

The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

"He is not here, for He has risen, as He said. Come, see the place where He lay."

M A T T H E W 2 8 : 6



He has
RISEN

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Looking ahead to May 4 National Day of Prayer

On May 4, Americans will gather at courthouses, schools, parks and churches to publicly pray for our nation. Such an intentional focus on prayer is always needed but also has never been more needed.

As I write this, our nation is reeling from yet another school shooting, this one at a private Christian school in Nashville (see story, page 6). Families and businesses in several states are cleaning up from a weekend of severe weather March 24–26 that killed more than two dozen people in Mississippi and one person in Alabama (see story, page 7).

And I have no doubt that in your life, you can think of a family or an individual who is coping with illness, grief or pain in one way or another. The words of 1 Thessalonians 5:17, “pray without ceasing,” seem to take on fresh urgency daily.

‘Fervently’

While we lift our prayers daily for the hurting, the National Day of Prayer offers an opportunity to join together in one mind and one accord.

This year, the National Day of Prayer theme is “Pray Fervently in Righteousness and Avail Much,” based on James 5:16b.

Curiosity led me to look up “fervently.” The word usually describes a

“great intensity of feeling,” but an alternate definition is “hot, glowing, boiling, burning.”

That second definition calls to mind the prophet Isaiah and his vision of a hot, glowing, fiery coal, symbolic of both God’s wrath and His love.

‘Avail’

As I browse the daily headlines, I hear the echo of Scripture: “You (Lord) are indeed angry, for we have sinned. In these ways we continue; and we need to be saved” (Isa. 64:5).

Oh that our prayers for healing, for peace, for our youth would avail. That we would, as National Day of Prayer Task Force president Kathy Bran-

zell says, recognize where God is moving and pledge to join His work.

“Even as our words hang in the air, He is already answering. ...

“He takes our intercession and impacts not just the course of time, but the course of souls and the Kingdom.

“God uses our prayers to write the history books of tomorrow.”

I’m looking forward to May 4, but I am committed to praying each day as fervently as I am able for the hearts of the people to turn toward the Lord. History is being written right now, and there’s no time to waste. (Carrie Brown McWhorter)

For resources and promotional materials, visit nationaldayofprayer.org.



The crossword puzzle can be found on page 15.

The Alabama Baptist

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

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RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

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



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@RashionalThts

Unexpected encounters, intentional moments can have lasting impact

Muscle memory kicked into action last week as my car topped the hill. Without even thinking, my right foot shifted to the brake pedal and eased down a bit as I continued toward the bottom.

Much like the experience on a roller coaster, traveling over and down this hill builds speed (even without pressing the gas) and takes you at least 20 miles over the marked speed limit by the time you get to the bottom.

Slowing the vehicle down while rolling into the quaint section of shops and businesses is vital to avoid zipping through the area and potentially causing an accident.

I learned this lesson the first time I topped the hill nearly 30 years ago — when the kind police officer explained it to me.

His grace for letting me off with a warning, his awareness that I was unfamiliar with the area and his willingness to take the time to explain why it mattered remains with me today.

So, out of concern for the people who could be harmed if I didn't obey the speed limit as well as returning the respect and courtesy a stranger showed me, I automatically press the brake and make sure my car stays at 25 mph or below on that hill.

It always intrigues me how simple experiences like this can teach us significant life lessons and give us opportunities to be better.

I also wonder what could have happened if the officer had not been at the bottom of the hill that day.

Would I eventually have noticed the speed limit on my own? Would I have been as dedicated to sticking to it without the encounter with the officer?

Or what if a different officer had been on duty?

Would the experience have been as pleasant? Would I be sharing the story these nearly

three decades later? Would I even remember it?

No matter our profession, where we find ourselves on any given day nor how well we know a person, we truly have endless opportunities to make a difference in several lives each week.

Looking beyond ourselves

It means being intentional, staying aware, looking beyond ourselves and praying for God's guidance in the who, what, when and where.

The temptation will sometimes be to dictate instructions, share strong opinions and be

adamant about next steps, even when we don't have all the information needed to truly understand a situation.

But what if we pull back, stay in constant communication with the Lord, watch for those He brings into our path and then follow His leading rather than our own?

What's an experience in your past that made a significant impression on you? How did it help you grow as a person?

Are you able to connect it to your faith journey and find a thread that led to who you are today? What's one way you can make a difference for someone in your life this week?

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

Isaac Watts

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God!
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

At the Cross

Isaac Watts/Ralph E. Hudson
Excerpt

At the cross, at the cross
Where I first saw the light,
And the burden of my heart rolled away,
It was there by faith I received my sight,
And now I am happy all the day!
But drops of grief can ne'er repay
The debt of love I owe:
Here, Lord, I give my self away
'Tis all that I can do.

Your Voice



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

Country churches and knowing your 'part'

By Walker Moore
Oklahoma Baptist Messenger

I was reared in a good ol' country church called Six Mile Baptist. You have seen churches just like it: gravel driveway and parking lot, white wooden frame building, cemetery out back and a preacher who uses farming lingo to explain the Bible.

Our church was so small that there was no such thing as a "secret" sin. The call to worship each Sunday was "Y'all come in," and the benediction was "Y'all come back, y'hear."

I enjoy preaching at churches like this. They have the best carry-in suppers you have ever tasted. Nothing on the table comes out of a can or a box.

You know you belong to a country church when:

1. They have a special fundraiser for a new church septic tank.
2. The discussion about Jesus feeding the 5,000 turns into a debate over whether the two fish were bass or catfish.
3. The choir is known as the OK Chorale.
4. Finding lost sheep is not just a parable.
5. The entire church directory contains only three last names.
6. People think "rapture" is what you get when you lift something too heavy.
7. The pastor says, "I would like to ask Bubba to close in prayer," and five men stand up.

8. People only lock their cars during the summer — to make sure their neighbors can't leave them a bag of squash.

9. Opening day of deer season is an official church holiday.

10. People grumble about Noah letting coyotes on the ark.

At Six Mile Baptist Church, we only had one paid staff member — the preacher — and I would hardly call what he got "pay."

Frequently, farmers would bring crop offerings to supplement his salary. I remember one time when a deacon brought him a gunnysack of popcorn kernels.

The possibility of a lifetime supply of snack food like this might be the one thing God used to bring me into the ministry.

In our church, one person held many responsibilities. My dad was a deacon, a Sunday School teacher and a mission group leader. My mother filled the rest of the jobs.

Sometimes my brother or I played piano for the service, and we always had to clean the church on Saturdays.

But what taught me the most was something my church called "parts."

Every Sunday night each of the youth was assigned a part — a section of the lesson we had to study, then stand and teach to our peers.

Churches have come a long way since those days, but along that way we seem to have lost our "parts."

Maybe one reason our children drop out of church at such an early age today is because they do not have a part.

God bless country churches and parts!

Thoughts from The-Scroll.com

Life is about growth and change, but growth can't happen if we're allowing things in our past to hold us back.

No matter our past, we can begin again — and a new year is a great time to start. "Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert" (Isa. 43:18–19).

Amy Hacker
the-scroll.com
"A new thing"

A glorious aspect of God is that He not only reveals Himself to us, but also grants us a community in Him that points us back to Him. Intergenerational relationships are a way we can continuously be drawn back to the splendor of God.

Selah Vetter
"The necessity of intergenerational relationships"

Their lives are a testament to God's mercy and redemption, and a foreshadowing of the value Jesus Himself placed on women.

Addie Lee Frierson
"5 women of Matthew 1: Introduction"

Be part of missions story

From planting churches to meeting needs through compassion ministries, the calling missionaries have given their lives to is not easy, but it's worth it as they get to share the hope of the gospel and see lives forever changed by Jesus.

Did you know we can be part of the story?

By giving to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, we have the privilege of stepping into the story of thousands of missionaries who plant churches, meet needs and engage in evangelism so that the gospel permeates North America.

It's challenging. It's exciting. It's humbling.

When we support our missionaries through the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, we get to come alongside them and hold up their hands as they serve where God has called them.

What an encouragement to them and a privilege for us.

Our team at the North American Mission Board thanks you for your investment in the lives of our missionaries.

We encourage you to continue praying, serving and giving.

Together we can reach more people with the hope of the gospel!

Catherine Renfro
Evangelism director
North American Mission Board

“Nothing dissolves loneliness like a session with God’s Word.”

BILLY GRAHAM
American evangelist (1918–2018)

Anxiety does not come from God. The Holy Spirit convicts; He does not worry.

Pastor Zach Richards
Pine Grove Baptist Church, Centre

Be intentional in your parenting. Study your children. Get to know each of your children’s God-given temperaments precisely and ask God to teach you how to work creatively within each child’s temperament rather than against it when helping him or her develop.

Jill Freeze
Entrusted Hope Ministries

“I might not be able to share the gospel in far-off places, but I can make sure someone else can through my Lottie Moon offering,” said **Dave Joslin**, who has been re-

cycling for cash to give to the international missions offering for years.

“We knew we wanted to actually like each other, be friends and still know each other,” said **Dawn Leopard**, who along with her husband, Eddie, launched a ministry devoted to helping couples keep their marriages strong. “So we just poured ourselves into doing a lot of things with one another and keeping our relationship primary.”

A song’s source “does not taint whether or not truth is expressed in the song,” said **Kenny Lamm**, worship ministries strategist for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. “If a song is biblical, singing the song would not harm the theology of your church members

nor would it infuse them with heresy.”

“There are women who walk out of our doors, and we think they’ve decided to have abortions, but they come back in later with the baby in the stroller,” said **Claudia Niebanck**, executive director for the Care Center in Southaven, Mississippi, one of more than 2,500 pro-life pregnancy resource centers across the U.S.

“When someone entrusts us with their story, I hope we are equipped to be the refuge God has called His church to be,” said **Brad Hambrick**, general editor of the Southern Baptist curriculum “Becoming a Church that Cares Well for the Abused.”

Qualities of a godly person

In the midst of warning God’s people about the coming day of His anger, wrath and judgment, God gives pointers in Zephaniah 2:1–3 about the kind of life He looks for in a godly person.

Godliness involves a particular fellowship. The first step in avoiding God’s judgment is pulling together with the people of God.

God’s followers cannot attain or sustain godliness alone. God grants us, through one another, a fellowship of love, help and encouragement along the way.

Godliness requires particular activities. God refers to the people who escape His wrath as people “who have carried out His ordinances.” They obeyed God, and obedience is essential to godliness.

Godliness includes a particular relationship. In addition to claiming Yahweh as their God, God wants His people to seek Him and to pursue Him. Those who seek Him demonstrate a desire to know and fellowship with Him. They value Him. God wants that relationship.

Godliness requires a particular character. God instructs His faithful ones to “seek righteousness.” Righteousness transcends keeping rules. It reflects a changed heart.

Godliness requires a particular perspective. God instructs His faithful ones to “seek humility.” Humility describes seeing one’s self from particular perspectives: grace and unworthiness. One could easily become prideful and boastful about one’s relationship with God, one’s obedience and one’s righteousness. Humility avoids that trap.

Godliness is humanity’s only chance, its only hope of moving from religion to a relationship with God.

Kevin Parker

Director of media services
Baptist Convention
of New Mexico

From the *Twitterverse*

@ronniejmartin

Here are 5 baseline things I pray for daily:

1. Affection for Christ.
2. Love of neighbor.
3. Wisdom from above.
4. Grace upon grace.
5. Forgiveness of sins.

@cnieuwhof

Expressing an opinion on everything cheapens your opinions on anything, including your area of expertise.

@greglaurie

As followers of Jesus Christ, we should not only avoid the very sin of immorality but also avoid anything that would bring us remotely close to it.

@lorifrank1

When young women are disciplined, recruited, developed and vaulted as team members and leaders, they become a powerful asset to the mission as we image Christ together. I love cheering them on!

@williemclaurin

Great leaders embrace uncertainty, because they know the truth: the promised land awaits them on the other side.

@jon_wilke

Real life solutions are a lot harder than sound bites.

@griffingulledge

I get the sense from my Bible reading that God is far more merciful than the ways we talk about Him

doctrinally often would lead us to believe.

Many will be with Christ in eternity who staggered to the gates.

@jackngraham

Worry is assuming responsibility God never intended for you to have. It leads to more and more stress and negativity in your life and to those around you. Instead cast your care upon Him because He cares for you. Calm down and live a peaceful, happy life in Christ!

@keahbone

Being coachable and committed to learning is something I have always taught and advised as a leader.

Unfortunately, it is also something I have forgotten for myself at times. I’m learning to learn again.

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

3 stories you should know



Facebook photo

Three 9-year-old children and three adults were killed March 27 when an armed intruder entered a private Christian school in Nashville and began shooting. The shooter, a 28-year-old biological woman who reportedly identified as a man, was killed by police officers responding to the emergency at Covenant School, an elementary school located at Covenant Presbyterian Church. Nearby Woodmont Baptist Church served as a reunification center. (TAB)

AL legislators consider crime, education bills

Alabama legislators have taken up several bills on a wide range of topics in the opening days of the 2023 legislative session.

Bills related to expanding hospital visitation rules and reducing time off criminal sentences for good behavior are among those passed by the Senate. Bills related to minimum mandatory sentences for possession of the synthetic opioid fentanyl and the adoption of adults in certain circumstances have passed the House.

Before any bill becomes law, it must be approved by both houses of the Legislature and signed by the governor.

Bills related to education, crime and abortion remain under consideration by various committees. To review a full list of state legislative activities, go to legiscan.com/AL. (TAB)

TN student's death prompts faith decisions

Dozens of people have made professions of faith following the death of 15-year-old Aleya Brooks, a Tennessee teen who died March 4 from injuries sustained when a tree fell on her while she was helping her family clear storm debris.



BROOKS

Grant Allen, high school student pastor at Long Hollow Church in Hendersonville, Tennessee, said 49 people, 36 of them students, made faith decisions after Brooks' memorial service. Ten people were baptized at Long Hollow on March 26, and more baptisms are scheduled in the coming weeks.

Read more at tabonline.org/aleya-brooks. (The Baptist Paper)

Persecuted church

40 Christian children rescued from trafficking scheme in Uganda

KAMPALA, Uganda — Forty Christian children in Uganda were rescued from an alleged trafficking scheme. Two people have been arrested in conjunction with the plot.

Police rescued the children on Feb. 2 from the Continental Hotel in Arua in the West Nile sub-region of Uganda, reported Morning Star News. The children — some as young as 5 years old — were being held at the hotel. They were about to be transported to the Democratic Republic of the Congo to be sold to the Allied Democratic Forces, according to the report.

A pastor in Arua alerted police to the scheme after church members told him of a Christian group recruiting many children for scholarships to a school in Uganda's Luwero District.

Police arrested two people, a male and a female. The male had falsely portrayed himself as the leader of a Christian charity that was offering the scholarships, according to sources.

Approximately 14% of Uganda's population is Muslim. Uganda's constitution and laws allow for freedom of religion, including converting from one faith to another.

However, Christian churches increasingly have received threats of violence, and some Christian converts have been attacked, killed or excommunicated by Muslim family members, the World Atlas reports.



Photo courtesy of Morning Star News

Two Pakistani Christians slain in disputes over fruit

LAHORE, Pakistan — Two Christians in Pakistan were slain in separate incidents attributed to Muslim extremism and prejudice.

On Jan. 11, 55-year-old Allah Ditta was killed after telling some Muslims to quit stealing guava from his crop in Renala village in Punjab province, Morning Star News reported. Ditta died instantly from a gunshot wound to the chest.

On Feb. 6, Emmanuel Masih was beaten to death as he irrigated fields for his landlord. Masih, a 48-year-old father of six, was slain after being accused of stealing oranges from the orchard.

Pakistan is No. 7 on Open Doors' 2023 World Watch List of places where it is most difficult to be a Christian.

Alabama news

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

► **First Baptist Church Leeds** is hosting a women's conference on Sunday, April 23, 5–8 p.m., with guest speakers Kathi LeGrand Lamb and her daughter, Leah Lamb Dickey. Dickey will be joined by her husband, Jonathan, to provide music. Worship begins at 5 p.m. and is free to attend. No ticket is needed.

An after-party also will be held. It will begin at 6:30 and include catered food, conference T-shirt, bracelet and a chance to win prizes donated by area businesses. There is a charge for the after-party tickets, which must be purchased by April 19. Visit fbcleeds.org/ladies for more information.

GENEVA ASSOCIATION

► **Geneva Baptist Association** conducted Disaster Relief training for chainsaw and mass feeding ministry at Trinity Church on March 9–10. Almost two dozen people completed the training enabling them to participate in aiding those going through a disaster.

They join over 25,000 volunteers in the Southern Baptist Disaster Relief ministry to provide hope here in Alabama, the nation and the world.

Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief organized leaders for the training.

LIMESTONE ASSOCIATION

► **Adam Mikel** is the new pastor of **Piney Grove Baptist Church, Ardmore**, where he has been serving as associate pastor of youth and education since 2009.

He holds a bachelor's degree in church leadership from the Baptist College of Florida.

He previously served as interim pastor of Piney Grove Baptist (June–September 2017); interim student minister of First Baptist Church Opp; interim pastor and youth minister of Piney Grove Baptist Church, Samson; youth minister of Bethel Baptist Church, Kinston; and interim summer

youth minister of FBC Brewton.

He and his wife, Heather, have two children.

MOBILE ASSOCIATION

► The third annual "Singing at the Steeple" is slated for May 11 at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. on St. Francis Street in Mobile. Featuring the Hill Brothers quartet from **Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile**, for a few songs and some favorite hymns, there is a cost for the event to help with expenses. For reservations, call 251-660-2425.

MONTGOMERY ASSOCIATION

► **Trinity Memorial Baptist Church, Montgomery**, is hosting an Easter egg hunt April 8, 2–4 p.m. rain or shine.

SAND MOUNTAIN ASSOCIATION

► **New Home Baptist Church, Pisgah**, is hosting a Good Friday service April 7, 6:30 p.m. Evangelist Phil Waldrep will be guest speaker. David Smith is pastor.

WEST CENTRAL ASSOCIATION

► **Newbern Baptist Church** is hosting its 175th anniversary Saturday, April 22 at 11 a.m. Tom Stacey, retired director of missions of Cahaba Baptist Association (now West Central), will speak. Special guests will be on the program and a jambalaya meal will be served in the community center. Contact John Broussard at 334-289-0966.

Roger Harper is pastor.

OTHER

► **Alabama Singing Men** celebrates 50 years in 2023 with several concerts April 11–13. The group will perform April 11, 6:30 p.m. at First Baptist Church Alabaster. There are two concerts on April 12. The first is at noon at the Baptist Church at McAdory, McCalla. The second is at 6:30 p.m. at Central Baptist Church, Trussville. On April 13, ASM will sing at 10:30 a.m. at FBC Trussville. The weekend will culminate with a 6:30 p.m. performance at FBC Birmingham with special guests Alabama Singing Women.

March storms leave one dead, cause damage across state

By **Carrie Brown McWhorter**
The Alabama Baptist

Several Alabama communities were in recovery mode March 27 following a weekend of severe storms that spawned at least seven tornadoes statewide.

The National Weather Service confirmed at least five tornadoes in Lauderdale, Morgan, Franklin and Jackson counties in the overnight hours of March 24–25.

A Morgan County man died from injuries sustained when his trailer was overturned during the storms. Residents of Florence, Hartselle, Hamilton and Bear Creek reported downed trees and power lines, power outages and roof and property damage.

Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers assisted with cleanup work the following week through Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association.

Immediately after the storms, chainsaw teams cleared downed

trees in several Florence neighborhoods while chaplains and other DR officials made their way through the damaged areas doing assessments and prepping for DR teams to provide aid.

"We had about 50 DR volunteers from across North Alabama who came in [March 25] and helped with assessments and chainsaw work," said Eddy Garner, recently retired associational missions strategist for Colbert-Lauderdale Association. "It was a tremendous blessing and a great picture of helping each other and sharing the love of Christ."

On March 26, a line of severe storms moved through South Alabama. The National Weather Service confirmed at least two tornadoes, an EF1 in Clarke County and an EF1 in Wilcox County. NWS was investigating a second possible tornado track in Wilcox County. Large hail, high winds and heavy rains also struck areas in the region.



Facebook photo
A man in Rolling Fork, Mississippi, places an American flag atop debris following the March 24 tornadoes.



Photo by Eddy Garner
Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief chainsaw volunteers cut a fallen tree in Florence. North Alabama was hit by at least five tornadoes in the overnight hours of March 24–25, the National Weather Service reports.

Beeson student grateful for 'role model' alumni

By Grace Thornton

The Alabama Baptist

When Grayson Bartlett was a junior at Spain Park High School in Hoover, she had no idea what she wanted to do with her life.

She also wasn't sure what she was getting into when she signed up for an elective class on biblical worldviews that met off campus.

"I signed up for it because my friend told me to," Bartlett said. "She and I were both Christians, and she said, 'Grayson, they have this class,' and I thought, 'I'm a Christian — might as well sign up.'"

But as haphazard as everything seemed at the time, she said it was clear God had a plan. From the first day, the class was life changing.

She met her teacher, and it began a new chapter of her faith journey.

That teacher was Yannick Christos-Wahab, who at the time was a student at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School. He grew up in a Nigerian home in a pocket of London where many other Nigerians also lived.

"I was surprised — I'd never had a Black male teacher before," Bartlett said. He brought a different perspective to the table than any she had heard up until that point.

Bible study tools

As he gave her and the other students tools to read the Bible and understand it for themselves, Bartlett learned she automatically viewed the Bible through her



Photo courtesy of Beeson Divinity School

While students at Beeson Divinity School, Yannick Christos-Wahab (left) and Ryan Linkous (right) taught biblical worldview classes to local high school students like Grayson Bartlett (far right).

own cultural lens without realizing it. For example, as someone who grew up in the U.S., she likely viewed freedom differently than someone who grew up in another setting.

New perspective

"He helped me to get out of my own cultural experience, to step out of it, and helped me practice seeing liberty and freedom from a different point of view," Bartlett said.

"It was a privilege to learn from him and to hear his perspective."

She grew deeper in her faith that year, and it challenged her to keep going. She took the class again her senior year with a new teacher, Ryan Linkous, who now serves as senior pastor of First Baptist Church Williams in Jacksonville.

"[Christos-Wahab and Linkous] were able to show me how beautiful the Bible is, how it's a literary masterpiece," Bartlett said.

Because of her newfound passion for theology and biblical teaching, as well as the kind of life she saw the two men living, she chose to follow in their footsteps.

She went to Linkous' alma mater, Union University, then to Beeson.

Bartlett shared how Christos-Wahab and Linkous "happened to be extremely intelligent, extremely godly and kind to other people. They're able to talk to anybody personably, and they love God and love God's

Word. I wanted to be formed into that kind of person."

And because of the perspective she gained from Christos-Wahab, she's taking a course this spring from Robert Smith Jr., the Charles T. Carter Baptist chair of divinity and professor of Christian preaching, called The African American Church.

"I learned that classes at Beeson are not only a time of learning, but also a time of discipleship," Bartlett said. "The teachers are discipling you, whether you realize it or not."

She said that kind of discipleship has changed her life, and what she's learned both through her classes in high school and at Beeson is that she always wants to be learning from people who are of a different ethnicity than her.

Her current church is La Conexión, a church plant in Hoover that focuses on the Spanish-speaking population. Bartlett said she wants to be equipped to handle

topics of diversity well too.

Christos-Wahab, who now serves as pastor of Stockwell Baptist Church in England, said watching Bartlett grow in her faith has been "the greatest blessing."

'Great joy'

"I am ever thinking about the teachers that were influential for me in growing in my desire to study the Bible, and so it is very humbling to play a similar role in Grayson's life," he said. "Ultimately, it is all God's work, but it is a great joy to play a part."

He said from the beginning she was a keen student who was curious about the Bible, and that passion has only grown.

"Grayson reminds me of what can happen when the Bible is taught," Christos-Wahab said.



BARTLETT

EDITOR'S NOTE — This story was originally published by Beeson Divinity School.

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 **BEST** CHILDREN'S HOSPITALS
US News
CANCER
2022-23

‘Tools to reach the world’

Digital Bible Institute utilizes online small group study in multiple languages at the same time

By Karen L. Willoughby
The Alabama Baptist

For decades, a continuing concern for short-term missions teams has been the follow-up with new converts.

Have the new converts grown in their relationship with Christ? Was the local pastor able to thrive while dealing with the spiritual needs of so many new converts at once? Or did the new converts’ faith, rootless as described in Matthew 13:5, wither?

The new Digital Bible Institute addresses this issue by utilizing online small group study in multiple languages at the same time.

“Small group leadership holds the greatest potential for revival in the local church,” Southern Baptist evangelist Sammy Tippit told *The Alabama Baptist*. In ministry on four continents, Tippit saw that when biblical truths about prayer, evangelism, discipleship and revival were practiced together, God multiplied His church and renewed His people.

Crossing borders

“Digital Bible Institute is a Jesus-focused ministry with a mission to combine biblical, spiritual and practical small group leadership training that results in spiritual renewal among followers of Jesus,” Tippit said. “One of the great features of DBI is that we are able to cross geographic and linguistic borders to share the gospel and make disciples. That’s exciting!”

DBI includes online weekly video teaching with a text summary and assignments. The DBI website, digitalbibleinstitute.com, describes the training provided:

► The prayer module trains followers of Jesus to have intimate communication with God by developing a daily time alone with God. It



Submitted photo

Multitudes of people in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East continue to hear the good news of the gospel — that Jesus loves them and has a purpose for their lives — through online tools such as Skype, Facebook, Whats App and other platforms. The Digital Bible Institute uses technology to help grow disciples.

teaches biblical and practical truths about prayer.

► The evangelism module trains followers of Jesus to effectively share Christ with others, including spiritual truths about motivation for sharing the gospel and the power to share it; biblical truths of the gospel; and practical training for sharing your testimony and engaging others in a gospel conversation.

► The discipleship module trains followers of Jesus to grow and multiply as His disciples in two specific areas: becoming more like Jesus and helping others grow in His image. This module leads the students to become disciple multipliers.

Spiritual awakenings

► The revival module presents truths about spiritual awakening and features interviews with pastors and Christian leaders who have experienced personal renewal and have seen revival in their communities.

The training will be available at no cost in at least 10 languages by the end of this year, and because it is digital, people speaking different languages can be in the same small group.

Expanding options

“[DBI will include] eight languages by April, but 10 by the end of the year,” Tippit said. “It will come out in English, Portuguese, Spanish, Farsi, Hindi, Punjabi, Nepali and Urdu in April. ... I just had someone say that they were willing to fund the translation into Romanian.”

DBI will work just as well for people from the United States who take short-term missions trips internationally or in North America. Since the training is all online, missions volunteers will be able to follow up by setting up small groups from among the people they meet.

The online small group training can also be used in local churches. “Small group” is key — the accountability component of the training is very important, Tippit said.

Consistent reading of Scripture and daily talking with God, as well as experience in applying evangelistic and discipleship skills, is built into the training.

“We want someone who goes through the prayer module to come out a person of prayer,” Tippit said. “We want the person who goes through the evangelism module to be leading people to Christ. We want the person going through the discipleship module to have someone they are discipling.”

Tippit has always used the latest technology to reach the lost.

“God has provided the technological tools to reach the world, tools no other generation has ever had,” he said. “It’s an exciting time to live.”

Instructors for the modules include David Butts, chairman of the U.S. National Prayer Committee; David Bruce, a vice president of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association; Richard Blackaby, president of Blackaby Ministries International; and pastor Bill Elliff.

Need for ‘solid discipleship’

“We know that there are thousands of Christians around the world who are crying for solid discipleship resources,” Tippit said. “With DBI ... we not only provide the resources, but [we provide them] in multiple languages, with accountability that will strengthen [Christians’] relationship with Jesus and impact their nations.”

DBI director Corey Webb, based in Texas, is one of 150 Christian network leaders in Africa, Asia, North and South America and Europe who have been testing DBI to work out the kinks before the April release.

'Different way to spread the gospel'

Businesses seek to impact Kingdom through influence in corporate world

By David Roach
The Alabama Baptist

Eight years ago, Lori Chambers was working as a bank executive in Birmingham, Alabama. She wondered how her faith in Christ fit in with her job. When she mentioned her questions to a friend at church, he extended an invitation that changed her life.

He urged her to attend a local meeting of some two dozen Christian professionals who convened periodically to discuss the integration of business and faith in Christ.

Known as Business as Mission, the group was part of a global movement focused on "the multiple bottom lines of economic, social, environmental and spiritual outcomes," according to the movement's website.

Each local Business as Mission group is autonomous, though the umbrella organization Business as Mission Global convenes an annual online summit. This year's is slated for April 27.

Through her participation in Business as Mission, Chambers found herself within a stream of Christians who see business as more than a way to turn a profit. It's a means of advancing God's agenda in the world.

Stewarding resources

Business as Mission participants are not "storing up mammon for the sake of storing up mammon," said Chambers, now a development officer with Hope International, an organization that helps people rise from poverty through business loans among other avenues.

"God has asked me to steward financial resources and to do it with excellence," she said.

Business as Mission participants in several cities across the country host annual events known as The Lion's Den, where Christian entrepreneurs present business ideas



Author and podcast host Shawn Lovejoy speaks at a Lion's Den event. The Lion's Den allows Christian entrepreneurs to present business ideas with potential Kingdom impact to investors looking for Christ-honoring ventures.

with potential Christian impact to investors looking for Christ-honoring ventures.

Lion's Den events in several U.S. cities have led to millions of dollars in funding for Christian business ventures.

Despite this success, the notion of business as mission is not without critics. Some see it as an oxymoron to claim capitalism advances God's purposes for the world.

Amid such anti-business sentiment, some have wondered whether Christians can indeed advance God's Kingdom through business.

Business-minded believers across the world have joined Chambers in answering with an emphatic yes.

Film producers

Among them is John Walsh, an independent film producer in Franklin, Tennessee, who who helped produce the movie "Jesus Revolution."

Walsh worked alongside Chris-

tian filmmakers Jon and Andy Erwin, who also have produced "I Can Only Imagine" and "October Baby" among other movies (see story, page 11).

Gospel impact

Christian businesspeople have multiple avenues for gospel impact, Walsh said, including ministering to employees, using profits for philanthropy and producing quality products that open doors to speak about Jesus.

"You can do something so excellent — like Chick-fil-A or In-N-Out Burger — that people just rave about it, and then they

want to know who these people are and why they do it," Walsh said. "That's such an impact."

Chris Chancey utilized business to advance missions when he founded Amplio Recruiting, an Atlanta-based staffing agency that helps international refugees find jobs in America.

The company aims to ask each

client how they can pray for that person's family. After a client finds employment, Amplio tries to get invited into the client's home to share the gospel.

Though Amplio doesn't track the number of people to profess faith through their efforts, men and women have come to a saving knowledge of Christ through their ministry.

'Win/win engagement'

Some business owners may pursue "money at all costs," Chancey said, but "there are still some businesses and ways of operating that would be more of an ethical approach — a win/win engagement."

In such a business, profit can indicate success at impacting lives, said Chancey, who sold Amplio in 2021 but remains involved as a consultant.

"The original intent and expectation of business" includes "a component of improving the lives of the people connected to that business in some capacity," Chancey said.

"Capital was a byproduct of that. Capital is the outcome of serving the customer well."

Chancey now resides in Jacksonville, Florida, and continues to participate in Business as Mission, including regular attendance at Dallas and Birmingham Lion's Den events.

He and fellow Christian businesspeople refuse to believe capitalism is inherently evil. They have seen too many lives impacted for good.

Dan Stafford, event manager for the Birmingham Lion's Den, said utilizing business as mission can even open doors for the gospel in places closed to traditional churches and ministries.

Many Christians "think they have to go into missions or ministry" to make an impact for Christ, Stafford said. "But we want them to also look at going into Business as Mission."

Lion's Den connects Kingdom-minded investors with Christian entrepreneurs

By David Roach
The Alabama Baptist

Funding for major motion pictures typically comes from Hollywood. But for Jon and Andy Erwin, it came from Birmingham.

In the early stages of producing their 2018 motion picture "I Can Only Imagine" — which tells the story of how the Christian band Mercy Me wrote their hit song of the same title — the Erwins needed investors.

They found themselves at the annual Birmingham Lion's Den, where Christian entrepreneurs present their ideas to potential investors who want their money to generate impact for Jesus rather than just profit.

Their idea went over well. Lion's Den participants provided approximately 20% of the \$8 million required to make the film, which grossed \$86 million and won a Dove Award for Inspirational Film of the Year.

"Now we have a brand and a name in Hollywood that is respected," said Josh Walsh, former Erwin Brothers chief operating officer. "And to think that came from a group of guys in Alabama — not ultrawealthy billionaires, but guys that were successful in their companies and had a vision to impact the world through pooling their finances ... and getting behind what they believe in."

The Erwin Brothers are not the only believers to find investors at the Lion's Den. Over the past decade, Lion's Den events across America have connected Christian investors with God-honoring business ventures.

The inaugural 2014 Lion's Den in Birmingham led to similar events in Dallas, Silicon Valley and Portland. A new event in Tampa, Florida, launched last month.

The events stem from a global movement called Business as Mission. It involves Christian businesspeople convening periodically in cities across the world to discuss the integration of their faith and their profession.

Among their aims are impacting employees, using profits for philanthropy and producing excellent products that open doors for gospel witness.

Fishers of men

Those aims led to the Lion's Den, which some describe as a Christian version of the reality television show "Shark Tank." But the Lion's Den aims to identify fishers of men rather than sharklike investors.

At each event, three or four preselected entrepreneurs make pitches to a panel of judges who ask them tough business questions. If audience members find a pitch compelling, they can connect with the entrepreneur.

The Birmingham Lion's Den has been hosted by Samford University and draws more than 500 participants.

Past Lion's Den events have generated between \$100,000 and \$5 million for worthy business ventures, said Lori Chambers, who helps organize the Birmingham event.

The pitches are surrounded by two days of workshops, seminars and networking opportunities for entrepreneurs and accredited investors, which are carefully defined by the Securities and Exchange Commission.

The Lion's Den is a "chance to

remember that God is at work in business," Chambers said. The investors "are taking huge risks by investing in these companies, taking a chance on these companies that have a great idea" with "a very clear spiritual impact."

Mentoring and networking

For Chris Chancey, the most valuable facets of presenting at the Lion's Den were the mentoring and networking opportunities rather than money.

He founded Amplio Recruiting in 2014, an Atlanta-based staffing agency that helps place refugees from other countries in U.S. jobs.

The business aims to pray with each client and find opportunities to share the gospel with them. That venture led Chancey to present at the 2017 Lion's Den in Birmingham.

Since that presentation, Amplio has expanded from three locations to 20 across the U.S. While Chancey didn't take any money from Lion's Den participants, their support helped fuel the company's expansion, he said.

Chancey sold the business in 2021 but remains involved as a consultant.

"There's so much value beyond just the financial piece," said Chancey, who has invested money in other companies at the Lion's Den.

Business professionals like Chancey have made the Lion's Den a powerful vehicle for advancing the Great Commission, Chambers said.

"What I see with the Lion's Den ecosystem is people choosing to love God by putting their resources behind their faith," she said.

The next Lion's Den is April 19–20 in Dallas. An event is planned for October in Birmingham.



The annual Lion's Den event in Birmingham, Alabama, is where Christian entrepreneurs present their ideas to potential investors who want their money to generate impact for Jesus rather than just profit.

Could potential TikTok ban impact online outreach?

By Meredith Flynn
The Alabama Baptist

As the social media app TikTok continues to raise security concerns, some churches and ministries would face a significant shift in outreach strategy if the platform is banned in the U.S.

The app, which allows users to easily create and share videos, is one of the world's fastest-growing social media platforms, especially among young people. The app has 150 million active users in the U.S. alone.

The U.S. has threatened to ban TikTok here unless its owner, ByteDance, sells its shares of the company. The chief security concern is that ByteDance could give users' data to the Chinese government.

TikTok was recently banned on phones issued by the U.S. government, and several states and university systems have enacted similar policies.

In March, lawmakers introduced bipartisan legislation that would allow the U.S. Department of Commerce to determine whether social media platforms represent a national security risk.

While TikTok is best known for viral dances and recipes, Christian leaders also use the platform to reach younger audiences. Passion Conferences has more than 2 million likes on videos of its worship events.

Shane Pruitt, national next gen director for the North American Mission Board, uses the platform to encourage deeper discipleship among young people. Cristina Baker started

sharing her hope-filled videos during the pandemic and now has more than 1 million followers on TikTok.

Churches too have begun using the platform to connect with a larger audience online. TikTok offers leaders a unique opportunity, Lifeway's Zac Workun wrote in 2021, to upload short, rewatchable lessons and begin to build community there.

'Gold mine'

The potential shifts in social media come at a time when churches are enjoying a big advantage across all platforms, said Brady Shearer of Pro Church Tools. For the first time,

he said, social media are prioritizing vertical video as the preferred type of post. TikTok led the trend.

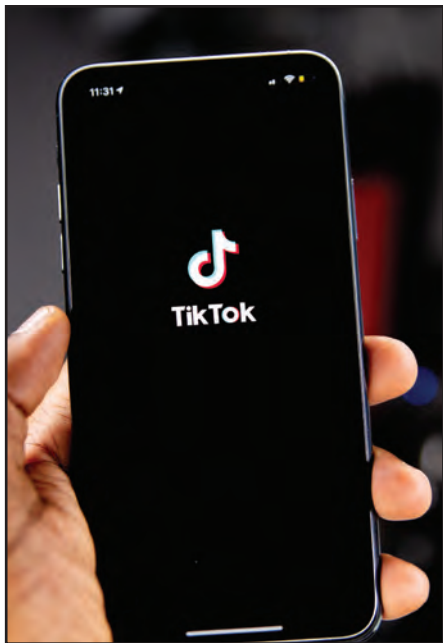
Churches already have a "gold mine" of content for vertical video, Shearer said, because most create a video message every week.

Additionally, social media platforms are moving toward algorithms that point users to new content based

on their activity, rather than limiting them to content liked or posted by friends, he noted.

That means churches can post the same vertical video on multiple platforms to reach different audiences.

In testimony before Congress on March 23, TikTok's CEO, Shou Zi Chew, said his company is not an arm of the Chinese government. Lawmakers remain skeptical, however, with several members of Congress saying they simply don't believe Chew's assertions.

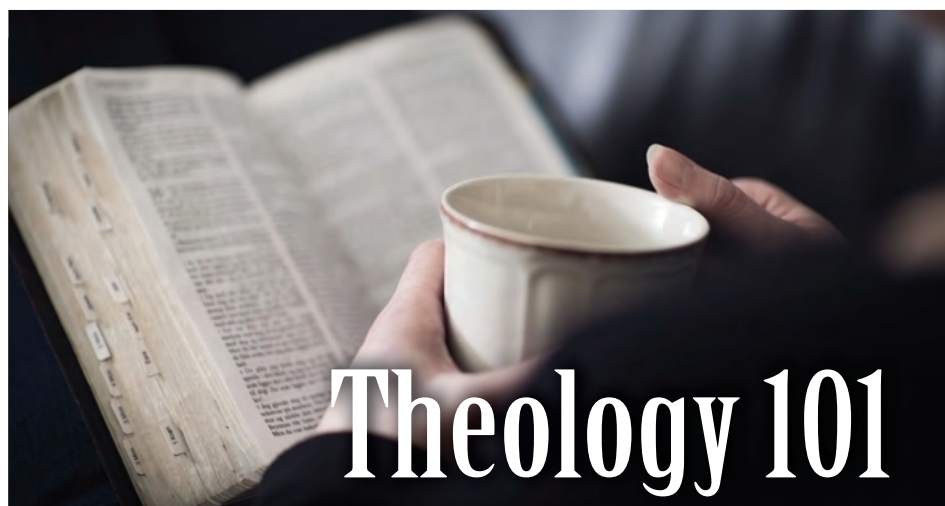


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**67% of teens in the U.S. say they use TikTok,
and 16% say they use it constantly.**

Only YouTube has a larger share of teen users.

Pew Research



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Let's Just Praise the Lord

The 'Hallelujah Psalm'

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
The Alabama Baptist

The Old Testament was originally written in the Hebrew language. For those of us who speak and write in English, Hebrew is a rather strange language.

For instance, it only has 22 letters as opposed to the 26 letters in the English alphabet. Furthermore, the Hebrew alphabet's 22 letters have rather strange names, not to mention their unfamiliar shapes.

If these differences were not enough, those 22 letters are put together backwards to form words which are spelled from right to left, and Hebrew sentences have to be read from right to left, rather than left to right.

And to top it off, the books comprising the Hebrew Bible are backward, with Genesis starting at the back of the Bible and Malachi ending at what to us is the Bible's front.

Word origin

In spite of the peculiarities of Hebrew when compared with English, all of us who have been in church for any length of time know a little Hebrew.

We may not realize at first that we do, but we really do. If you have ever uttered the word hallelujah you have spoken a bit of Hebrew. In either language, this word means "praise the Lord."

Psalm 150 is the "hallelujah psalm." It opens with a hallelujah, and this word occurs not only in the opening and closing verses of the psalm, but also 11

times in between. Thus the call to praise the Lord occurs a total of 13 times.

Interestingly, the term occurs only 24 times in the whole Book of Psalms. This means over half the occurrences are in this one psalm — which makes it quite unique, being composed of six verses of pure praise.

'Lift our hearts'

Psalm 150 makes no request, although elsewhere God invites His people to present their requests to Him.

The psalm contains no intercession, although other psalms contain intercession for the nation as well as for one's enemies.

This hallelujah psalm doesn't contain any confession, although other psalms confess personal sins, as well as national sins.

Throughout this month, Theology 101 will explore the theme of praising the Lord, using this hallelujah psalm as the focal point.

The Bill Gaither Trio and the Gaither Vocal Band have made this month's theme popular with a song which begins, "Let's just praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Let's just lift our hearts to heaven and praise the Lord."

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.



Small group engagement lags in many churches

Many churches are finding it increasingly difficult to grow their small groups.

A recent Lifeway Research report suggests pastors are facing challenges when it comes to moving worship attendees into small groups where they'll study Scripture.

"Small groups and Sunday School classes provide the relational glue that allows a local congregation to be a place where people love one another," said Scott McConnell, executive director of Lifeway Research.

"Groups and relationships that are centered on the Word of God unify a congregation and motivate people to work together on the mission of the church," he noted. "Churches with few people participating in groups are not in a healthy position to be making more disciples."

On average, Protestant churches say 44% of their current weekend worship attendees are involved in a small group, Sunday School or similar group, indicating a decline in average small group attendance since 2010 (49%).

Church size matters

Small churches in particular face significant challenges when it comes to integrating worship attendees into small groups.

Pastors at the smallest churches, those with fewer than 50 attendees, are the most likely to say less than 25% of their attendees are involved in a small group (39%).

Mainline churches are also more likely to struggle with small group participation than evangelical churches.

As churches have struggled to develop small group attendees, large numbers of



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new commitments to Christ are becoming less common.

In the past 12 months, Protestant churches have seen an average of 15 new commitments to Christ.

Compared to 2010, fewer churches today are seeing at least 20 new commitments in a year (20% v. 13%).

"Previous research has shown people who regularly attend groups share with others how to become a

Christian and invite people to church more often," McConnell said. "As we see less participation in groups, it is not surprising that churches see fewer people coming to Christ."

On average, 79% of new commitments to Christ become active in the life of the church. More than half of Protestant churches (56%) retained all new commitments. This indicates a slight

improvement since 2008 when 51% of churches retained all new commitments.

Once again, mainline churches are more likely than evangelical churches to struggle to gain new commitments. Mainline pastors are more likely than evangelicals to report no new commitments (23% v. 15%).

Church size is a significant factor for new commitments and retaining those commitments in the church.

Pastors at churches with attendance of fewer than 50 are most likely to report no new commitments (32%). And pastors at churches with attendance of 250 or more are most likely to report at least 20 new commitments (57%).

However, pastors of the largest churches (attendance of 250 or greater) are the least likely to have retained all new commitments (35%). (Lifeway Research)

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UPCOMING EVENTS

sponsored by the State Board of Missions

MIX Music Camp helps students prepare to lead

Does your child or teenager love music? MIX Music Camp is the perfect place for them to spend a week this summer.

The camp, which is three camps in one — MIX for rising third through fifth graders, MIX6 for rising sixth graders and reMIX for students going into grades 7–12 — is set for July 10–14 at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega.

MIX Music Camp will build lasting friendships and focus on discipleship and worship.

Lindsay Lyon, a former camper and now counselor, said the camp made a big



SBOM photo

impact on her and taught her it was “not about the performance.”

“It’s not about what other people think about you. It’s about worshipping the Lord,” she said. “And this

camp is the one thing that helped me understand that most of all.”

For more information or to register for MIX Music Camp, visit mixmusiccamp.org.

Church Tax Conference for Small Churches June 8

Do you need a W2 if the pastor is the only paid employee?

Do you have to complete Form 941?

Can a minister take 100 percent of his income as housing?

How does a small church of 100 or fewer people differ from the large church in tax issues?

At the Church Tax Conference for Small Churches, you will learn the answer to these questions and more.

Lee Wright, who serves in church financial services for the Alabama Baptist

To register, visit alsbom.org/churchtax or scan the code below with your smartphone’s camera.



State Board of Missions, said it can be tough for small churches to have these procedures in place

correctly, so a conference like this can help tremendously in keeping them on track for ministry.

“Almost all churches have some financial practices that are incorrect,” he said. “Some could result in an IRS fine or worse.”

The conference will be held June 8, 10 a.m.–3 p.m., at the SBOM at 1404 Fairview Avenue in Prattville. The cost of this event is \$15, which includes lunch and materials.

For more information or to register, visit alsbom.org/churchtax.

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CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR

Westside Baptist Church in Jasper, Alabama, is in search of a senior pastor. Deadline to apply is May 24. Mail resumé to: Westside Baptist Church, 1101 22nd St W, Jasper, AL 35501. Email to: wbcjasper@gmail.com.

SENIOR PASTOR

Providence Baptist Church, Town Creek, Alabama, is in search of a senior pastor. Please send resumé to: jcrosslin89@gmail.com.

PASTOR

Elam Baptist Church, Thomsville, Alabama, is seeking a full-time pastor. Interested applicants can email resumé to: reid2546@hotmail.com or call Johnny at 334-357-1652 for more information.

PASTOR

Northside Baptist Church, Selma, Alabama, is seeking a full-time pastor. Please submit resumé to: Northsidebaptist2021@gmail.com.

PASTOR

Hamilton Baptist Church in Robertsedale, Alabama, is in search of a bivocational/full-time pastor. Please email resumé to: hamiltonbaptist3037@gmail.com or mail to: HBC 32815 County Road 112, Robertsedale, AL 36567. Resumés must be received by April 30.

PASTOR

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

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Westview Baptist Church, 809 Damascus Hwy., Enterprise, AL 36330, is prayerfully seeking resumé for a bivocational pastor. Please send resumé to: church address, marked ATTN: Search Committee, or via email at wchurch.enterprise@gmail.com. For additional inquiries, call 334-797-0798.

YOUTH PASTOR

Bethlehem West Baptist Church, a vibrant and growing church in Vinemont, Alabama, is seeking a full-time youth pastor. Please send resumé to: shane wheeler1210@icloud.com.

PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER

Webb Baptist Church is seek-

ing an individual who can work part-time in leading the youth ministry. Resumés can be sent to: lshayles@outlook.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.

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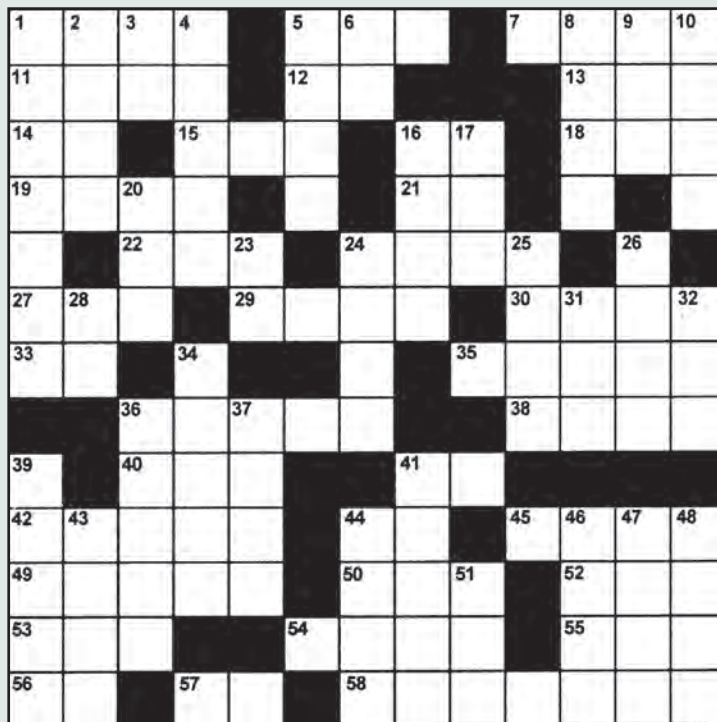
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CHRISTIAN Crossword



ACROSS

1. Charity suffereth long, and is _____. (1 Cor. 13:4)
5. They have spread a _____ by the wayside. (Ps. 140:5)
7. Gather the wheat into my _____. (Matt. 13:30)
11. A thought or concept.
12. I will set him _____ high. (Ps. 91:14)
13. Having to do with life science. (prefix)
14. Compass direction.
15. Glory to God in _____ highest.
16. How long shall I _____ with you? (Mark 9:19)
18. British word for bathroom.
19. Some would even _____ to die. (Rom. 5:7)



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21. _____, _____, C.
22. _____, and it shall be given you. (Matt. 7:7)
24. _____, Father. (Mark 14:36)
27. And did all _____ the same spiritual meat. (1 Cor. 10:3)
29. Behold, the _____ wept. (Ex. 2:6)
30. And his _____ went throughout all Syria. (Matt. 4:24)
33. Decimeter. (abbr.)
35. Calls for someone in a public place.
36. Far _____ all principality, and power. (Eph. 1:21)
38. The veil of the temple was _____ in twain. (Matt. 27:51)
40. Nancy. (abbr.)
41. _____ angel of the Lord.
42. _____, and walk? (Matt. 9:5)
44. Before Christ. (abbr.)
45. He is _____; yet is he clean. (Lev. 13:40)
49. Gets up in the morning.
50. All that handle the _____. (Ezek. 27:29)
52. Side away from the wind.

53. One of the Three Stooges.
54. A type of deer.
55. The father shall be divided against the _____. (Luke 12:53)
56. Saint. (abbr.)
57. But also _____ die at Jerusalem. (Acts 21:13)
58. His _____ was cleansed. (Matt. 8:3)
26. So be it.
28. _____ I my brother's keeper? (Gen. 4:9)
31. Die in the flower of their _____. (1 Sam. 2:33)
32. Eastern Standard Time. (abbr.)
34. And _____ him that is high. (Ezek. 21:26)
36. Pay tithe of mint and _____ and cummin. (Matt. 23:23)

DOWN

1. Is not Boaz of our _____ ... ? (Ruth 3:2)
2. "I've got a great _____!"
3. Compass direction.
4. Sweet fruit grown on palm trees.
5. Christmas.
6. Inhabitants of _____ dor. (Josh. 17:11)
8. No man ... was _____ to open the book. (Rev. 5:3)
9. City in Brazil.
10. About _____ ... there shone ... a great light. (Acts 22:6)
16. Find the _____ wrapped in swaddling clothes. (Luke 2:12)
17. One type of tide.
20. A type of vermin.
23. Kilobytes. (abbr.)
24. He is _____ also to save. (Heb. 7:25)
25. When he saw Jesus _____ off, he ran. (Mark 5:6)

All Bible verses are KJV unless otherwise specified.

Children's Music Summit July 7-8

It's back — a hands-on training event for pre-school and children's music leadership to get you excited about teaching these precious children about God through music!

The Children's Music Summit, set for July 7-8, is designed to motivate, inspire, educate and prepare you to lead effectively in your churches, schools, Mom's Day Out or week-day education programs. Watch the love for worship come alive in your pre-schoolers and children! The Children's Music Summit will be July 7,

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



2:30 p.m., until July 8, 4 p.m. at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega. For more information or to register, visit alabamaworship.org.

Legal Issues Conference April 13

Legal Issues, a conference coming this April, can provide your church staff with helpful information about legal challenges that come up in churches today.

Topics will include gender law, sexual

misconduct and tax law.

Jim Swedenburg will teach the conference at the SBOM, 1404 Fairview Avenue in Prattville, on April 13, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

The cost is \$15 and includes lunch. To register, visit alsbom.org/legalissues.

Church Weekday Education Conference

If you're a church pre-school teacher or director, the Church Weekday Education Conference, set for May 5-6 at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega, is for you.

The conference is good for credits to meet the requirements for training by the Alabama Department of Human Resources.

To register, visit at alsbom.org/cwe.

Create a simple guest card to gather information

By **Mark MacDonald**
The Alabama Baptist

One are the days when a pastor asks visitors to raise their hands or stand up and be recognized — that is cringe-worthy now. Guests at your church want anonymity until they need something or want to take the next step.

Is there a difference between a visitor and a guest?

It's all in the individual's perspective, but when a visitor feels ready to be considered a guest at your church, be ready with a quick and easy way to gather the individual's pertinent information. We'll call this a guest card.

Right timing

Many people will not want to give you their contact information on their first visit. Here's why: We live in a skeptical culture where a visitor doesn't want to

be identified until they feel ready. That can take several visits.

So when they're ready, here are 5 ways to improve your church guest card:

1. Keep it short. The longer your guest card is, the less likely it will be filled out. Consider the minimal information you need now. You can always add to the information later.

2. Make it digital as well as printed. Don't assume someone will want to fill out a form with a pen. Digital forms are usually easy to complete on a smartphone, and they also eliminate transcription errors.

Note, however, that a printed card can act as a visual reminder. The card should include a QR code that leads to a digital form on your "about" or "new?" webpage as well as space for those who want to manually write in their informa-



Unsplash.com

tion. Be sure to have a pen nearby.

Next steps

3. Have a call to action. When you request information, remember it costs a guest a lot to fill it out, even if it's just the cost of giving you information. Therefore, lead guests to something that's of value for submitting the card. Reward them in some way — with informa-

tion, a usable gift or a way to step into a discipleship journey toward salvation, baptism or church membership.

4. Explain how the information will be used. Always disclose why you're collecting information and what you'll do with it. Be brief and be honest. Every person wants to protect their privacy. Assure them you'll protect it.

Have your guest cards readily available in the pew or chair area, at a visitors center or as a digital form on your website so guests can access them easily.

Once you have the information, use it — perhaps for analytics, follow-up or demographics. If you really don't need the information to improve your first impressions or responses or to help your guest feel honored, then don't ask for it.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Mark MacDonald is a communication pastor, speaker, consultant, bestselling author, church branding strategist for BeKnownforSomething.com and executive director of the Center for Church Communication, empowering 10,000+ churches to become known for something relevant throughout their ministries, websites and social media.

Revive
evangelizeAL.org/revive

Senior Adult Evangelism Conference
Monday, May 8, 9:30 a.m.-Noon, First Baptist Church, Birmingham

SPEAKERS
J.J. Washington Kevin Hamm

SPECIAL MUSIC
Karen Peck and New River

FREE ADMISSION

Evangelism Everywhere

‘Educating tomorrow’s generation’

Samford’s commercial music emphasis example of training ‘the whole person’

By Tracy Riggs Frontz
The Alabama Baptist

Samford University students interested in commercial music careers received a unique opportunity to learn from industry professionals during the school’s annual Step Sing weekend.

Steven Potaczek, assistant professor of commercial music at Samford, organized the second annual “How to Make it in the Music Industry” workshop in conjunction with the university’s 73rd annual Step Sing competition.

The event brought producers and musicians to campus to evaluate Step Sing music arrangements, choreography and costume design but also provided an opportunity for students and others to learn more about the music industry.

Serving as Step Sing judges were Simon Lythgoe, television and film producer of shows such as “American Idol” and “So You Think You Can Dance” and founder of Legacy Productions; Chris Fryar, drummer for the Zac Brown Band; and Steve Schnur, worldwide executive and president of music for Electronic Arts, the largest video game producer in the world.

Featured panelists

Lythgoe, Brown and Schnur — along with Ruben Studdard, American Idol winner and producer, and Philip Peters, TobyMac’s manager — also were featured panelists at the workshop.

“The truth is, commercial music is an evolving industry,” Lythgoe said. “Technology is driving it so fast, so quickly, you’ve got to keep your eyes open and utilize social media — you’ve got to be careful with social media, but you have to



Photo by Tracy Riggs Frontz/The Alabama Baptist

Simon Lythgoe, producer of shows such as “American Idol” and “So You Think You Can Dance,” was at Samford University in January to judge the annual Step Sing competition and to discuss careers and other issues related to the commercial music industry with students.

use social media to promote your music.”

Strategy, creativity and marketing are three strategies important to the use of social media in the industry, he noted. Lythgoe also reminded participants that the music industry is much broader than the musicians.

“There are so many elements to the music business,” he said. For every performer a support team exists — agents, managers, attorneys, accountants and more.

Helping students understand the full picture of the music industry is the reason Potaczek launched the annual workshop.

“It’s one thing to sit in a classroom and talk about the music

industry, but it’s wholly another to go to it (which we do) and bring it to students,” he explained. “We not only regularly go to those places but we bring them to us. It’s really a desire to bring in some heavy hitters.”

However, the workshop panelists are not selected strictly because of their notoriety, Potaczek emphasized. “We want people who are interested, not only in the music industry but also in the mission of Samford University.

“As the word of this program gets out, we’re trying to invite people in who would say, ‘Man, I’m really interested in that,’ or, ‘I feel like our missions align and I’d love to come speak at it.’”

Samford’s Bachelor of Arts de-

gree in commercial music trains students in the aspects supporting the musician on stage — product distribution, copyright laws, etc.

“We just recognized there’s no reason we shouldn’t be educating tomorrow’s generation and really bringing them up with the Christian values that Samford embodies and the mission of Samford University,” Potaczek added.

“It’s really our desire to educate the whole person, including the mind, body and the spirit,” Potaczek said.

‘Missional mindset’

“Our goal is really to educate the whole person and hopefully allow them to be lights in this world ... [to have] a missional mindset and be the salt of the earth that God’s called us to be.”

For more information, visit tabonline.org/commercial-music.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For April 9

Explore the Bible

By Ben Stubblefield

Visiting assistant professor of Christian studies, University of Mobile



I HAVE SEEN

John 20:1–18

Today's passage begins on the first day of the week. The Sunday Resurrection is the reason for Christian weekly corporate worship on Sunday. It is the Lord's Day — the day He undid death and became the first-born of the new creation, the first-fruits of many more to come. On this day, believers honor Jesus in weekly discipleship. It is a day of joy, hope, promise and sacred worship.

Examine (1–10)

Mary Magdalene had the privilege of being the first to see the stone rolled away. She hurried to notify Peter and John, who raced to investigate. While John outran Peter, Peter was the first to peer into the tomb, where he found folded burial linens. That detail indicates two things: The tomb wasn't robbed — thieves wouldn't need a body and would have taken the garments. And whoever had the grave clothes on didn't think He'd be needing them anymore.

For those reasons, John saw and believed. The disciples were perplexed about the death of their Messiah, but the seeds of belief had started to sprout. By evening, their misconceptions and doubts would dissolve (v. 19).

Many Jesus-seeking folks appreciate the Gospel writers' honesty and plain presentation. These verses don't read like myth or fable or clever storytelling. It's ordinary flawed people describing a miracle as sincerely as they can. Perhaps this Easter we can learn from John by inviting others to consider the Gospel writer's simple testimony and to examine the empty tomb with him in his uncertainty and doubt.

Questions (11–13)

A faithful, yet desperate Mary Magdalene returns to the tomb and finds two angels seated where Jesus'

body had lain. Seeing her sadness, they ask, "Why are you weeping?" She, like most of us, struggles to believe, as indicated by her statement in verse 13.

The Lord and his angels don't toss Mary aside for her struggle. In His kindness, Jesus will soon reveal Himself as more than a gardener (v. 15). It is encouraging that the Lord is patient with our struggle to trust and obey. He doesn't cast us aside for our ineptitude or lack of faith. The Lord often counsels us who are weak, so we might follow Him more fully.

Witness (14–18)

Mary does not recognize Jesus and thinks He is the gardener. Perhaps she couldn't believe her eyes or was exhausted. Or perhaps His resurrected body was so astonishingly strong that He was difficult to recognize at first glance. In any case, when He called her name, Mary recognized and clung to Him.

Jesus' instructions to her in verse 17 are perplexing. It's best to envision a Mary so enraptured and excited that she doesn't want to let Him go. He tells her in effect, "I'm not going anywhere yet!"

She leaves Jesus and bears witness to the disciples. We don't know how they reacted to her news, but we know she was faithful. The disciples may have been frightened or confused, but her assignment wasn't to convince them — it was to report her witness. Isn't that our calling too?

We're called to be faithful to go, tell and bear witness to the resurrected Christ, regardless of people's response. I've heard people say culture is changing and folks don't believe, but I wonder if the burden is on the other foot. Perhaps fewer believe because fewer bear witness.

Let's be faithful to tell others about the hope of our Lord.

***"I am ascending to my Father and your Father,
to my God and your God."***

John 20:17b

Bible Studies for Life

By James R. Strange

Professor of biblical and religious studies, Samford University



JESUS ROSE AGAIN

TO GIVE ME LIFE

John 20:1–2, 11–18

He is risen! Today's story of an encounter with Jesus is the most formative of all. Before day dawns on the first Easter, Mary Magdalene meets her risen Lord.

In the synoptic Gospels, she is among the women who come to the tomb, but John focuses on Mary alone before the two men arrive.

The encounter leads to the issue of Jesus' identity and the response of faith.

The tomb in which Jesus was buried was found empty. (1–2)

The first day of the week is Sunday. John says the Resurrection happened while it was still dark, echoing the proclamation with which he began his Gospel (John 1:4–5).

Although he was associated with John early in Christian tradition, "the disciple whom Jesus loved" is not named in the Gospel. This anonymity invites John's readers to consider Jesus' love for them.

For Mary, the sight of the empty tomb is not yet evidence of the Resurrection. The beloved disciple, however, understands what has happened (v. 8).

Jesus revealed Himself as alive. (11–16)

Following the practice of the day, the tomb was carved into a limestone hillside and had a low opening. Anyone wishing to see inside had to stoop (v. 5).

In John, the messengers ("angels" in Greek) don't announce the resurrection. Mary sees Jesus, but like the disciples walking to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–35), she doesn't recognize Him.

Like others who encounter Jesus but don't yet know His identity, Mary inadvertently calls Him "Lord" ("sir") before coming to full

belief (4:11; 8:11; 9:36). Perhaps because of her grief and alarm, Mary

thinks a gardener would remove a corpse and that she can take him away on her own. This could also explain why she doesn't recognize Jesus' appearance or His voice.

She does, however, know Him when He speaks her name. This might be the most powerful moment among all Resurrection appearances, for Jesus calls her even in her fear, confusion and anguish.

The message of the resurrected Christ is to be shared with others. (17–18)

Having moved from the darkness of loss to the light of joy at the Resurrection, Mary does the job of the angels. She proclaims her own experience: "I have seen the Lord!" The men take up the message in verse 25.

We can't preach this message the same way for we have not seen our Lord as they did.

But He is risen. This is the truth we celebrate every Easter and proclaim every day. We are the ones

Jesus spoke of when He said to Thomas, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe" (v. 29).

Without seeing, our strongest testimony is still our own experience of the living Lord — Jesus gave me peace. He turned my heart from judgment to mercy. He brought me out of darkness into light. He healed me. He taught me to love. He called me by my name. What can you add that the Lord has done for you and those you love?

Jesus did these things even as we languished in situations like Mary's, some better and some worse. Jesus came to us as we were and called us to Himself. Thus we who have not seen may confess with Thomas, "My Lord and my God!" (v. 28).

"Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord' — and that He had said these things to her."

John 20:18

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Michael Foust
The Alabama Baptist

‘The Wingfeather Saga’ is a gripping fantasy series for the whole family

You won’t find TV’s best new family series on over-the-air channels, cable outlets or even on the major streaming services.

The animated series — “The Wingfeather Saga” — likely wouldn’t have been greenlighted by Hollywood anyway.

The first season debuted on Angel Studios’ platforms in December, telling the fictional story of a tight-knit family, the Igibys, who live in a fantastical world of friendly creatures and not-so-friendly monsters. The Igibys are battling their overlords, the evil Fangs. The family does things you won’t see in most mainstream series. They pray before meals. They rarely squabble. They encourage one another. They practice random acts of kindness.

Kid-friendly

The series is based on the popular novels by singer and author Andrew Peterson and provides faithcentric families a rare treat: a fantasy series that can be viewed by the entire family. There’s no coarse language. There’s no sexuality. Yes, there are a few frightening moments, but it always remains in the kid-friendly realm — although for little ones, it may be wise to have a pillow to oc-



“THE WINGFEATHER SAGA”

Photo courtesy of Angel Studios

asionally cover their eyes. The best part? The story, animation and musical score are as good as anything produced in Hollywood.

Each time my 11-year-olds watch an episode, they beg me to let them watch the next one. The series is known for its cliffhangers — it’s a gripping voyage into an unknown world.

A crowdfunded series, “The Wingfeather Saga” was streamed 3.5 million times in its first five weeks. It features the voices of Jodi Benson (“The Little Mermaid”), Henry Ian Cusick (“Lost” and “The 100”) and Kevin McNally (“Pirates of the Caribbean”), among others.

Peterson told The Alabama Baptist that mainstream movies and television shows too often manufacture conflict within the family. In “The Wingfeather Saga,” he said, the family members are on the same team.

Identity is another major theme in the series, but not in the way the world views the subject, he said. In

“The Wingfeather Saga,” the family’s identity is found in their service to the Maker.

“We belong to Someone. We belong to the King of the world,”

Peterson said. “If you’re a Christian, that changes everything about who you are and your place in the world.”

If your family is a fan of “The Chronicles of Narnia” or “The Lord of the Rings” series, then you’ll probably enjoy “The Wingfeather Saga.”

Angel Studios plans on releasing seven seasons. Visit angel.com for more information.

Other recommendations

Also worth watching this month:

► **“The Most Reluctant Convert” (Pure Flix)** — An atheist scholar becomes a believer thanks to the witness of his Christian friends. It’s based on the real-life story of C.S. Lewis and the stage play of the same name by Max McLean, who portrays a middle-aged Lewis in the

film. It was one of the best movies of 2021. Visit PureFlix.com.

► **“Happily Ever Emma” (Great American Family)** — An actress who enjoys matchmaking discovers romance isn’t as simple as she thought. It’s based on the Jane Austen novel “Emma” and debuted in March on Great American Family, which is also the new home of Candace Cameron Bure. “Happily Ever Emma” can be watched on the channel’s on-demand platforms (Frndlytv.com, for example). Visit GreatAmericanFamily.com.

► **“Minions: The Rise of Gru” (Netflix)** — An 11-year-old boy who dreams of becoming a supervillain fails to land a spot with his favorite supervillain team, the Vicious 6. This animated comedy is the backstory to the “Despicable Me” series, although it doesn’t contain the redemptive element of those earlier films. Even so, it’s hilarious. Rated PG for some action/violence and rude humor.

► **“Torchlighters: The Richard Allen Story” (Redeem TV)** — A young boy born into slavery before the Revolutionary War grows up to change the face of American Christianity by founding the African Methodist Episcopal Church. It’s the 22nd episode in the excellent “Torchlighters” animated series, which introduces children to heroes of the Christian faith. Visit RedeemTV.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.

MEET THE REVIEWER

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

The Alabama Baptist

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December 8, 2022

INSIDE



Missionary couple recognized for decades of service
→ Page 9



Pastors working as Santas bring joy, extend ministry to others during holidays
→ Page 11



'Something

Ice cream truck dreams turn into ministry

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Michelle Norwood says on a much smaller scale, she might know what Noah felt like. For her it wasn't an ark — it was an ice cream truck. "I had seen one for maybe three minutes in my life," she recalled. "I was visiting my sister in Memphis one summer. We walked out, and I bought the kids an ice cream." But in 2017, Norwood said she woke up night after night at 2 a.m., and God started to speak to her about how to build one.

"I'd wake up, and little by little there would be another idea of what I needed to research or figure out," she related. "I made notes and started making connections." It was a new thought, but the purpose behind it had been in Norwood's mind and heart for

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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)

SPOTLIGHT SPONSOR ...

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

The Alabama Baptist

February 23, 2023

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College students focus of Feb. 23 prayer emphasis

By Carrie B. McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

An annual day of prayer for college students is coming at a pivotal time in the spiritual lives of students throughout the nation and across Alabama.

The Collegiate Day of Prayer, which falls this year on Feb. 23, has garnered renewed attention as news reports chronicle the revival happening at Ashbury University in Wilmore, Kentucky.

Livestream

This year's 200th anniversary prayer service will be livestreamed from Ashbury on Feb. 23 from 7 to 9 p.m. Central time.

On Feb. 24-25, hundreds of college students from across Alabama will gather at First Baptist Church Montgomery and student ministries for Pursue, an annual missions and discipleship conference.

Ben Edfield, director of collegiate and student ministries for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said he is excited to see how God will use the convergence of the day of prayer, Pursue and the Ashbury revival.

"I hope that our Alabama Baptist churches will join the office of collegiate and student ministries on Feb. 23 in asking God to move in an unmistakable way — calling students to repentance, inviting students

(See 'Missions,' page 9)

Jesus'

to Annie Armstrong gifts

In Alabama there are churches everywhere."

That started the couple on a journey toward realizing God was calling them to plant a church there.

They started a church planting residency in early 2020, were affirmed in the summer and started growing their launch teams in 2021.

"We launched The Local Church officially in February 2022," McKay said. "We started in one location, meeting on Sunday afternoons at 4 p.m."

(See 'Ministry,' page 10)

LIGHT SPONSOR ...

Training Institute at Samford University — Equipping students to be leaders in their churches and communities through biblical education and practical ministry training.

Most creative

By Ashley Allen

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Seminary professor strives for biblical accuracy, inspired students

Whether dressed as a Roman soldier or a Jewish shepherd or supplying his class with 3D glasses to be at the empty tomb through a video he created, Jim Wicker strives to demonstrate for his students how to accurately — and creatively — teach the Scriptures.

“We’ve all heard boring lessons or boring sermons at some point,” said Wicker, professor of New Testament at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary since 2000. A messenger can be “accurate, but if you’re boring, they’re asleep,” he noted.

Through magic tricks he calls “gospel illusions” or using modern technology coupled with a skit to show the consequences of a verse of Scripture taken out of context, Wicker said his goal is for students to leave his classroom with a “better understanding of how to correctly interpret God’s word and then [be inspired to] creatively preach and teach God’s word.”

Bringing the text alive

The result has been a memorable classroom experience for his students.

Karen Kennemur, professor of children’s ministry and Bessie Fleming Chair of Childhood Education, had Wicker as a New Testament professor while earning her master of arts in Christian education at Southwestern in the early 2000s.

“He really brought the New Testament alive for those of us that were in his class,” she noted.

Calling Wicker “the most creative professor” she had at Southwestern, she remembers walking into the classroom one day and seeing 3D glasses on each desk. Wicker used a picture of Jesus’ tomb so when the class put on the special glasses,



SWBTS photo

Jim Wicker, professor of New Testament at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary since 2000, strives to use creativity to effectively teach and share the gospel.

Kennemur recalled, “we felt like we were standing at the tomb, looking at the tomb, where they had laid Christ’s body.”

In course assignments, Wicker encourages his students to tap into their creative skills through the Creative Biblical Arts Project.

He explained the purpose is “to show everyone can be creative” as they prepare to teach the Scriptures.

Wicker challenges students to look for ways to share a biblical text creatively, including “writing a song, singing a song, painting, drawing, [writing a] skit, [doing a] gospel illusion, [performing] spoken word” or anything else to be creative. In one of his classes the challenge is for extra credit, while in another it is a requirement.

Wicker’s desire to use creativity to effectively teach and share the gospel began at a young age.

When he was a child, Wicker said he performed gospel illusions

at children’s birthday parties, however, he stopped in junior high when other kids began to tease him. While he was a student at Hillcrest High School in Dallas, Wicker and other friends began helping lead and facilitate Bible studies twice a week at the school.

Opening doors

After a motorcycle accident in high school left him incapacitated, he and a friend wrote a comedy act that won competitions including the high school talent show, the state fair of Texas, Key Club and Key Club International. This opened doors for them to perform the show 365 times one summer at Six Flags Over Georgia.

Wicker recalled the experience was invaluable, and it taught him how to read an audience.

It was not until he was an oral communications major at Baylor University and leading weekly

backyard Bible clubs in and around Waco, Texas, that Wicker began to use the gospel illusions with children. He presented the plan of salvation several times, he recalled.

Ministry and performance

After graduating from Baylor in 1977, Wicker began as a master of divinity student at Southwestern.

While a student there, he began performing in shows alongside his classmates, including Neal Jeffrey, former San Diego Chargers quarterback and current associate pastor of pastoral and preaching ministries at Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano, and Christian comedian Dennis Swanberg.

After graduating from Southwestern in 1980, Wicker served as pastor of First Baptist Church Lavon, Texas.

He also began working toward a doctor of philosophy degree at Southwestern.

He recalled how he pursued doctoral studies because he wanted to teach, but thought he would “pastor in a college town and then teach in a local university.”

In addition to serving at FBC Lavon for more than two decades, Wicker served as pastor at FBC Farmersville and FBC Frisco. He also taught at satellite campuses of Dallas Baptist University.

Though Wicker never thought he would have an opportunity to teach at a seminary, he’s still doing so after more than two decades.

“It’s very meaningful to me to be here and invest in students’ lives in the way that those wonderful professors [I’m so thankful for] ... invested in my life,” he said.

“God sometimes brings these unexpected, wonderful experiences into your life.”

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Pastors: Prepare now for instances of abuse

By Art Toalston
The Baptist Paper

Pastors, search out someone to provide guidance if sexual abuse is suspected in your church. Do this now, Brad Hambrick advises, not after suspicion or an allegation arises — nor in the midst of a crisis.

Hambrick, general editor of the Southern Baptist curriculum “Becoming a Church that Cares Well for the Abused,” was among interviewees on “The Stain,” the eighth episode in the Reconstructing Faith podcast series hosted by Trevin Wax, vice president of research and resource development for the North American Mission Board.

“Virtually every aspect of the church’s credibility is affected by these egregious evils,” Wax said in the episode’s introduction.



Photo courtesy of Summit Church

Brad Hambrick is general editor of the Southern Baptist curriculum “Becoming a Church that Cares Well for the Abused” and was among interviewees on “The Stain.”

sode’s introduction.

Hambrick noted, “We should be able to scroll through our phone, find the number of a social worker, an attorney, a law enforcement officer, various people in those fields.” If not, the first action step is to find

“somebody who knows this terrain that I can call when something I’m not sure about comes up.”

Establishing trust

“You don’t need to build those relationships mid-crisis because the crisis will

shake those relationships. You need to establish yourself as a person of trust in them — and them as a person of trust in you — before you get to the middle of the crisis,” said Hambrick, assistant professor of biblical counseling at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, and pastor of counseling at the Summit Church in Durham.

“Sometimes we think if we make the first phone call, we are filing charges, as if legal papers are getting dropped at that moment,” Hambrick said. Rather, pastors should regard such a call as seeking an expert second opinion.

“You’re sharing what you know” in a “structured interview process” with an appropriate professional, Hambrick said, in order to

proceed toward the legal responsibility to report potential criminal activity.

Pastors may have the misconception that “we have to know. We want to have all of the facts before we move forward ... like, you’ve got to have two or three witnesses.”

Take initial steps

However, “sexual abuse doesn’t happen with two or three witnesses,” Hambrick said, noting that a rape kit or a doctor’s examination can provide key evidence. “Unless those steps are taken, somebody who has been harmed doesn’t get that support.”

He added: “The most dangerous time in the life of a victim is when they initially come forward because the abuser (has) a strong vested interest in silence.”

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The Wellness Kitchen

"Nature is God's Wellness Kitchen where Food is Medicine."

By Pat Terry
The Wellness Kitchen

FRESH GINGER CAKE

Makes 10 to 12 servings

INGREDIENTS:

1 cup mild or light molasses (Grandma's Unsulphured)	1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 cup sugar (You may use as little as 1/2 cup, if desired.)	1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
1 cup light olive oil or unflavored peanut oil	1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
1 cup all-purpose flour (or use all-purpose flour for all 2 1/2 cups flour)	1 cup water, boiled
1 1/2 cups spelt flour (or use spelt for all 2 1/2 cups flour)	2 teaspoons baking soda
	4 ounces (1/3 cup) fresh ginger, grated or minced
	2 large eggs, at room temperature

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F with rack in the center.
2. Line the bottom of a 9-inch cake or square pan with parchment and grease the bottom and sides with butter.
3. In a large bowl, whisk together the molasses, sugar and oil (the oil will float to the top).
4. In another bowl, whisk together flour and spices.
5. Bring the water to a boil in a saucepan. Remove from heat and stir in the baking soda. It will foam up considerably, so be ready. Whisk it into the molasses mixture along with the ginger.
6. Gradually sift the flour mixture over the wet ingredients, whisking to combine.
7. Whisk the eggs thoroughly to combine whites and yolks and add to the batter.
8. Scrape the batter into the prepared pan and bake for one hour or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out with just a few crumbs attached.
9. Cool 15 minutes in the pan and then flip out onto a wire cooling rack to let the cake cool completely.
10. Serve plain or with poached fruit, ice cream or whipping cream. You may also combine whipping cream with some lemon curd to top.

*If using a springform pan, wrap the bottom well with nonstick foil, in case of leaks.

Adapted from epicurious.com and brooklynsupper.com

What's in season right now? Ginger root!

Ginger root is one of the healthiest and most delicious spices on earth. It is closely related to turmeric and cardamom. Fresh ginger complements many Asian dishes and blends well with curries, meat and poultry stews, soups, fish and vegetables. Dried and powdered forms of ginger are also available and are best suited to baked goods and sweets. The ginger root is typically brown in color with a knotted appearance. The flesh ranges in color from light yellow-green to white.



Photo by Racool_studio on Freepik

Two forms of fresh ginger may be available in the market. Young ginger has a mild, sweet taste and mature ginger, identified by its tougher skin, has a sharper more pungent flavor. Medicinal and culinary uses of ginger were first documented in Southeast Asia, India and China over 5,000 years ago. It is best known for alleviating diges-

tive distress. Through European colonization, the use of ginger spread to many world cuisines. The phytonutrient gingerol in ginger is a powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory.

Peak time: Available year round

Average price: \$3.58 per pound

Nutritional highlights: Ginger root is a source of vitamin C, magnesium, manganese, potassium and copper. However, its nutritional power comes from terpene and phenolic phytonutrients — especially ginge-

rol. Gingerol is an antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial and anti-tumor compound. It is a therapeutic used for osteoarthritis, gastrointestinal protection, liver protection, weight reduction, blood sugar control, lowering cholesterol, and it protects brain function. It is truly remarkable.

Pat Terry started The Wellness Kitchen as a way to share the knowledge she's acquired over the 30 years she served as a professor of nutrition and dietetics at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama. Prior to her work at Samford, Terry was the first nonclinical dietitian appointed by the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention to serve overseas. Visit her website at thewellnesskitchenrd.com.

