant to the questions I've been confronted with.

Here's one, a prayer of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 1:18-19:

"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what is the wealth of His glorious inheritance in the saints and what is the immeasurable greatness of

His power toward us who believe"

Another is found in Ephesians 3:16-19:

"I pray that He may grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power in your inner being through His Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith."

'Fullness of God'

"I pray that you, being rooted and firmly established in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and width, height and depth of God's love, and to know Christ's love that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

So put me on your prayer list. And perhaps ask a friend or two to put you on theirs.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Art Toalston is a writer based in Nashville, Tennessee. He retired in 2019 as senior editor of Baptist Press. His website is arttoalston.com.



TOALSTON

Thoughts from The-Scroll.com

There is an important secondary application for every believer here, regardless of giftedness in teaching: We must all be careful to speak truth in love. When the truth of God and love of God collide in the hearts of men, enemies dissolve and hearts are changed.

James Hammack
"Truth in love"

Find someone — a trustworthy friend, a Bible study leader, a sibling — and ask if they'd be willing for you to come alongside each other to grow a healthy habit in your spiritual journey.

Hannah Muñoz
"Accountability matters"

Faith is not telling God the outcome and trusting Him to do it. It is trusting God in the outcome and knowing He will walk us through it, whatever that may be.

Amy Hacker
"A mustard seed of faith"

What practice could you add ... that would allow you to worship God in a way that is specific and meaningful for you?

Jessica Ingram
"What's your worship language?"

'Lordship' critical element

By Pastor Michael J. Brooks

Siluria Baptist Church, Alabaster

Bestselling author James Patterson, in his new autobiography, told about being on the "Oprah" show in Chicago. He and his co-writer came to promote their latest book that contained a lot of questions they called "mostly ridiculous." Winfrey took one of the questions and asked it of her audience: "For \$2 million, could you give up your faith?"

An audience member responded: "I couldn't do it. My faith is too important to me. Not even for \$2 million."

The audience applauded her commitment.

Later Winfrey asked another question from the book: "Could

you kill a stranger for \$2 million?"

The same woman responded: "For \$2 million, yes, I could. From a great distance. With a rifle."

Patterson wrote, "We could all see why this woman needed her church."

I suppose the moral of this story is that we can be firmly committed in one area of life and fall short in another.

Certainly this is true. I've known church members who loved and served their churches, but their faith didn't make it home.

All of us have areas of needed growth in our lives. We've not yet arrived.

“Sometimes ... the association is the best kept secret from our own churches.”

CRAIG CARLISLE

Director of missions, Etowah Baptist Association

“Nothing in the Bible promotes a quick fix. ... There is nothing in the Bible that teaches you can fix your life by your own means,” said **Eli Alexander, family pastor at The Church at Chelsea Westover in Harpersville.**

Revival in your heart begins when you see God’s truth, His clear and plain truth, and wash off Satan’s lies that he bombards you with continually. A simple prayer can wash away the stress and the pain you have allowed to weigh you down.

**Bill Brewster, author
“Revival: It’s Time to
Live Again”**

“I keep praying, You keep moving; I keep praising, You keep prov-

ing ... there’s purpose in Your plan,” excerpt from the lyrics of “Honey in the Rock,” written by **New Zealand singer-songwriter Brooke Ligert-wood** and **American contemporary worship musician Brandon Lake.**

“When Jesus comes on the scene and you’re amazed at His teaching, you’re amazed at His power, you’re amazed at who He is, you can’t help but talk about Him,” said **Chuck Lawless, dean of doctoral studies and vice president of spiritual formation and ministry centers at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina.**

“Every believer is called and commissioned to share the gospel with a

lost world,” said **Willie McLaurin, interim president of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee.**

“I’ve found that if you’ll just preach the gospel, people will get saved. They’re hungry for it. They want to know, ‘Is there something that can save me and fix me?’” said **Mac Brunson, pastor of Valleydale Church in Birmingham.**

“We are in what is now labeled, The Great Resignation. Americans, let alone pastors, are leaving their jobs in record numbers to find either new employment or no employment at all,” said **Rick Harrington, pastor of First Baptist Church Haverhill in Massachusetts.**

Focus should be on making disciples

Recently I was once again challenged by the need to focus on making disciples.

If the gospel is planted in a community and disciples are grown in that context, there will be a new church.

Discipleship is an imperative. Yet many times the planter can get lost in the Sunday “affair” and programs without nurturing his soul and then helping a few others to grow with him as a Jesus follower.

Church planting can be complex, yet the Great Commission remains a simple mandate.

During my morning Bible study time, I was reading through 2 Timothy anew. The Word is an essential part of the life of every believer, and it is simple and true.

Paul is giving direction and guidance to Timothy. Paul says the Word is to be used in teaching, rebuking, correcting and equipping.

As I have been thinking through discipleship in the church, I once again was hit by the need to use the Word faithfully to not just preach and teach but to deal with conflict, character, wrong motives, broken relationships, etc.

The challenges and division in our churches are many times the direct results of the lack of biblical discipleship.

Followers of Jesus should be growing in Christlikeness, fruitfulness and servanthood. We are called to invest in the essential.

Who are you discipling and investing in so they can grow as a believer?

Where does your time in ministry go weekly? How much could you and your committed group give to making disciples?

What would you have to say no to?

**Brian Harper, lead church planting strategist
Alabama Baptist State
Board of Missions**

From the *Twitterverse*

@richardblackaby

You can come to God just as you are, but after the encounter, you should never be the same again.

@keahbone

Respectful dialogue is always a catalyst for change. Disrespectful dialogue is almost always ignored and becomes noise that is easily ignored. Choose wisely. The world needs more change, not more noise.

@SEBTS

“You cannot say that you are pro-life from the womb to the tomb if you are apathetic when the womb is a tomb.”

@williemclaurin

Asking the Lord to move me outside of my comfort zone so I can see

the harvest the way He sees the harvest. “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. (Matt. 9:37)

@SamRainer

Your church has to replace 32% of its attendance to stay even each year. For every 100 persons in attendance in your church, you will lose each year: one to death, nine to moving, seven to transfer to another church in the community and 15 to declining attendance frequency.

@ElyseFitz

He remembers your sin no more.

@philpnation

At the end of Jesus’ life, there were two bowls of water:

— One which Jesus used to wash feet & serve His friends.

— One which Pilate used to wash his hands & deny Jesus’ lordship.

Each morning, we must choose which bowl we will pick up to use during the day.

@haines_matt

Man’s greatest need in life is not spiritual validation, but spiritual regeneration.

@ronniep

Things I regularly remind myself of as a pastor:

- ▶ Giving is gaining.
- ▶ The way up is down.
- ▶ Doing less is doing more.
- ▶ Being faithful is success.
- ▶ Obedience takes faith, courage.
- ▶ The way forward is deeper intimacy with God.
- ▶ Bring on less of “me” in 2023.

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

3 stories you should know



Screenshot from PBS

Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers from various regions around the world as well as the United States continue to mobilize and work with ministry partners on the ground in response to a 7.8-magnitude earthquake in Turkey and Syria on Feb. 6 — followed by aftershocks and a second quake measuring 7.5. “The needs are overwhelming,” said Paul Chitwood, president of the International Mission Board. The death toll had climbed past 20,000 at press time.

VictoryLand president says no more bingo

The president of VictoryLand says he has no plans to offer electronic bingo at the Macon County casino anytime soon.

VictoryLand president Lewis Benefield told AL.com the casino has shut down its electronic bingo operation and laid off several hundred employees.

Benefield said his hope is to instead offer betting on historical horse races. VictoryLand already offers gambling on simulcasts of horse races and greyhound races held in other states and countries, as does the Birmingham Race Course, where Benefield is also president.

Alabama courts have ruled numerous times through the years that VictoryLand’s bingo operations are illegal slot machines. Those decisions have resulted in multiple closures and reopenings. (TAB)

Minnesota law affirms, protects abortion rights

Minnesota is the first state to codify abortion as a fundamental right after the reversal of *Roe v. Wade*, joining four states and the District of Columbia where legislative laws affirm abortion rights throughout pregnancy.

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz signed the Protect Reproductive Options (PRO) Act on Jan. 31 after the Minnesota Legislature passed the law Jan. 27. Minnesota joins Colorado, New Jersey, Oregon, Vermont and D.C. where abortion rights are codified throughout pregnancy by acts of the respective legislatures, according to the Guttmacher Institute.

Abortion was already legal in Minnesota through the 1995 state Supreme Court *Doe v. Gomez* decision, but the PRO Act affirms abortion rights that can only be reversed by another act of the legislature. (BP)

Persecuted church

Myanmar’s military shells kindergarten, kills 5-year-old

NAYPYIDAW, Myanmar — A 5-year-old girl was killed and a 10-month-old boy was injured recently when Myanmar’s military shelled a kindergarten where displaced people were sheltering.

The 5-year-old and her family had sought refuge in the building in Demoso township in a predominantly Christian area of Kayah State after fleeing shelling in their village of Kone Thar, relief group Barnabas Fund reported.

The girl suffered a thigh injury and bled to death before she could receive treatment. The 10-month-old boy was in critical condition from his injury. Other family members also were wounded.

A source claimed the Tatmadaw purposely shelled the kindergarten.

The Tatmadaw gained power in the mostly Buddhist Myanmar in a February 2021 coup. For years the Tatmadaw has persecuted the mainly Christian Chin, Kachin and Karen ethnic groups and Christian communities in Kayah and Shan states.

Myanmar (also called Burma) is No. 12 on Open Doors’ 2022 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian.

Christian father killed after 13 Ugandan Muslims put faith in Jesus

MBALE, Uganda — A father of four who helped begin an outreach that saw more than

100 Ugandan Muslims put their faith in Christ in one year has been slain.

Ahamada Mafabi, a 37-year-old father, had participated in a Christian-Muslim debate Jan. 2, after which Islamists killed him.

Morning Star News reported 13 Muslims had put their faith in Christ during the debate in Nakaloke, and tensions rose as Islamists demanded Mafabi to leave. A pastor assigned two Christians to escort Mafabi to his home in Butaleja District, but Islamists accosted the three on the road, and the two escorts fled.

Mafabi’s wife and children now need to be relocated, a pastor told Morning Star.

Approximately 12% of Uganda’s population is Muslim. The country’s constitution and laws allow for freedom of religion, but Christian churches and converts have been frequent targets of attacks, World Atlas reported.



Photo courtesy of Myanmar Now

Alabama news

BIBB ASSOCIATION

► **Taylor Gurley** is the new pastor of **Four Points Baptist Church, Centreville**. He holds a bachelor's degree in biblical studies from Southeastern Bible College in Birmingham and a master of divinity degree from Southern Seminary. While at seminary, Gurley received the Westminster John Knox Award for Preaching. He is currently pursuing a doctor of ministry degree in expository preaching from Southern.



GURLEY

Gurley previously served as pastor of Eagle Creek Baptist Church, Dadeville. While he was minister of students/associate pastor of Vernon Baptist Church in Indiana, he served as chaplain/coach for the Jennings County football and track teams.

He also was minister of youth and college of Bemiston Baptist Church, Talladega.

He and his wife, Sarah, have two children.

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

► **Amy Byrd** is the new minister to women and girls of **Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover**. She was previously minister to girls at Hunter Street.



BYRD

Byrd, who grew up at Hunter Street, has been on staff since 2008 and also has served as director of girl's ministry.

She holds a bachelor's degree from Auburn University and a master's degree in biblical counseling from Southern Seminary. She and her husband, William, have three children.

► **The Church at Shelby Crossings, Calera**, is hosting Level Up to aid the spiritual, academic and physical growth of children in grades K-3. The ministry will take place one Saturday a month during the school year from 9 a.m. until noon and includes math and reading skills practice lessons as well as fun recreational games, a Bible lesson and a healthy lunch. The Saturdays are free, but registration is required.

"We are excited to partner with our communi-

ty to take the hearts and minds of children to the next level," said Theresa Preston, who is coordinating the new ministry. "We saw a need in our area to come alongside parents and teachers to help children educationally, while also providing a safe time for fun and fellowship. Our desire is to offer a loving and welcoming environment for learning and a healthy lunch as well."

The next Saturdays are Feb. 25, March 18, April 15 and May 20.

Parents can register their children online at shelbycrossings.com/level-up.

BLOUNT COUNTY ASSOCIATION

► **Pleasant View Missionary Baptist Church, Holly Pond**, will host its regular third Sunday night singing Feb. 19 at 5 p.m. with 2ndMile from De Kalb, Mississippi.

COFFEE ASSOCIATION

► Enterprise Military Support Group meets Tuesdays at 6 p.m. at **Church on Boll Weevil Circle, Enterprise**.

DALE ASSOCIATION

► **John Edwards III** is the new pastor of **Rocky Head Baptist Church, Ariton**. He previously served as pastor of First Baptist Church Harold, Milton, Florida. He has college credits from Tallahassee Community College in criminology and the University of Arkansas in retail business. Edwards also completed professional certifica-



EDWARDS

tions in human resources and Six Sigma project management.

He has a 28-year retail background with Sam's Club, 15 years in law enforcement and is a veteran of the U.S. Air Force.

He and his wife, Cynthia, have one daughter and two grandchildren.

MOBILE ASSOCIATION

► **Westlake Church, Wilmer**, will celebrate its 4th anniversary March 5. Endel Lee, chaplain and retired Rear Admiral, will bring the message. The service begins at 10 a.m. and will be followed by a covered dish fellowship. Vaughan Gardner is pastor.



GRIFFITH

RUSSELL ASSOCIATION

► **Alan Griffith** retired Dec. 31, 2022, as pastor of **Emmanuel Baptist Church, Phenix City**, after serving 34 years. This was his first and only church. Before becoming a pastor, he was in general contract construction work. He earned a graduate of theology degree from Bethany Bible College, Dothan. Griffith and his wife, Trenda, have four children and 10 grandchildren.

TALLAPOOSA ASSOCIATION

► **Calvary Heights Baptist Church, Alexander City**, has been renamed **Grace Pointe Baptist Church**. Members recently voted to change the name as part of the church's revitalization/replant process.

Samford names Hunt general counsel

Joseph H. "Jody" Hunt has been hired as Samford University's next general counsel. He will begin his tenure March 1.

Hunt, who has served more than 30 years in both public and private law practice in the U.S., spent his childhood in Taiwan and other Asian countries as a missionary kid. His parents are retired missionaries Bob and Rosalie Hunt of Guntersville.

Hunt is taking the position over from Clark Watson who is retiring after serving as general counsel since 2015. Watson, a graduate of Cumberland School of Law, previously served on the university's board of trustees from 2003 to 2011 and served as its chair from 2007 to 2011.



HUNT

He and Hunt both clerked for U.S. District Judge James H. Hancock of the Northern District of Alabama early in their careers.

Hunt, who was co-valedictorian of his 1982 class at Samford, received his bachelor of science degree in public administration from Howard College of Arts and Sciences. He went on to earn a master of arts from Florida State University and his juris doctor from Columbia University Law School. He worked for the U.S. Department of Justice for 21 years, including a stint as assistant attorney general, and was Samford's Alumnus of the Year in 2021.

Hunt and his wife, Lori, have three children. (SU, TAB)



WATSON

Correction

An item about Central Baptist Church's 100th anniversary was published under an incorrect associational label in the Feb. 2 issue of The Alabama Baptist. The label should have been Russell Association. We regret the error.

Preaching professor urges pastors to use all senses in biblical exegesis

By Michael J. Brooks
The Alabama Baptist

Robert Smith Jr., professor of Christian preaching at Beeson Divinity School at Samford University, suggests an occupational hazard in pulpit ministry is reading the Bible too quickly.

“We must read the Bible slowly, without assumption,” he asserted.

Smith, in his 26th year at Beeson, was the guest speaker at a recent Birmingham Metro Baptist Association pastors fellowship at First Baptist Church Birmingham.

“A great obstacle is we think we know the text, many of them so familiar,” Smith explained, “but we must bring the naiveté of a child to our reading as though we’ve never been there before. We focus on the passage, think through it and internalize what it says.

“We can be guilty of trespassing on the territory of the Holy Spirit unless we read the text again and again until its words own us,” Smith said. “We use our cranial and cardiological skills until the truth is imprinted on the screens of our minds and we’re moved by our understanding.”

Preachers must ask questions in order to understand, Smith added.

‘Mirrors of identity’

Familiar characters in the Bible aren’t “models of morality” but “mirrors of identity,” Smith asserted. “We often make these characters ‘plastic saints’ without thinking about their battles. They struggled ... Think about Abraham who was commanded to take ‘the son you love’ and burn him on the altar. Imagine Abraham’s devastation. ... Of course, his faith triumphed according to Hebrews 11 when he trusted in the God

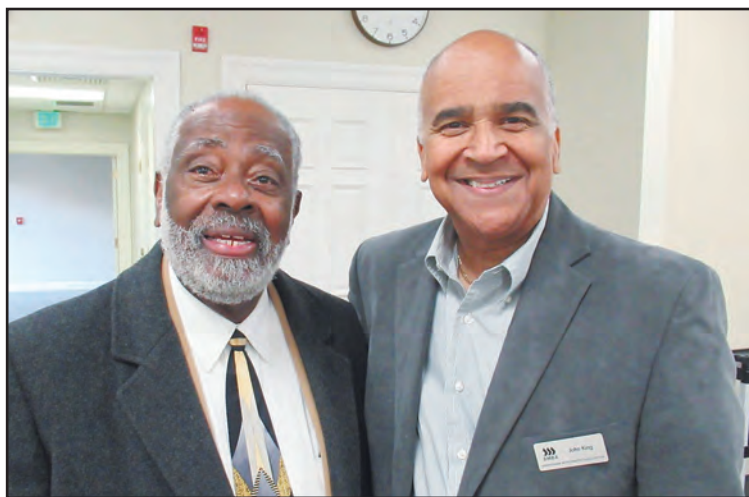


Photo by Michael J. Brooks/The Alabama Baptist
Beeson Divinity School professor Robert Smith Jr. (left) and John King, church/community relations consultant for Birmingham Metro Baptist Association, participate in a recent pastors fellowship at FBC Birmingham.

who brought the miracle son to him and Sarah in the first place, and whom he believed could raise Isaac from the dead. But this doesn’t mean he didn’t question the command of God.”

Always preparing

Smith further exhorted pastors to use all their senses to understand the Bible and to always be preparing through reading, thinking, listening, observing.

“The theologian Helmut Thielicke claimed ‘the olfactory glands are the organ of remembrance,’” Smith quoted. “The sense of smell is powerful, and we can all remember certain odors both good and bad. They trigger our memories.”

As an example, Smith noted the story of Peter denying his friendship with Jesus while warming his hands at a “charcoal” fire, according to John 18:18.

“What does charcoal smell like?” Smith asked. “It has an odor that is unique and unforgettable.”

“Then Jesus made a charcoal fire after His resurrection and cooked fish for the disciples, according to John 21:9. Why would the One who fed the multitude need to cook fish? I think the purpose here was to remind Peter of another charcoal fire

when his faith failed, and he denied the Lord.

“This brought about the three questions, ‘Peter, do you love me?’ and Peter’s rededication.”

Another sense to consider is touch.

“Jesus touched the untouchables,” he noted.

“What is it like to touch people overlooked by society? If you want to know what Jesus is like, see the people He hung around and the people He touched,” Smith said.

“He touched everyday people and invited them to forgiveness.”



Photo by Michael J. Brooks/The Alabama Baptist
Tim Dowdy of the North American Mission Board travels to Alabaster to share with pastors of Shelby Baptist Association.

Pastoral wellness expert offers 3 tips for ‘restored souls’

Tim Dowdy, who serves with the North American Mission Board, said every pastor identifies with God’s call to Jeremiah: “Go where I send you, and speak what I tell you” (Jer. 1:7).

Obedience to this directive doesn’t mean the pastor won’t live under great stress, however.

While visiting with Shelby Baptist Association pastors, he suggested three main action points:

1. Pace.

“Pastors must refuse the temptation to rush all the time” and should maintain a healthy rhythm.

“I call it ‘self-sabotage’ when we get out of rhythm like staying up too late and robbing ourselves of rest.”

2. Spiritual diet.

“This involves prayer, Bible study and service.

“Whenever we feel anxious, we need to pray,” he said. “If we don’t pray, we’re saying, in effect, that ‘we’ve got this’ without God’s help.”

3. Rest.

Rest, as well as enough movement, must be intentional and consistent for physical and mental health, Dowdy said. (Michael J. Brooks)

“I am thankful we purchased our new sign from Reliable Signs. Brother Danny came by and helped us choose the correct sign. His installation crew was knowledgeable and very professional. The clarity is top notch. We enjoy reaching our community with the gospel of our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you, Reliable Signs, for helping Lighthouse Baptist Church get the gospel to our community through the 4G digital sign!”

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'I wanted a better life'

Branee's story highlights Alabama Baptist Children's Homes College Care ministry

By Nicole Walker

Alabama Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries

When Branee came into the care of Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries her sophomore year of high school, she had attended 19 schools and was in and out of shelters and foster homes.

Growing up, her father was in and out of her life. Her mother was addicted to drugs and alcohol, causing strokes and medical issues. Her brothers were in and out of foster care. At one point, Branee was the only one with a job to bring in money to support her family.

Branee was determined to work hard at school for a better life, but that proved difficult when her family kept moving and she constantly had to change schools. She often had to catch rides to school because she didn't have reliable transportation. It was hard to make friends, making her feel even more alone.

"I tried everything I could and just wanted to graduate high school," said Branee. "I just wanted to go to college. I wanted to make a better life for myself." Having no stability in her life and constantly moving made it difficult for Branee to achieve those dreams.

When her parents weren't able to care for her anymore, she was

passed around and eventually ended up in foster care.

Branee desperately reached out to family members to take her in. It was devastating for her when no one was able to help. "I was very alone. ... I didn't know what to do," said Branee. "I didn't know what to say. I didn't know the next move. I just grabbed my things and had to go."

Generous donors

When she entered foster care at ABCH, donors generously helped provide her with the resources to take school credit recovery classes and fix her grade point average in just two years.

She took dual enrollment courses and graduated with a 3.4 GPA and is attending the University of Alabama at Birmingham to become a nurse.

During her time in foster care at ABCH, she formed a relationship with the Lord and accepted Jesus as her Savior. "The feeling I had [when I talked to God] made my heart warm," shared Branee. "I didn't feel alone."

God used the support from generous donors to walk alongside Branee to let her know she is not alone in this journey.

Many kids who age out of foster care do not have resources to support themselves. They are more likely to become homeless, unemployed or incarcerated.



ABCH photo

Branee is defying the odds and going to college thanks to the College Care ministry of the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries.

By praying, serving and giving, Alabama Baptists helped Branee defy the odds and make a better life for herself.

The support she received equipped her to continue on to the College Care program, where her tuition, fees, books and other school costs are covered.

Living expenses

On top of that, other living expenses are covered, such as apartment costs, doctor's visits, counseling, food, clothing and more.

This will allow Branee to truly focus on making her dream of becoming a nurse a reality.

You can help youth like Branee live out the callings God has put on their hearts.

To learn more about how you can make a difference in the lives of hurting children, visit alabamachild.org/bts22.

EDITOR'S NOTE — This story was originally published by Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries.



ABCH photo

Branee celebrates her completion of the certified nursing assistant program.

"The feeling I had [when I talked to God] made my heart warm. I didn't feel alone."

**Branee
UAB student**

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Alabama Baptists continue journey toward racial unity

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Charles Carter remembers vividly the night 10 hooded Ku Klux Klansmen came in the back door of his church, walked to the front, put a \$10 bill in the offering plate, prayed a white supremacist prayer and left.

“As a pastor and as a Christian, it made me very, very angry,” said Carter, who is white.

It was 1955, and two weeks before, Carter — then pastor of a small church in Chilton County — had gotten a call from a young African American pastor in the area asking if he could come to a biweekly youth event Carter and other pastors hosted.

Speaking out

“He said, ‘We’ve heard about what you are doing, and we’d like to start something like that for the African American young people in this county, but we don’t know what to do,’” Carter said. “He asked if he could come and observe, and I said, ‘It would be a delight to have you there.’”

Carter welcomed the young pastor at the event, told the crowd about the ministry he was hoping to start and then asked him to come up and lead in prayer for God to move through that ministry.

And two weeks later, Carter’s church had those unexpected guests show up at the Saturday night youth meeting. For Carter, it was a gut punch — and a gut check about



Alabama Baptist pastor Charles Carter (center) served as chairman of the Southern Baptist Convention Resolutions Committee in 1995 when the SBC adopted a resolution apologizing for its racist past and asking African Americans for forgiveness. Here, he discusses the resolution at a press conference alongside SBC second vice president Gary Frost (left) and Christian Life Commission executive director Richard Land.

what was going on in his area when it came to race relations. He stayed up all night working on a sermon called “God is No Respector of Persons,” and he preached it the next morning on his countywide radio show.

“I told the whole county exactly what had happened,” he said. “I was overwhelmed with anger. From that sermon I got hate mail, threats, everything you could imagine. But

it got the word out to the county how bad the situation was.”

And it started Carter on a journey to do everything he could to help bring reconciliation between the races in his state and in the larger Southern Baptist world.

In the 1960s, things were beginning to shift in the U.S. and in the South especially. Evangelist Billy Graham’s 1964 Easter Rally at Legion Field in Birmingham was

an integrated meeting, and after he held a weeklong crusade the following year in Montgomery, many Alabama Baptist churches established open door policies to officially welcome everyone.

In 1971, when Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Birmingham brought Carter to preach in view of a call, he told them right away that if an African American person wanted to join the church, he would welcome them.

Slow change

Carter said one man — Gaines S. Dobbins, a prominent Southern Baptist educator — stood up and said, “Pastor, we would not call anyone as our preacher who did not feel exactly as you have just expressed.”

The congregation applauded and voted Carter in unanimously, but it didn’t mean there wouldn’t be struggles. Two years later when Shades Mountain Baptist received its first black member, a husband and wife who were good friends of Carter and his wife, Janice, left the church. When asked why, they said they hadn’t believed Carter was serious when he said he would welcome black members.

“I wrote them a long letter and told them how much I loved them and would love them forever ... and said if you can find a church anywhere who preaches the gospel and a ‘whosoever will’ invitation but at the same time knowingly rejects people because of the color of their skin, I hope you join it,” Carter said.

It took them a while, but they did find that church and request their letter from Shades Mountain, Carter said. The culture in Alabama Baptist life still had a long way to go when it came to race relations, but it was changing, he said.

In 1995, Carter chaired the Resolutions Committee that urged the Southern Baptist Convention to pursue racial reconciliation and denounce racism. It was a significant milestone, but he told the reporters who interviewed him that “the easiest thing about racial reconciliation we can do is what we have just done — pass a resolution.”

The real issue, Carter said at the time, would be what everyone did when they got home.

As he drove back to Alabama from Atlanta after the conference, he made a commitment to God that he would be intentional about building relationships with African American pastors. And he kept his word.

His friendship with one pastor turned into a long-standing partnership where the two swapped pulpits, spoke at each other’s church, worked together to help the inner city and saw their congregations become good friends.

Carter said he wanted to do the best he could “to be an instrument of reconciliation on a one-on-one basis.”

D’Linell Finley — who is pastor of Southlawn Baptist Church in Montgomery and is black — said although Alabama Baptists and Southern Baptists have “a long way to go in terms of racial reconciliation and bringing our people together,” he recognizes that a lot of progress has been made over the decades.

Learning to lead with love

“At one time, the Southern Baptist Convention was exclusively a white convention, and not only that but a white convention that favored slavery and slave ownership,” Finley said. “I think by and large the convention has put forth an effort in terms of racial reconciliation.”

His wish for today is that Alabama Baptists would be known as leaders in loving people who look different and maybe think differently than they do, in regard to both skin color and political views. Division still exists in a lot of areas that it doesn’t have to, he said.

Scars and healing

But the way Alabama Baptists are able to talk openly about racial reconciliation and advocate for it is not something that would have been done in the 1950s, and that is significant, Finley said.

The Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions started making real moves in this direction with the addition of H.O. Hester in 1961 to head the department of special missions. Hester worked hard in that role to improve race relations.

And across the state today, Baptist churches are seeing reconciliation happen. Multiracial church plants like Imago Dei Church at the 45 in Lowndes County are serving as a picture of Christ’s love in areas where race relations are fractured and in need of healing.

In other places, churches like Chisholm Baptist Church and Flatline Church at Chisholm in Montgomery — a predominantly white congregation and a predominantly black congregation — are seeing God work as they share a building and do ministry together.

Dewayne Rembert, Flatline’s pastor, said God has done some amazing work in the two churches’ lives, but the reality is he still

sees the scars of the past every day as he does ministry in the community.

He and others at the church have reached out regularly to one elderly African American woman in the neighborhood. She can point out the tree where a deacon in her church was hung years ago.

“He was hung by other church men at a big church in Montgomery, and after they finished hanging him, they went right to church,” Rembert said. “We’ve been and

witnessed to her, but she hasn’t been to church in years, not since that happened.”

Those stories of trauma aren’t uncommon, he said.

But Rembert says he’s seeing healing happen as Chisholm Baptist has worked alongside Flatline to serve meals to the surrounding neighborhood and the greater Chisholm community. He’s seen white members of Chisholm and other partnering churches become like team moms to the football players at the predominantly black local high school.

Carter says over the years, he’s seen that kind of healing happen more and more too. He’s spoken as often as he’s been able to on the Scripture passages he used in that sermon he preached on the radio in 1955 — Acts 10 and 17, James 2, John 3:16 and 2 Corinthians 5:19.

In 2000, he reconstructed that sermon for a chapter called “God Shows No Favoritism” in a book titled “A Mighty Long Journey: Reflections on Racial Reconciliation” edited by Timothy George, founding dean of Beeson Divinity School, and Robert Smith Jr.,

a preaching professor and the namesake of Samford University’s preaching institute.

Smith, who is African American, is one of Carter’s closest friends. In a chapter called “Shattering Wall and Veil,” Smith wrote these words: “It is impossible for us to love God and not love one another, and it is impossible for us to be in community with God and not be in community with one another.”

“We must see each other,” he wrote, “as fellow humans.”

In 1998, a couple of years before that book was published, Carter went back to Chilton County to preach a revival at another church there, and while he was there, they welcomed their first black member.

At the end of the service, Carter told them the story of the KKK members who had visited his church 43 years before, and then he said this — “Folks, this is progress, but it’s altogether too slow.”

Alabama has definitely moved forward since then, he said — but it’s up to everybody to keep moving toward greater unity.

After all, Carter said — that’s what Christ called us to.



Photo by Doug Rogers
Dewayne Rembert, pastor of Flatline Church at Chisholm, talks with football players at Lee High School, which is near the building the church shares with Chisholm Baptist.



Photo by Sam Evans/The Alabama Baptist
D’Linell Finley, pastor of Southlawn Baptist in Montgomery, presents a resolution “On Sufficiency of Scripture Concerning Racial and Intercultural Relations” at the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting in 2021.



Photo courtesy of Davey Lyon
Davey Lyon, pastor of Imago Dei Church at the 45, says he hopes the Lowndes County church plant will be a “little taste of heaven” and an agent of healing in an area with deep racial tension.

Churches: Tax law tips for handling contributions

By Michael J. Brooks
The Alabama Baptist

The risk of a church being audited by the Internal Revenue Service is minimal, but careful attention to IRS guidelines is always prudent, said Lee Wright, church compensation services specialist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

“The IRS won’t telephone to ask for money, nor will they threaten to send law enforcement,” Wright said. “The IRS will send a letter (and it) will contain the correction (needed) and perhaps a penalty.”

Church personnel should be thoroughly aware of the six rules for deductible charitable giving so contribution statements will be done correctly. Those rules are:

1. **Cash or property**, not time or labor.
2. **Given by Dec. 31.**
3. **Given without tangible benefit to the donor** and a statement to this effect should be printed on the contribution records churches provide for its members.
4. **Used for qualified charities.**
5. **Must not be in excess allowable, legal amounts.**
6. **Must be substantiated.**

Wright suggests contribution records be kept seven years and contribution envelopes at least three years.

A special area of concern, accord-

ing to Wright, is designated gifts.

“The key is church authorization and control,” he explained. “The church oversees the designation, and it cannot be for the personal benefit of the donor or for a particular individual.”

Wright said the standard deduction under current tax law is \$25,900 for 2022 and \$27,700 for 2023.”

“Accordingly, 95% of taxpayers don’t itemize anymore for their federal taxes,” he said, noting the state of Alabama still allows itemization.

Unless the church has a reimbursable expense plan, the minister cannot deduct typical expenses such as mileage, books and supplies and cellphones, Wright noted.

Wright said confusion exists over a minister’s dual tax status — an employee for federal income tax purposes and self-employed for SECA (Social Security) taxes.

One benefit of the self-employed nature of ministry as an ordained minister is the housing allowance that is not taxable for federal purposes but is taxable for self-employment tax purposes, he said.

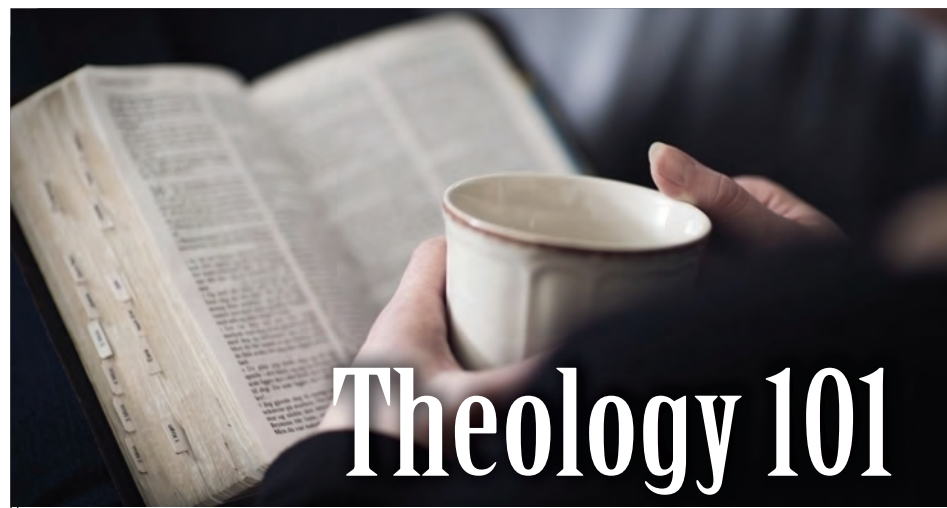
The housing allowance should be requested by the minister and approved by the church. “The housing allowance should not exceed the fair rental value of the house, furnished, plus utilities.”

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



Photo by Michael J. Brooks/The Alabama Baptist

Lee Wright, coordinator of church compensation services for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, shares tips during a recent conference in Prattville.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Discipleship

Becoming like Jesus

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
The Alabama Baptist

There was a season during my high school career that the administration placed an easel on the landing of a stairway to the second floor of our building. Posters with brief, catchy sayings were placed on the easel for all of us to read when we went from one floor to another. Of all those messages, I can remember only one. This one has stayed with me for my lifetime. It read: “What you are speaking so loudly I cannot hear what you are saying.” That was my first encounter with this potent caution.

Jesus gave an indispensable truth about discipleship when He declared, “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master” (Matthew 10:24–25). The hymn writer Charles Gabriel captured this essential truth in his hymn that begins, “More like the Master I would ever be/ More of His meekness, more humility;/ More zeal to labor, more courage to be true;/ More consecration for work He bids me do.”

The most crucial element in a life of discipleship for Christ may well be not our words, but the crucial quality of a Christlike life. Of course, our witness must, of necessity, be verbal if others are to know what Christ has done and what they must do to be saved. But words without the authenticating impact of an example of what those words are aiming to

accomplish will always carry a hollow ring. In short, an indispensable goal of being a disciple of Jesus involves becoming more Christlike ourselves.

The path toward Christlikeness involves self-denial. Given the sinful nature that is part of every person, becoming like Christ requires the denial of the attitudes and actions that have their roots in our sin nature. The Bible tells us of an occasion when Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Matthew 16:24).

Forming Christlikeness

The path toward Christlikeness also involves yielding to the indwelling Holy Spirit. The fullness of the Spirit involves His control of a believer’s life. When in control, the Spirit will be at work forming Christlikeness in that believer.

This process will involve self-denial since our natural inclination is toward sin. When the Holy Spirit is controlling a life, a person will think like Christ, act like Christ and love like Christ. In short, the Spirit will be at work making us “more like the Master.”

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.



Hunger Offering helps churches continue to minister

(continued from page 1)

Now the only requirement is to drive through and show proof of residency in Shelby County, Weaver said. “Our No. 1 goal is to feed the hungry. We feel if they’re going to sit in that long line to get groceries, they have to have a need.”

She said families have come back to let her and others at the church know that without the ministry, they “wouldn’t have made it the past several months.”

They’ve also received cards and letters of thanks and have heard of some food recipients who have started doing their own food drives after they got back on their feet.

The costs to maintain this kind of ministry are going up, Weaver said, but “God has unbelievably blessed our ministry.”

“Whenever we feel like we are at the end of our resources, we get a donation,” she said.

One of the ways the ministry is supplemented is through funds from the Hun-



Michelle Weaver (center), community ministry director at FBC Alabaster, talks with volunteers at the church’s food ministry as they sort food. The ministry is one of many in the state that benefit from the Alabama Hunger Offering.

ger Offering collected by Alabama Baptist churches. The offering’s focus Sunday is Feb. 19, though funds are received all year long.

God’s Word is clear

Kristy Kennedy, an associate in the office of associational missions and

church planting of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said God’s Word is clear that His people are to take care of those in need, and one of the greatest needs today is food for those who struggle with hunger.

“One of the ways we

as Southern Baptists address this need is through our Hunger Offering,” she said. “The Hunger Offering is used to provide food to those who have hunger needs whether in Alabama, North America or around the world.”

When a dollar is given to the offering, the first 25% goes to feed the hungry in Alabama by assisting associations and designated churches with food pantries, Ken-

nedy said. The remaining 75% is distributed through the Global Hunger Fund. Of that second portion, 80% goes to the International Mission Board for overseas hunger projects and 20% goes to the North American Mission Board to support hunger projects in the U.S. and Canada.

One hundred percent of gifts go straight to purchase food, Kennedy said.

Inflation

“The Hunger Offering helps provide funding to ministries like the First Baptist Church Alabaster food ministry,” she said. “They are meeting hunger needs of families in their community who are having a difficult time putting food on the table due to the inflation we have seen over the past few years which has greatly affected our food prices.”

Some two-income households are still finding it difficult to provide for their families in recent days, Kennedy said. “Ministries like the one at FBC Alabaster are making a big difference during these difficult times in our state and world, and they are able to do what they do in part because of your giving to the Hunger Offering.”

For more information about how to give to the offering or promote it in your church, visit alsbom.org/hunger.



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Photo by Grace Thornton/The Alabama Baptist

Thanks to God’s provision through avenues including the Alabama Hunger Offering, FBC Alabaster’s food ministry stays stocked and ready to assist the community.

UPCOMING EVENTS

sponsored by the State Board of Missions

Bivocational Ministers/ Spouse Retreat: Feb. 24–25

Later this month, bivocational ministers and their wives will have the opportunity to get away and enjoy fellowship, encouragement and inspiration in a relaxing retreat environment.

The Bivocational Ministers/Spouse Retreat — set for Feb. 24–25 at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega — will feature Craig Etheredge, a gifted communicator, author and Bible teacher who serves as lead pastor of First Baptist Church Colleyville in the Dallas/Fort Worth area.

To register, visit leadercareAL.org/bivoretreat or scan the code below with your smartphone's camera.



He is the founder and president of discipleFIRST ministries and adjunct professor of discipleship at Southwestern Baptist

Theological Seminary.

The breakout sessions for wives will be led by Trish Jackson, a pastor's wife who is also missions lifestyle strategist for pre-school, children and students for Alabama Woman's Missionary Union.

Her husband, James, serves as pastor of Glynwood Baptist Church in Prattville.

The cost is \$40 per couple staying overnight, \$30 for single occupancy and \$10 for commuters.

To register, visit leadercareAL.org/bivoretreat.

MinistrySafe workshops

For several years now, MinistrySafe has been helping equip Alabama Baptist churches to protect their children from sexual abuse.

If your church staff hasn't had the opportunity to attend a MinistrySafe confer-



LOVE

ence, two new dates are now being offered — Thursday, Feb. 23 at Calvary Baptist Church in Dothan and Thursday, March 23 at Valleydale Church in Hoover. Greg Love, cofounder of MinistrySafe, will provide awareness training on topics including

how sexual predators select and groom their victims, peer-to-peer child sexual abuse and setting up a safety system for your church.

The cost for the event is \$20 per person.

Both events begin at 9 a.m. and end at 1:30 p.m. To register for either the Dothan or Hoover location, visit alsbom.org/ministrysafe.

Lead your church to greater health through the Pathfinder Conference

In January, the Intentional Leader Series featured the first of the four Ps of leadership — Person. The next conference — Pathfinder — will be held April 18 at the Alabama Baptist

State Board of Missions office facility in Prattville.

State missionaries Ken Allen and Rob Jackson will share how to strategically lead your church into greater overall health. The

series provides an ongoing process to be challenged as a leader.

The \$8 cost for the Pathfinder Conference includes lunch. To register, visit leadercareal.org/ils.

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

Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church in Gordo, Alabama, is seeking a pastor. Please send resumés to: mtplesant@centurytel.net.

PASTOR

First Baptist Church of Gantt, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking a pastor to serve our congregation and community. Please direct resumés to: firstgant@gmail.com or mail to: FBC Gantt, P.O. Box 34, Gantt, AL 36038, by March 31.

PASTOR

Pine Grove Baptist Church in Bay Minette, Alabama, is in search of a full-time pastor. Interested candidates may email their resumé and cover letter to: pgbmbaptist@gmail.com or mail to: 42240 Pine Grove Road, Bay Minette, AL 36507, ATTN: Pastor Search Committee.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Liberty Baptist Church in Morris, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor who will preach God's Word, pray for God's leadership and have a heart for missions. Send resumés to: garrettm2@bellsouth.net.

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC

Cherry Street Baptist Church in Attalla, Alabama, is seeking a candidate to lead our worship services and choir in a blended style of music. Please submit resumés to: judydrummond07@yahoo.com.

YOUTH MINISTER

Webb Baptist Church is seeking an individual who can work part time in leading the youth ministry. Resumés can be sent to ishayles@outlook.com.

BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH DIRECTOR

Cherry Street Baptist Church in Attalla, Alabama, is seeking a candidate to lead and to help us rebuild our youth program. Please submit resumés to: judydrummond07@yahoo.com.

PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER

South Chapel Hill Baptist, Decatur, Alabama. Flexible hours and scheduling. Please email resumé and inquiries to:

knhayes2022@gmail.com for details.

OTHER POSITIONS

ASSOCIATIONAL MISSIONS STRATEGIST

The Bethel Baptist Association, located in Linden, Alabama, is seeking an associational missions strategist to serve its 33 churches. You may send a resumé to: bethelba.linden@gmail.com or you may mail one to: Bethel Baptist Association, Associational Missions Strategist Search Committee, P.O. Box 481088, Linden, AL 36748. Resumés will be received through April 30.

CARING CENTER DIRECTOR

FBC Community Ministries in Montgomery seeks a degreed social worker. Full-time position with benefits. Email resumé to: vbrrant@fbc-cm.org.

SIGNS

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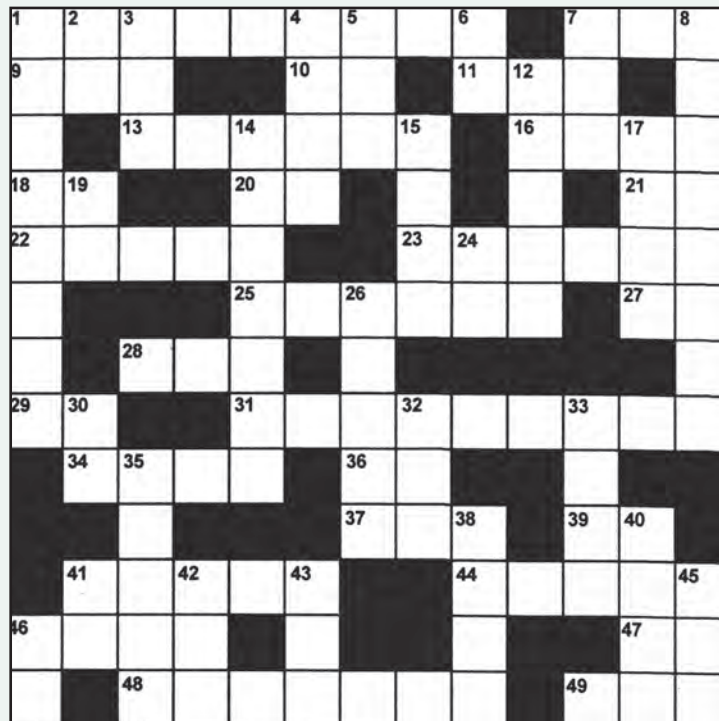
CHRISTIAN crossword



UPCOMING EVENTS
sponsored by the State Board of Missions

ACROSS

1. Johoiada was the leader of the _____. (1 Chron. 12:27)
7. A serviceman who did not return from war may be one of these.
9. To forbid.
10. Learn to ____ well. (Isa. 1:17)
11. Abraham would be called this today.
13. Remember what ____ did. (Deut. 25:17)
16. The puppies tails were _____.
18. Speak unto ... Israel, that they ____ forward. (Ex. 14:15)
20. He will ____ a wild man. (Gen. 16:12)
21. Familiar form of *you* in German.
22. ____ the son of Ner. (2 Sam. 3:25)
23. Parts of a play.
25. Sons of Zeruiah there, Joab, Abishai, and _____. (2 Sam. 2:18)
27. Saint. (abbr.)
28. Extol him ... by his name _____. (Ps. 68:4)
29. Compass direction.
31. All the ____ and strangers. (Acts 17:21)
34. Judah, and _____. (Jer. 9:26)
36. For example. (abbr.)
37. Thou shalt not ... _____. (Lev. 19:13)
39. Elevation. (abbr.)
41. The name whereof is called _____. (Ezek. 20:29)
44. ____ and Caiaphas



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- being the high priests. (Gen. 23:2)
15. King Saul's father. (1 Sam. 10:21)
17. Fruit drinks.
19. Obstetrician. (abbr.)
24. Chemical Engineer. (abbr.)
26. And Leah ... called his name _____. (Gen. 30:13)
30. ____ are labourers together with God. (1 Cor. 3:9)
32. _____, id, superego.
33. The young men of _____. (Ezek. 30:17)
35. Made silver shrines for _____. (Acts 19:24)
38. Passing through the valley of _____. (Ps. 84:6)
40. An Eastern monk.
41. To ____ or not to be.
42. Manuscripts. (abbr.)
43. The ____ is withered away. (Isa. 15:6)
45. Which taketh away the ____ of the world. (John 1:29)
46. Their cry came up un__ God. (Ex. 2:23)

DOWN

1. Belonging to Nabal's wife. (1 Sam. 25:3)
2. Antiaircraft. (abbr.)
3. Ribonucleic acid. (abbr.)
4. Not working.
5. Upon the great ____ of their right foot. (Ex. 29:20)
6. South America. (abbr.)
7. The sound a kitten makes.
8. A decree from Caesar _____. (Luke 2:1)
12. The beginning of his kingdom was _____. (Gen. 10:10)
14. Sarah died ... and ____ came to mourn.

All Bible verses are KJV unless otherwise specified.

Disciple-Making Conference

Looking for a community of people who are passionate about disciple-making? Need tools to start a disciple-making culture at your church? You can find all that at the Alabama Disciple-Making Conference, set for April 24–25 at Fultondale First Baptist Church.

The conference is an experience that will expose you to the principles of disciple-making, provide you with practical tools and give you an opportunity to hear from experienced conference leaders.

All the way around, the event is designed to impact

For more information or to register, visit ALDMconference.com or scan the code below with your smartphone's camera.



both the seasoned leader and those just beginning their ministry. It will run Monday, April 24 from 1:30 to 8:30 p.m. and Tuesday, April 25 from 8:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Revive for senior adults

Ready to spend a morning in fellowship with other senior adults and be encouraged through God's Word and a time of music celebration?

If so, plan to come to Revive on May 8 from 9:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. at FBC Birmingham.

J.J. Washington, national director for personal evangelism with NAMB, and Kevin Hamm, pastor of Gardendale FBC, will speak. Karen Peck and New River will provide music for the morning.

You'll be revived in spirit and motivated to continue serving in God's purpose for your life. Admission is free. Visit evangelizeal.org/revive.

Pastoral Evangelism Workshop set for May

As a pastor, how do you lead your church to make a greater impact in evangelism? And how do you prepare biblical sermons that have an evangelistic appeal? The Pastoral Evangelism Workshop — set for May 16 at the State Board of Missions — is designed to address these questions.

For more information or to register, visit evangelizeal.org/pew.

Disaster relief volunteers from Mississippi are hard at work in Eutaw, helping residents recover from their third tornado in nine months.

Grateful for partnership



Photo courtesy of Hubert Yates

Mississippi DR volunteers help with cleanup in storm-weary Eutaw

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Bennie Adams said the people in his area had never really gotten cleaned up from a tornado that came through in November 2022 when another one came down the same track Jan. 12.

It was Eutaw's third tornado in nine months.

"I had no structural damage at my house, but my neighbor's house did," said Adams, deacon

chairman at Eutaw Baptist Church. "We're in a wooded area, and there are a lot of trees down too."

Hubert Yates, state director of disaster relief for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, said he met people soon after arrival in mid-January whose homes were damaged for the second time in three months. The most recent tornado, an EF2, was 600 yards wide and raked a path nearly 39 miles long.



Photo courtesy of Hubert Yates
Eutaw Baptist Church served as home base for Mississippi Baptist disaster relief volunteers.

"The people are weary; they're tired," Yates said, noting that even though the damage doesn't appear to be as

severe as Selma or some other areas, the people are fatigued from the back-to-back storms.

To help them get things going, Yates brought a team of disaster relief volunteers from Mississippi that started work Jan. 20, removing trees and cleaning up yards. It only took a few days to finish the work. The team used Eutaw Baptist as its base of operations.

'Well received'

"This particular storm took down some large trees, so we brought in some of our experienced volunteer teams from Mississippi that

have skid steers and can handle the larger trees," Yates said.

"We've been well received by the mayor and the city."

He said they had opportunities to share the gospel as well as pray with homeowners.

Across the state, Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief teams also worked in hard-hit areas such as Selma (see story, page 17).

Mark Wakefield, disaster relief strategist for Alabama Baptists, said he's grateful for the strong volunteer network.

Alabama Baptists have a great relationship with Mississippi Baptist disaster relief as well, he added.

"We have a lot of volunteers, and a lot of work is getting done," Wakefield said. "It's going very well, it's just taking some time."

For more information or to give to disaster relief efforts, visit sldr.org.

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Rallying to help each other

Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief teams minister to communities in their own backyard

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Doug Vance has gotten a call many times to get his Disaster Relief team ready to head out to a tornado, hurricane or flood-affected area.

There's a rhythm to that kind of work, he said.

"When you go out of town, you know how long you're going to be there, and you know when you're coming home. But when the storm is at the house, you're never far from it."

That's what Vance — district 8 coordinator for Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief and leader of the Cahaba team — said he and other Disaster Relief volunteers in his area have faced since Jan. 12 when a tornado plowed through Dallas County and through the middle of Selma.

"When it's at home, when it's in your area, sometimes it seems like it never stops. It can go on for quite a while," he said.

When it's at home, it also starts the moment the storm hits.

Vance's counterpart Sissy Cooper, leader of the Selma team, said she heard about the storm through her husband's radio — he's a volunteer firefighter — and headed out quickly.

"I called the guy who pulls our trailer, and I said, 'Charlie, where are you? We need to head to Selma.' He said, 'I'll be home in 10 minutes,' and I said, 'I'll be there waiting for you.'"

Hard-hit spots

Cooper and Charlie Kee beat most everybody else to one of the most hard-hit spots, Tremont Street — which happened to be the street of Guy Anderson, retired minister



Photo courtesy of Melanie Sharpless
Selma disaster relief team member Terry Sharpless prays with a Selma resident as Sharpless' church, Imago Dei Church at the 45, serves food to those affected by the Jan. 12 tornado.

of music at the local Elkdale Baptist Church, and his wife, Debbie, both of whom are DR chaplains. The top of the Andersons' home was ripped off, and trees were down everywhere.

So Cooper and Kee started working there immediately. They were soon joined by other teammates. Vance's team had also started working nearby.

From there, the two teams — both a part of West Central Baptist Association's ministry — continued to work toward each other. They were joined two days later by an army of Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief teams from other parts of the state. Those teams worked for 16 days, staying at Elkdale Baptist and helping area residents tarp roofs, cut up trees and remove debris from homes and yards.

Vance said the disaster relief net-

work that Alabama Baptists and Southern Baptists have is a "well-oiled system."

Lee Tate, director of missions for West Central Association, said it's been "overwhelming" for their area

to be the recipient of all the help they've received.

"I'm just so thankful that we got to be in these seats to see all this, to learn from it, to be built up by it, to encourage as well as be encouraged," he said. "It's been a difficult trial, but it's been a

wonderful trial. We're all learning lots of stuff."

Tate said one of the main "wonderful" things that has come out of this is the way bridges have been built between churches in Selma. He said he's had Jesus' prayer in John 17:20-21 on his mind a lot — the prayer in which Jesus prayed for His followers to be one and live in unity.

Since the storm, churches have been rallying to help each other and help the community, he said.

Imago Dei Church at the 45, a multicultural church plant in nearby Lowndes County, came over to cook food alongside First Baptist Church Selma and then Plant Street Baptist Church, an African-American church in Selma whose building was destroyed by the tornado.

Melanie Sharpless, a chaplain on the Selma Disaster Relief team and member of Imago Dei Church, said it was a great time of bonding for believers in the area.

As Davey Lyon, Imago Dei's pastor, and other volunteers cooked food under tents at Plant Street Baptist, Sharpless and her husband, Terry, and others talked and prayed with members of the community who came by for a meal.

"We left the tent up so they could have church under it Sunday morning, and they invited Davey to preach," Sharpless said. "He preached on John 17. The church knows we love them, and we want to help however we can."

Tate said his prayer is that this kind of bond will carry on after the storm cleanup and recovery is done.

He said he wanted followers of Christ to continue working and worshipping with each other there, regardless of the color of their skin.

A watching world

He said he can't think of a better way to show Christ's love to a watching world in Selma, a place known for its history of racial tension.

"It becomes our rally cry," he said. "God never wastes tragedy. He's given us a gift."

To learn more about Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief training and ways to give, visit sbdr.org.

To read the full story of the Andersons' tornado experience, visit tabonline.org/Andersons.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For February 19

Explore the Bible

By Douglas K. Wilson, Ph.D.

Executive Director of the Center for Christian Calling, University of Mobile



I KNOW MY OWN John 10:7-14, 25-30

David, the shepherd king, referred to Yahweh as his Shepherd. As the incarnate God, Jesus revealed Himself as the Good Shepherd. He also utilized a related metaphor: the Gate (also translated as the Door).

In this lesson, we review Jesus' teaching about His role as Shepherd and His relationship with His sheep. My writing has likely been influenced directly or indirectly by Phillip Keller's books on Psalm 23 and John 10.

The shepherd has access to the sheepfold, where the flocks are protected from thieves and predators. He calls each one by name and they respond to his voice. They follow the familiar call of their shepherd, but not the call of a stranger.

The Gate (7-10)

The gate is the only way in or out of the sheepfold. Only the shepherd and his flock had access to the walled area where they could rest. Jesus is the only way to God the Father.

"I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

Throughout the Book of Acts, Luke underscored this statement of Jesus through multiple references to Christians as followers of the Way.

And in Acts 4:12, Peter boldly proclaimed there is no other name than Jesus by which we must be saved.

In an age of pluralism and identity politics, Christians are accused of intolerance. The sad fact is that worldly poison has infiltrated churches. The clear teachings of Scripture have been supplanted by the world's oldest lie, the claim that people know more than God.

"There are many paths to God. It doesn't matter what you believe," they say.

They contradict Jesus. All who attempt to enter the sheepfold other than by means of the Gate are unwelcome thieves.

Those thieves enter to steal, kill and destroy. By contrast, our loving Shepherd protects our lives and provides for our needs.

The True Shepherd (11-14)

What is the difference between the true Shepherd and hirelings? The true Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep. He laid it down and took it up again. Hirelings flee in the face of danger.

"I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me."

John 10:14

Jesus faced the conspiracy between the Sanhedrin, Herod and Pilate. He willingly took up His cross and embraced atoning death for His sheep, knowing He would rise again. Throughout the Old Testament, prophets referred to civil and religious leaders in Judah and Israel as shepherds. These shepherds failed to keep, lead, feed and protect God's flocks. Our Chief Shepherd did not fail.

Hirelings fail in their callings today. So do well-meaning under-shepherds. They may fail morally or doctrinally. They may fail by caring for their own interests above the flocks they serve. They may flee to more lucrative, more appreciated and less stressful occupations. Praise God, Jesus is our true Shepherd!

The Securing Shepherd (25-30)

Not only is Jesus our true Shepherd, but He is also our securing Shepherd. While the religious elite were debating whether or not Jesus was demon-possessed, He continued teaching. He reiterated that His sheep were secure under His care and the Father's care.

They asked Jesus if He was the Messiah. He had already answered their question. They did not know who He was because they were not His sheep.

Our Shepherd speaks to us, calls us by name and we follow Him because we know His voice. We are secure in His care because He takes care of His flocks.

Bible Studies for Life

By Tyshawn Gardner, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Biblical and Religious Studies, Samford University



DOES IT HONOR GOD? John 17:1-9

The Gospel of John presents Jesus in a similar, but different light than the synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. In John's Gospel, Jesus is presented as God, the Word made flesh. Much emphasis is placed on the divinity of Christ in this special gospel.

In this week's lesson passage, Jesus alludes to His divinity by bringing attention to His preexistence with the Father. However, as divine Son of God, Jesus still seeks to glorify God.

As a member of the Godhead, in His divine identity, Jesus' focus is not on Himself, rather He is intentional and passionate about bringing glory and honor to God. If Jesus can ensure His works point to God, surely we can too.

We honor God when we share about the eternal life Christ offers. (1-3)

In Chapter 17, the time draws nigh for Jesus to give His life to purchase our redemption. Of all the matters and concerns around Him at the critical time in His divine assignment, Jesus has the discipline and awareness to share about the eternal life He offers. Even though it is He who is laying down His life, His desire is for humanity to know God as "the only true God."

Where is our focus in times of suffering? When we are called upon to make deep sacrifices, do we desire for others to acknowledge and give credit to us?

Jesus teaches a valuable lesson in this prayer. The lesson is that in everything we do, God must get the glory. There is glory beyond this life. The greatest glory we will experience is a life of eternity with the Father.

We honor God when we continue the work He has given us. (4-5)

In this prayer, Jesus gives thanks to the Father for allowing Him to complete the work the Father gave Him. Moreover, He does not expect nor desire an earthly reward for

His sacrifice, but rather looks to be glorified in the presence of the Father.

We are prone to talk about ourselves and make ourselves look good. We are encouraged to "look out for No. 1" and "toot your own horn."

Although Jesus has been despised and rejected and is now on His way to Calvary, He is faithful to continue and finish the work.

In similar manner, we bring honor to God when we complete the work He has given us.

Many Christians and churches give attention to the results of the work. Thus their commitment to the work is often driven by results. If the results look unfavorable, we rarely continue in a work that looks doomed.

We must learn to measure our success not by results, but by faithfulness.

We honor God when we pray and disciple others. (6-9)

In this prayer, Jesus is also focused on His disciples and those who will come after them.

God has called each of us to a life of selfless devotion and sacrifice. Jesus served as the supreme example on earth of how to honor God. When we disciple others, we set in motion a perpetual cycle of servants who are committed to honor the Lord.

Prayer is also hearing from God. God's voice always leads us to glorify Him and accomplish His purposes. We are in the best place possible when we do that and live for His glory.

Christian discipleship also teaches Christ followers to honor God in the hardest times in our life.

We should be reminded that when we suffer, others are watching. We often produce disciples unknowingly. We are ever on display, even in the most difficult seasons of life.

When others see us worship, serve and obey God in our tough places, they too will be disciples that honor God in the good and bad times of their lives. The things God calls us to will point to His honor and glory.

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Tracy Riggs Frontz

The Alabama Baptist

Now 'largest annual tour in the world,' Winter Jam still about ministry

Formed by NewSong in 1995, "Winter Jam is an incredible evening of live concerts by the top artists in Christian music ... to encourage believers and share the good news with those who have yet to trust Christ," according to its website, 2023.jamtour.com.

Now considered "the largest annual tour in the world," Winter Jam came from humble beginnings.

Russ Lee, one of the lead vocalists of NewSong, recalled, "In the early '90s, Eddie Carswell [an original NewSong member] had this crazy idea. Eddie said, 'What if we did a concert at a neutral location, and so it wouldn't be taxing ... do it in January?'"

Eddie's idea included no ticket sales — only a love offering and suggested donation. That first event, not yet named Winter Jam, featured only NewSong and was held at the Greenville Memorial Auditorium in South Carolina.

Beginning success

To cover the cost of the auditorium, they needed 1,500 people to attend the event.

Lee revealed, "That's what they were hoping and praying for ... 1,500 people. Instead, 8,000 people showed up. The building would only



Photo by Tracy Riggs Frontz/The Alabama Baptist

NewSong performs at Winter Jam 2020. As the tour added concerts yearly, the name kept changing. It was NewSong, then NewSong and Friends, then January Jam and when it outgrew January, it became Winter Jam, Russ Lee of NewSong, explained.

accommodate about 6,000, so they said, 'We may be on to something crazy here. God may be doing something nuts.'"

As the tour added concerts yearly, the name kept changing.

"It was NewSong, then it became NewSong and Friends. Then it became January Jam and then when it outgrew January, it became Winter Jam," Lee explained.

The NewSong and Friends event included artists such as Margaret Becker, Clay Cross, Jaci Velasquez and Russ Taff.

This evolved into Winter Jam inviting three new artists each year. Francesca Battistelli, Chris August and For King and Country are just a few artists whose careers were helped by the tour.

Lee noted, "[Though] every year the tour features several of the biggest names in Christian music,

[NewSong recognizes] that part of our role is really to encourage those coming behind us."

The main purpose of Winter Jam is to spread the gospel, so a speaker delivers a salvation message each evening.

"We share the gospel at Winter Jam. That's what it's about," Lee asserted.

It's easy as an audience member to enjoy an inexpensive evening of worship led by incredible talent, but

"we have to do a year's worth of prep," Lee said.

Planning the details

The organizers prayerfully consider artists who would be a good fit, look for affordable venues and work on schedules. They plan routing and transportation for around 150 people in 14 to 15 buses, several semitrucks and a catering team.

The stage is set with earlier acts

in the front and the headliner in the back, sharing any possible equipment. The crew practices setting up and tearing down between each act. Then the artists are included in rehearsals.

As each group finishes, the crew packs that set's equipment directly into the trucks. Final tear down takes close to 3 hours.

'Huge undertaking'

"I cannot tell you how incredible our crew is and how important every aspect of what they do is. We have a video crew, sound and production crew, lighting crew [and] people that are ... managing transitions so we can get artists on and off the stage. It's a huge undertaking," Lee revealed.

Another goal is to build Christian community for those on the road. Recognizing how much someone gives up to go on tour, the organizers pay attention to small details like making sure the catering is good and the crew has everything they need to do their jobs well.

Winter Jam also prioritizes providing spiritual support.

"We have pastors and mentors for those on the tour — to encourage them and facilitate them spiritually to help them with their life. ... They have family members who pass away and [receive] bad diagnoses. You have things that happen in the lives of people every day, and Winter Jam is no exception," Lee acknowledged.

Winter Jam's 2023 tour began Jan. 13 and ends March 26, with a stop in Birmingham at the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex on March 10.

Winter Jam includes a student leader reception before each concert. For more information, visit 2023.jamtour.com.

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.

For more information, visit 2023.jamtour.com.

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The Alabama Baptist

Pastor's everyday intercessions touch thousands

By Ann Lovell
Baptist and Reflector

Adrian Knipper loves the Lord, and he loves people. As a pastor for nearly 30 years, Knipper has visited, counseled and prayed with many people.

In 2017, Knipper retired as pastor of Porter's Creek Baptist Church in Middleton, Tennessee, after an extended illness left him homebound and confined to a wheelchair. At the time, he had no idea that his prayer ministry was about to multiply exponentially.

"(The prayer ministry) started slow," Knipper said. "I was in and out of the hospital for about a year in 2015 and 2016. ... A lot of folks came and prayed for me. ... I got to thinking about it and decided when someone asked me for prayer, I would say 'Let's pray now.'"

But his illness took a toll.

Confined to a wheelchair, he realized he no longer had the strength to serve as a pastor. His recovery took time, but his commitment to pray for others didn't waver.

"After I got home, two men from our church helped me and my wife get to and from our doctor's appointments. We always had prayer together. Any time I heard somebody was sick or going through something, I'd call them and say, 'Let's have prayer,'" Knipper said.

In 2019, the couple's everyday prayers began to multiply. Knipper keeps a log of the people he prays with. While many are from the local area, he has also prayed for people as far away as

Mississippi, North Carolina, Texas and Florida.

"The first year, 2019, I prayed with 525 people over the telephone," Knipper said. "In 2020, I prayed



Photo by Diane Goodman

Following a recent Sunday service at Porter's Creek Baptist Church, Adrian Knipper prays by telephone with a friend.

with 631." By 2021, Knipper had prayed with 903 people, and in 2022, he prayed with more than 753 people.

"I've seen God answer prayer," Knipper affirmed.

"I've seen evidence of how God responds to sincere prayer. ... Through my sickness — even though God didn't bring me where I wanted to be or where I thought I should be — I know God was at work to lead me to do other things, like this prayer ministry ... God has worked in my life and worked things out."

Diane Goodman is the secretary of Porter's Creek Baptist. She has known Knipper since the late 1980s. She says prayer is nothing new to him.

"He was always one to visit the hospitals," and he didn't hesitate to offer to pray with patients and families, Goodman said.

When Knipper's illness prevented him from visiting, "the next best thing was getting on that telephone," Goodman said. "We've always known he was praying for us."

EDITOR'S NOTE — This story was originally published by the Baptist and Reflector, newsjournal of the Tennessee Baptist Mission Board.

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From prison to the pulpit

By Ryan Biller
The Pathway

Seminary student finds new life, purpose in Christ

Having spent over a decade of time behind bars, coupled with a long history of drug abuse, Keanon Hurst is perhaps one of the last people you would expect to find on Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's campus — let alone behind a pulpit.

A native of eastern Nebraska, Hurst describes himself in childhood as “the outcast who would do and say things to just get attention.”

“It was obvious from a young age I was headed down the wrong path,” he said.

However, it wasn't until November 1991 that Hurst's life would completely change.

“When I was 12 years old, I was in a bad hunting accident ... I shot myself in the left leg,” he said. “I remember my dad cut open my overalls, put a tourniquet on my leg and carried me to my grandma's house for over a mile on his shoulder. From there I was rushed to the hospital.”

Hurst would be in that hospital for the next six months.

Addiction

While at the hospital, Hurst explained how he quickly became addicted to the morphine the doctors were administering to him for the pain in his leg.

“They gave me this little morphine clicker,” he said.

“At 12 years old I was introduced to drugs before I even knew what drugs really were,” he noted. “From that point on, I was off to the races. When the doctors would come into the room, I would click the button; when my parents came in and I didn't want to talk to them, I would



Photo courtesy of The Pathway
Keanon and Ruth Hurst, pictured with their children (l to r) Cloe, Sammy and Eva, plan to pursue pastoral ministry in Alaska. Keanon was introduced and became addicted to drugs after a bad hunting accident at the age of 12 placed him in the hospital for six months.

click the button. Looking back, I found myself hitting the button just to hit the button.”

At the age of 14, Hurst's doctors refused to give him any more morphine, and he quickly transitioned to alcohol and marijuana.

“At that point, I was already an outcast and just a bad kid, and it was only getting worse,” he said. “By 15, I was introduced to meth, which quickly became my drug of choice. And by 17, I had dropped out of high school.”

Hurst began breaking the law to get meth and alcohol.

On his 18th birthday, he was arrested for forgery and the possession of illegal drugs.

“I was sent to prison for the first

time at 18. It was like a badge of honor for me. As soon as I got out, I went right back to what I was doing — meth and alcohol,” he said.

Hurst would go on to repeat this cycle for the next 20 years.

It wasn't until his fifth prison sentence at the age of 35 that Hurst's life would completely change.

“At the beginning of my fifth sentence, I remember hearing calls for a Bible study,” he said. “I only started going because the guy in the cell with me was loud and obnoxious.”

Hurst explained that while going to the study, the pastor who taught the lessons was faithful to share the gospel. It was during a conversation

with his Bible study leader in 2015 that Hurst decided to follow Christ.

“I knew at that point that I was saved and that I couldn't just go back to the streets and do the same things I was doing with my life,” Hurst noted.

Hurst spent a year at a rescue mission in Columbus, Nebraska, where he built a Christian foundation and was taught how to be a man.

Learning to be an adult

“They taught me how to go work, pay my bills and just do things that I had never done before because I was always living off of everyone else,” he said.

Once Hurst graduated in late 2016, he decided to pursue counseling to help those also suffering from drug and alcohol abuse. During this time, Hurst met his future wife, Ruth, who was a member at First Baptist Church Columbus, Nebraska.

After a couple of months of talking back and forth, they decided to date, all while she was in South Africa as a missionary, and Hurst was in the Midwest. They were married in 2019.

They currently have three children. After they got married, the Hursts decided to go to Midwestern Seminary so he could be better equipped for ministry.

After graduation, which is slated for May, the couple plan to pursue pastoral ministry in Alaska.

“We're excited about the future but are grateful for the present.”

EDITOR'S NOTE — This story was originally published by The Pathway, newsjournal of the Missouri Baptist Convention.

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Through a near-death experience when she was a teenager, Rose Ignacio was introduced to the life offered in Jesus Christ. After she left the hospital, she wanted to attend a church and walked four miles to Tinian Baptist Mission (now Tinian Baptist Church), in Cuba, New Mexico.



Photo courtesy of Rose Ignacio

By Grace Thornton
The Baptist Paper

‘Lady Moses’ healed by God, now involved in gospel work to Navajo Nation

Rose Ignacio doesn’t remember the moment her little sister died in her arms. But she does remember a lot about the hours before.

Ignacio was 13, her little sister 8, and the two had taken a bus through the Navajo Nation in New Mexico to visit her aunt. In a way, she was trying to escape her life — her mother had died a few months before while giving birth, and the baby also died.

Lots of loss

Her father was an alcoholic; her mother had been too. But at this point all Ignacio could remember were the good times when her mother was sober and had taken care of her. Though they were small

windows of time, even those were gone now.

So Ignacio went to visit her aunt.

“We got off the bus, and I didn’t know how far or where they lived,” she recalled. “So we just took the road and kept going.”

Normally that might have worked, but on this February day freezing rain came out of nowhere, followed by a blizzard. It enveloped the two girls, and after a while darkness fell.

“During the walking I wasn’t asking my sister how she was, but I myself was tired, I was hungry, I

was sleepy and I was cold, so I just kept going,” Ignacio remembered.

Even at 13 she was aware of the severity of the situation.

“BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND YOU WILL BE SAVED.”

ACTS 16:31

“While walking, I thought, ‘If I die tonight, it’s OK,’ because my mother, she loved me and took care of me when she was sober, but I didn’t see anyone who would love me now,” Ignacio recalled. “I remember thinking to myself, ‘I don’t care if I die tonight.’”

The girls kept walking.

“Then all of a sudden we were tired, so we thought we could get

under a tree and that would be safe for us,” Ignacio said.

They sat down, and Ignacio put her arm around her little sister.

“I guess we went to sleep.”

Hearing her name

There under the tree Ignacio heard someone call out.

“I heard my name, ‘Rose,’” she said. “And then I opened my eyes.”

When she looked up, it was all white, and she saw a sign, a picture with a dark brown frame coming down to her.

“It kind of stopped where I could read it,” Ignacio said. “And on that picture frame, it said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, and your house’ (Acts 16:31). I had never seen that verse. I never learned it.”

Ignacio had never gone to church or known anything about God, but she accepted what the words said. And then the sign disappeared, and she thinks she went back to sleep.

That's all she remembers until the moment she woke up in the hospital, and a woman in a white nurse's uniform told her to stay still.

It was a while before anyone told her that her sister hadn't survived the night.

"They tell me that the morning after we sat down under the tree, the snowbank was about four feet high," Ignacio said. "My brother and uncle took out the sheep, and the dog was barking. My brother ran after the dog, and the dog found me. I was crawling on the ground covered with snow all over."

They brought the horses and wagon to get the girls.

"They found my sister; she froze to death," Ignacio said. "She died, and they got me and wrapped me in a quilt and put me on the wagon and took me home."

'God did'

A missionary with a four-wheel-drive vehicle was able to clear the road so emergency responders could come, and that's how Ignacio got to the hospital. She doesn't remember any of it.

She just remembers that Bible verse, and how her whole body was stiff when she woke up.

Ignacio was in the hospital more than three months. Over time she was able to use her arms and hands again, and her right foot healed. But her left foot stayed swollen and stiff.

One night Ignacio heard people talking in the hall about sending her to Albuquerque to have it amputated.

"I didn't know what that meant exactly, but I guessed it might mean to chop it off," she remembered.

In the next few days as she waited to see what would happen, a missionary came by to see her and talked about what it meant to follow Jesus. She remembers praying in her Navajo language, "Lord, You know me. You created me. I want to invite You into my life. I want You to change my heart."

The next day Ignacio said she felt as if the Holy Spirit was telling her to watch her doctor's expression when he came in.

"The doctor said, 'Good afternoon, Rose,' and then he uncovered my feet, and he raised his eyebrow



Photo courtesy of Rose Ignacio
People often call Rose Ignacio 'Lady Moses' because of the way she has devoted her life to serving God on the Navajo Nation.

like he saw something," Ignacio recalled.

He looked at her feet and both were red, and they were the same size.

"He just dropped it and said, 'Rose, did you walk on it? Did anybody do something? Did the medicine man come?' I said, 'No.' And he said, 'Then who did?' I said, 'God did.'

"And then he shook his head and said, 'There ain't no God,'" Ignacio remembered.

But when the missionary came back, he knew immediately Who had done the work.

"He came back and said, 'You didn't go to Albuquerque?' And I said, 'No, look at my feet.' And he said, 'Praise the Lord,'" Ignacio recalled.

Ignacio said God saved her feet, but most of all He saved her life, and He opened her eyes.

Learning to walk

In the weeks that followed, she started to heal and walk again, and she also started to walk out her new faith, something the missionary had told her might be difficult.

"I got home and my relatives, my aunt and my uncle, told me, 'You're taking the wrong way. The Bible is not for you; the Bible is not for us. That book is for white people,'" Ignacio recalled.

So she relied on advice the missionary had given her — she prayed. And on Sunday morning she walked four miles to the nearest church building she knew of.

"But there was nobody there," Ignacio remembered. "I was sitting at the street. The sun got to the mid-day mark maybe, and that's when I heard a car coming."

It was an old Suburban, and one of the four people in it was a Cherokee missionary. She spotted Ignacio, and they stopped and had church together, just the five of them.

"I said, 'Are you guys coming back next Sunday?' And they said, 'If you're coming back, we'll be back.' So that's where I started," Ignacio, now 73, recalled. "I know I was so happy, my eyes opened, and it was so great that I found God."

The little church that had been closed — Tinian Baptist Mission in Cuba, New Mexico — was re-opened and is still going today as Tinian Baptist Church.

"It's a self-supporting church now, and I'm still there," Ignacio said.

Over the years she has given her life in service to God, sharing her faith every time she gets a chance.

"I tell my testimony in my own language and people always say, 'Wow, is that how it happened?' Some families have accepted the Lord through my story," she said.

Actively involved

Ignacio is actively involved in Woman's Missionary Union and was instrumental in encouraging Pure Water, Pure Love (a compassion ministry of WMU) to provide a well for the church, which has helped provide water for the community.

"A lot of people in the commu-

nity are looking to our church to get help," she explained.

Ignacio also collects food and clothing at the church to give to people in the area, and they always ask why she's doing it.

"I say, 'Because I have Jesus in my life,' and really they can tell the difference," Ignacio said. "I get a lot of opportunities to share about the Lord."

'Lady Moses'

Daniel Clymer, state Native American strategist for the Baptist Convention of New Mexico, said Ignacio's people call her "Lady Moses" because of the way she has devoted her life in service to the Lord.

"When I was a little boy I remember hearing Rose sing in Navajo," he related. "My father was a missionary to native peoples here in New Mexico.

"She has been a mentor and one of the elders who has guided me through the years."

Ignacio is a big part of the gospel work in the Navajo Nation, Clymer added.

"We just awarded her with a Heroes of the Faith Lifetime Award for all of her service over the years," he noted. "I can't even tell you all the areas she has helped support. It just reminds you of the powerful way God works in our lives even in the midst of dramatic, unfortunate situations."

Clymer said Ignacio is a "Southern Baptist hero of unbelievable proportions."

"She has put many miles on her feet over the years sharing the gospel, and nothing has slowed her down."



Photo courtesy of Rose Ignacio
The day Rose Ignacio walked to Tinian Baptist Mission as a teenager, the church was closed. But when a carload of people — including a Cherokee missionary — rode by and saw her waiting there, they decided to stop and hold a service with her. That was the spark the church needed to get going again, and today it's thriving.