

The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.



Chickasaw Middle/High School students fit a prosthetic leg to an amputee in Tulum, Mexico.

Photo courtesy of Brian Copes

Impacting nations

Mobile area teacher leads his students to help change lives around the world

By Erin Roach
The Alabama Baptist

A technical education teacher in the Mobile, Alabama, area is leading disadvantaged students to change lives in other countries by designing and building prosthetic legs, beach wheelchairs, solar suitcases, basic utility vehicles and other helpful devices.

“It became more about building

the kids than building the projects,” Brian Copes, an engineering and career instructor at Chickasaw Middle/High School, told The Alabama Baptist.

When he taught in the Birmingham area several years ago, he noticed some students came early to school and stayed late, and the designing and building captured their attention.

“I was seeing kids engage. I was

watching their grades improve, and they were taking leadership roles in their classes,” said Copes, who has taught for 27 years.

‘I’ll go’

The teacher remembers being a child at Vacation Bible School when a missionary speaker asked who would go to the nations. He raised his hand to say, “I’ll go.”

During his teenage years, Copes

heard another missionary talk about smuggling Bibles into Russia behind the Iron Curtain, and he was inspired. His first missions trip was to Liberia in 1985, leaving his family for two months during a high school summer to build a school.

While in college, he found himself on Red Square in Moscow during a coup attempt on Mikhail Gorbachev.

(See ‘Stepping,’ page 13)

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Photo by Hannah Muñoz/The Alabama Baptist

Participants gather at Samford University for an April 27 church safety seminar led by Dan Graeber with the Center for Personal Protection and Safety. The seminar was co-sponsored by Counter Threat Group, Samford MTI and TAB Media Group.

TAB Media helps host church safety seminar

Along with several other educational takeaways, the concepts of de-escalation and situational awareness techniques were outlined during a church safety seminar held April 27 at Samford University.

Dan Graeber, vice president of faith-based initiatives for the Center for Personal Protection and Safety, led the seminar.

The event was sponsored by CPPS, Counter Threat Group, TAB Media Group and Samford's Ministry Training Institute.

Graeber shared how de-escalation is needed when a crisis involves a person in a distressed state — controlled by emotions rather than reason. As a result, a conflict involving the individual must be managed before it can be resolved.

De-escalation tips:

► **Calm:** Control what you can control — your response and your behavior.

► **Connect:** Empathy can absorb tension between two parties. Try

to see through the eyes of the other person.

► **Capitalize:** Establish open and honest dialogue. Validate the person's feelings, look for areas of agreement and then work toward a solution.

Situational awareness is about recognizing potential dangers and responding reasonably. The best response in high-intensity, dangerous situations is an organized, planned response, he said.

Graeber advises churches to have procedures in place and make sure staff, safety team and/or volunteers know them. A good plan, he noted, considers the specific needs of the congregation and factors such as building size, staff size and building layout.

Learn how your church can get a threat assessment from Counter Threat Group at counterthreatgrp.com.

Learn more about CPPS and its resources for churches, visit cpps.com/houses-of-worship-overview. (Jessica Ingram)



Photo by Hannah Muñoz/The Alabama Baptist

Security expert Dan Graeber notes the importance of preventative measures when it comes to safety.



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



jrash@thealabamabaptist.org



@RashionalThts

How can we help those serving on national entity boards?

Do you ever think about what you would want to happen in the flow of a contentious business meeting in which you were the chair?

Would you want full transparency with what was said and done, or would you prefer everything be held in confidence? Or maybe somewhere in between?

No matter what happened in the meeting, would you be tempted to gloss over details and put a positive spin on it or find a way to share the reality of the situation with love and grace?

Some decisions require discussions on sensitive, personal or legal information that needs a confidential setting.

Determining what to share

However, sometimes executive sessions or secret meetings are used so those involved can talk straight up with each other without fear of their concerns or words being reported out.

Closed meetings also are sometimes used to share difficult news with the group and the leaders prefer keeping the news as privileged information.

I can see and understand both sides of this debate if an appropriate and fair report is made

following such meetings. What's troubling is when important information is purposefully hidden. What's even more troubling is when stakeholders are not properly informed along the way, especially when a serious issue is at hand.

Still, the responsibilities of leadership at various levels of an organization are heavy and, many times, difficult to navigate.

Each seat on the trustee board represents a real person with a real family and a real life. Many are likely going through something bigger than what's taking place in the meeting.

For the vast majority of trustees, they truly are trying to do their best with what they've been tasked to do and within the scope of their understanding of what that means.

Have you ever thought about how trustees are selected to serve on national entity boards? What if you were asked to be a trustee on the SBC Executive Committee?

How much do you know about it? Would you feel confident in helping make business decisions related to the entire convention by serving on its board?

We put together a piece to help provide some insight (available online). But even armed with that information, understanding

the full extent of the work takes time and experience.

And sometimes trustees are thrust into intense situations without the benefit of growing into the position through time and experience.

Pulling from their other work and ministry experiences helps, but attempting to reconcile those experiences with the many levels involved in understanding Baptist polity can be overwhelming.

In recent years, a new EC trustee shared with the group how much she had to learn because until she was asked to serve on the board, she did not know her church was Southern

Baptist. She has proven to be a dedicated member of the board, even earning a leadership role, but her comment during her first meeting struck me.

Need clear expectations

Could some of the confusion that surfaces within entity boards come from a lack of understanding by members? Is it possible staff and/or board leaders could take advantage of that lack of knowledge?

Trustees aren't tasked with running the day-to-day operations of the entities, but they are responsible for keeping them accountable to their purpose and ministry assignments.

Alabama's Hughes tapped to serve on SBC Exec Comm search team, covets prayers

Neal Hughes, DOM for Montgomery Association, is one of the seven SBC Executive Committee members selected to help find the next EC president.

The team plans to meet soon to elect officers and determine next steps. Members initially planned to meet May 8 but needed to reschedule due to unanticipated scheduling conflicts.



HUGHES

Hughes also serves on other EC work committees, as do all EC members from Alabama:

▶ Craig Carlisle, DOM, Etowah Association, Gadsden.

▶ Tim Cox, pastor of Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea.

▶ Dana McCain, columnist, layperson, FBC Dothan.

▶ Ann Stafford, educator, layperson, Southside BC, Dothan.

Your Voice



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

Persecuted believers need missionaries, prayers, support

By Jeff Iorg

President, Gateway Seminary

A few years ago Nigerian Baptist leaders welcomed me at the airport with these words: “Thank you for sending Thomas Jefferson Bowen to bring us the gospel.”

The Nigerian Baptist Convention, the fourth largest Baptist denomination in the world with more than 8 million members, traces its founding to Bowen — a missionary sent by Southern Baptists who arrived in Nigeria in 1850.

Southern Baptists and Nigerian Baptists have a deep connection because of this shared history.

That’s one reason persecution of Christians — including Baptists in Nigeria — strikes a dissonant

chord with Southern Baptists.

Brothers and sisters are suffering, and we ache for them. Sadly, while recent news reports summarize new attacks, they were not isolated or unusual incidents.

A person who worked in Nigeria among tribal people helped me develop a broader perspective on the situation.

‘Everyday life’

Tribal warfare, terrorist activity and paramilitary attacks are part of the everyday life of many Nigerians. The reasons for the conflicts are convoluted — tribal allegiances, economic depravity, criminal activity, religious differences — all of which combine in an ever-changing kaleidoscope of

attacks and counterattacks. The situation makes sorting out solutions extremely difficult.

Christians caught up in these conflicts suffer — some for their faith and others because of additional factors coinciding with their religious identity.

Persecution has been happening somewhere in the world in an unbroken line since the first century.

We are fortunate the American church is not being persecuted, and we embarrass ourselves when we claim we are.

Believers in other parts of the world are dying for their faith, and we should be humbled by their ex-

ample and motivated to help them — not claiming we are experiencing something similar.

What can we do for Nigerian Christians and other persecuted believers?

Pray for them. Send financial gifts through organizations working among them. Elect government leaders who will insist on aid policies conditioned on protections for religious freedom.

Mostly, we can send more BOWENS! We need to send

more people with the message of the gospel to encourage believers and reach more around the world.

A few years ago, I asked a Christian government worker in Africa, “Don’t you think the gospel is the ultimate solution to the problems you are trying to solve?” He replied, “Of course, but you people are just too slow. Until you pick up the pace, we will just keep doing the best we can to manage the symptoms.”

What an indictment!

We are just too slow. We need to strip away frivolous distractions and get much more serious about sending more gospel workers around the world. People who have never heard the gospel deserve the opportunity to receive it.

Believers struggling to sustain their faith need the encouragement of leaders who will buttress them against persecution. We can do more, and we must.



IORG

Cooperative Program: Future of SBC missions

I believe strongly that the Cooperative Program is the future of missions in the Southern Baptist Convention.

Here are three facts that, in my opinion, are undeniable:

► The Great Commission is the calling of every Christian until the end of time on this earth. Therefore, until Jesus returns, the Great Commission is the future.

► Southern Baptists are, and I believe always will be, missional people. Missions is part of the DNA of Southern Baptist church

members and of Southern Baptist churches.

► For nearly 100 years, the Cooperative Program has proven to be the unquestioned best method among all churches and denominations of doing missions. I’ve spoken with enough leaders in other denominations to know that they recognize the necessity and power of cooperation, especially for missions. ...

We need to remain strong in our commitment to cooperating in our missions efforts. ...

As Southern Baptists, we undeni-

ably can do more together than we can alone. We serve a mighty King — Jesus! We have a righteous and lifelong call to the Great Commission as well as the Great Commandment.

Let us look to the future with an eye toward greater partnerships and not fewer. Toward greater going and not less. Toward magnifying the name of Jesus — together!

**Jay Stewart, director
Cooperative Program and
church financial resources
Alabama Baptist SBOM**

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EDITOR’S NOTE — This story was originally published at thegateway.press.

“What is our greatest challenge? It is to stay focused on missions and evangelism.”

RICK LANCE

Executive director, Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

While God can restore anyone in any manner He chooses, many times He is simply waiting for us to “come to our senses” and return to Him, such as the prodigal son.

If you are waiting for God to return to your life before you make changes, then you have it backward. God is intentional with you, and you need to be intentional with Him.

Intentional with the time you spend in His Word. Intentional in

your prayer time. Intentional in your worship. Intentional in your service. Intentional in your tithe.

Bill Brewster, author

“Revival: It’s Time to Live Again”

“When a church exists to serve the Kingdom of God, it is powerful,” said **Jeff Christopher**, author of “Once You See: Seven Temptations of the Western

Church.” “When a church exists to serve itself, it becomes idolatrous and powerless.”

While we’re in this broken world, we can hold on to the truth of God’s Word and the hope of perfect peace and love we will one day experience in heaven.

Amy Hacker
the-scroll.com

“Visions of heaven”



Chitchat

What people are talking about on social media

EDITOR’S NOTE — The past few months have brought changes to Twitter, resulting in many people, including many Baptists and other faith leaders, choosing to leave the platform. With those changes, we are retiring the Twitterverse column you would normally find here so we can provide comments from a variety of social media sites. Twitter will still be included as well.

Why Chitchat? The word suggests informal banter, the kind of small talk one might engage in at a conference or social event.

Chitchat is friendly, surface-level engagement with others, but it has the potential to develop into more substantial conversations.

We’d like to hear from you. Where are you focusing your time on social media these days? Who are you following? Send us your favorites so we can follow too.

And while you’re scrolling, be sure to follow TAB Media on all our channels as well (see column at right). We love to engage with our readers. Let’s chat soon!

#Blackabyministries

If you want to know God, you’ve got to learn His ways.

Instagram

@DustyMcLemore

Joy is contagious! Joy gives us strength to endure; Joy gives us energy to love; Joy is an oasis in a desert land; Joy is the Velcro that makes relationships stick! #wordforyoutoday

@plpanter

Seeing so many solid people graduating ... from SBC (seminaries) bolsters my faith that the future is bright for the SBC. Our missionaries, pastors, denominational servants and business people are all the products of our seminaries. Have faith, y’all.

Life without God will leave you bitter when you don’t get what you want and empty when you do get what you want.

Kevin Sanders
via Facebook

If you say you want justice but you reject all standards of objective truth, you are left with no basis for justice. Only in Jesus do we find truth that both establishes the foundation for justice and empowers us to do justice.

Jake Brown
via Facebook

@DrPaulChitwood

I am fully convinced of this: a lost world needs Southern Baptists to remain committed to working together to share God’s solution — the gospel — to the world’s greatest problem, lostness. Are we the world’s last and only hope? No, but we know the One who is.

@jaredcornutt

I don’t always agree with other Southern Baptists. I don’t always agree with SBC entity heads. I don’t always agree with decisions, hires or philosophy. But I always lead my church to joyfully give through the Cooperative Program for the sake of the gospel despite those differences.

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3 stories you should know



Facebook photo

Volunteers from several Texas Baptist churches responded after a May 6 shooting at a mall in Allen left eight people dead and many others injured. Three members of one family, Kyu, Cindy and James Cho, 3, were killed. Six-year-old William Cho survived. The Chos reportedly attended New Song, a Korean Baptist church in nearby Carrollton. Brian Everett, pastor of Allen Heights Baptist Church, said volunteers sought “to be the hands and feet of Jesus.” (TAB)

Experimental DNA method used in Britain

Doctors in Great Britain reported May 10 the first babies born in the country using a controversial DNA technique.

Britain’s Human Fertilization and Embryology Authority released few details but said fewer than five babies have been born using a scientific technique in which the genetic material of three people are combined. The first baby born using the technique was reported in the U.S. in 2016.

The goal of the technique is to prevent women from passing on genetic mitochondrial disorders that result in diseases such as muscular dystrophy, epilepsy, heart problems and intellectual disabilities, the Associated Press reported.

Critics warn the methods have not yet proven to be safe and could lead to misuses of the technology. (TAB)

2022 ACP report shows SBC lost more members

In 2022, churches in the Southern Baptist Convention reported increases in baptisms (up 16%), in-person worship attendance (up more than 5%) and giving (up almost 2%), but the denomination lost almost half a million members.

According to the Annual Church Profile compiled by Lifeway Christian Resources in cooperation with Baptist state conventions, the current total membership of Southern Baptist congregations is 13,223,122, down from 13,680,493 in 2021 — the largest single year numerical drop in more than 100 years.

In total, Southern Baptist churches have suffered membership declines of about 3% annually the past three years.

View the full 2022 ACP statistical summary at LifewayResearch.com. (TAB)

Persecuted church

China pushes for more government influence over Christian worship

QINGDAO, China — Organizations calling themselves Christian churches but operating under government control in China’s Shandong province have formed a committee dedicated to making Christianity adhere to socialist ideology.

Such a push is called “sinicization.” The human rights group ChinaAid reports it is the goal of the newly created Special Committee to Advance the Sinicization of Christianity.

This may be the first committee to focus completely on Christianity, ChinaAid reported.

“The (Chinese) Communist Party hopes to reduce Christianity to the point that it operates as a tool, turning it into pseudo-Christianity,” ChinaAid says. “Religious activities are only permitted under the terms of the CCP. The state

employs advanced surveillance to ensure that Christian worship services are consistent with the socialist ideology of Mao Zedong and Xi Jinping.”

China is No. 16 on Open Doors’ 2023 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian.



Photo courtesy of ChinaAid

Pastor in Uganda attacked after 37 people put faith in Jesus

MBALE, Uganda — A pastor in Uganda was hospitalized earlier this year after being attacked for his participation in a debate at which 37 Muslims reportedly put their faith in Jesus.

Pastor Arthur Asadi Babi was hospitalized in February after he was assaulted in Mbale. Morning Star News reported the assault.

Babi had spoken about Christ’s uniqueness as the Son of God and the only way to God the Father. A local source said 37 people decided to put their faith in Jesus after hearing Babi speak.

Babi was then attacked with sticks, clubs and stones. Ben Yasiini, a church member, was injured rescuing Babi, reported Morning Star.

Approximately 12% 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.

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

▶ **Donald Richard “Brother Rick” Glenn**, died May 4. He was 71.

Born in Clanton, he was a graduate of Samford University and New Orleans Seminary.

He was serving Antioch Baptist Church, Ashford, at the time of his death. He previously served several other churches as pastor and associate pastor.

He is survived by his wife of 52 years, Virginia “Ginny” Glenn; two children; and three grandchildren.



GLENN

▶ **Harold D. Wicks**, a longtime associate pastor, former director of missions and former missionary, died May 2. He was 88.

He held a doctorate in religious education from New Orleans Seminary and worked as a pastor in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He was a seminary professor at the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary in Ogbomosho for 13 years. Upon return from the missions field, he worked as director of missions for Salem-Troy Baptist Association and taught world religions at Troy University until his retirement in 2000. He spent the past 23 years as associate pastor at Galilee Baptist Church in New Hope, where Henry Branum (his grandfather-in-law) also served as a preacher.

He is survived by his wife, Rebecca; son, Daryl Wicks; daughter, Debra W. Kinnane; and three grandchildren.



WICKS

AUTAUGA ASSOCIATION

▶ **Calvary Baptist Church, Prattville**, will host Twists & Turns Vacation Bible School June 3–4 for students in preschool through sixth grade. VBS begins at 9 a.m. on Saturday, June 3, and goes until 2 p.m. On Sunday, June 4, VBS begins at 9:45 a.m. and ends at noon. To pre-register or for more information, call 334-365-5213, or visit calvarybaptistprattville.org/what-s-happening. Dave Burns is pastor.

BARBOUR ASSOCIATION

▶ **Barbour Baptist Association** is hosting an anniversary reception June 4, 3 p.m., for its director of missions, **Don Hatcher**. He is celebrating 10 years of service. The event will be hosted at the association office.

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

▶ **Josh Wilks** is the new minister to college students and young adults at **Valleydale Church**,

Birmingham. He holds a bachelor of arts degree in Christian ministry from Leavell College and master of divinity from New Orleans Seminary.

He previously was minister to children and family (since 2017) of NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville, and served as middle school minister for four years prior to that. He also was a youth intern at Calvary Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa.

He and his wife, Kathi, have three children.



WILKS

BLOUNT COUNTY ASSOCIATION

▶ **Pleasant View Missionary Baptist Church, Holly Pond**, will host Unity 4 from Mississippi, for its regular third Sunday night singing May 21, 5 p.m. Earl Harper is pastor.

CALHOUN ASSOCIATION

▶ **Westwood Baptist Church, Alexandria**, is hosting Fusion Summer Kickoff on May 27. A Kona Ice truck will be there from 5 to 6 p.m. along with outdoor games and activities. Worship begins at 6:30 p.m. Winston Harris is the guest speaker. Bring a blanket or chair.

MARSHALL ASSOCIATION

▶ **Pearson Shaw** is the new student minister of **Sardis Baptist Church, Boaz**. He holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Mobile. Previously, he served as lead cinematographer, website content manager and a youth leader of Shoal Creek Baptist Church, Holtville. During college, he was a student intern at Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile, and also an intern for Fighting with Hope, Mobile. He is married to Carli.



SHAW

MONTGOMERY ASSOCIATION

▶ **Ron Davis**, pastor of **Open Acres Baptist Church, Montgomery**, recently retired. On April 2, the church named him pastor emeritus. He had preached at the church since November 2004 and was voted in as pastor in February 2005.

Davis served in the U.S. Air Force (1976–1996) where he was stationed in Oklahoma, Georgia, Mississippi, Ohio and Belgium. He served two tours in Korea and Operation Freedom in Iraq. He worked with the city of Montgomery in information technology until he retired in April 2022.



DAVIS

He has previously served as a youth pastor in Ohio and Yarbrough Street Baptist Church, Montgomery. He was ordained (1997) at Pratt Court Baptist Church, Prattville, and also served as pastor (1997–2004).

He and his wife, Debrah, have five children and 11 grandchildren.

▶ **Brian Clements** is the new director of administration and senior adult ministries of **Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery**.

Clements will manage the property and oversee security, non-church member benevolence and food service.

He and his wife, Renee, have been members of Eastmont for almost 28 years.



CLEMENTS

SHELBY ASSOCIATION

▶ **Clayton Mullins** is the new associate pastor of discipleship — students and missions of **Riverchase Baptist Church, Hoover**. Previously, he served as youth minister of Grantswood Baptist Church, Irondale.

He is a graduate of Southeastern Bible College and New Orleans Seminary.

Mullins and his wife, Amanda, have two children.



MULLINS

WALKER ASSOCIATION

▶ **Kevin Bowman** is the new pastor of **Grace Baptist Church, Sumiton**, where he has spent the last six years as associate pastor and student minister. He was licensed (1999) and ordained (2006) by Lawler Baptist Church, Dora.

He completed a certificate of discipling (2019) and pastoral leadership (2020) through Samford University's Ministry Training Institute. He previously was pastor of Mount Brook Baptist Church, Hayden, and Fellowship Baptist Church, Sumiton.

Bowman and his wife, Jaime, have two children.



BOWMAN

WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION

▶ **Chapel Hill Baptist Church, Millry**, will celebrate its homecoming May 21.

Singing starts at 10:30 a.m. with worship at 11; business meeting at 11:45 and lunch at noon. Mike Chatham, former pastor of the church, will deliver the message. The singers will be made up of members of the church and the local community.

Commencement surprise

University of Mobile unveils newly named Mark Foley Hall to honor former president

During his commencement address to over 330 members of the UM Class of 2023, University of Mobile President Emeritus Mark Foley challenged graduates to pursue their purpose and be active and effective influencers for Jesus Christ in the world.

As more than 3,000 graduates and families watched the video screen on the Dr. Fred and Sue Lackey Great Commission Lawn, the university then unveiled the name of the university's newest residence hall: Mark Foley Hall.

University of Mobile President Lonnie Burnett made the surprise announcement on the 25th anniversary year of Foley's selection as the university's third president.

"The highest honor a university can give an individual is to place their name on a building. Today, Dr. Mark Foley joins the illustrious



Screenshot



FOLEY

names of Weaver, Bedsole, May and Martin in the history of this university," said Burnett, who serves as the fifth president of UM.

After the ceremony, Foley said he was humbled by the honor.

The naming of Mark Foley Hall "is an incredibly humbling surprise, but the real story is in the lives of the men and women who built it and the men and women who lived in it. I just happened to be here to see it," Foley said.

Formerly known as The Timbers, the three-story residence hall was built during Foley's 18-year tenure as university president. The nearly 40,000-square-foot building includes 24 apartments housing four students each.

Capital investment

The residence hall was part of a total \$44.8 million investment in capital projects during Foley's service as president. Other major projects were the Weaver Hall Enhancement Project that gave the university's historic first building its iconic look with a pitched roof, portico and cupola; two more residence halls; a professional recording studio; Ram Hall auditorium and more.

A time capsule is sealed in the lobby floor of the residence hall. Set to be opened in 2061 on the 100th anniversary of the university, the time capsule features memorabilia from the first 50 years of university life. (UM)

Samford awards 1,217 degrees during spring commencement

Samford University awarded degrees to 1,217 students during six commencement ceremonies held on campus April 28–29.

Ceremonies for Beeson Divinity School, Brock School of Business, Orlean Beeson School of Education, and the undergraduate College of Health Sciences commencement were held on Friday, April 28.

Graduates from Cumberland School of Law, Howard College of Arts and Sciences, the School

of the Arts and graduate students from the College of Health Sciences were honored during commencement ceremonies held on Saturday, April 29.

President Beck A. Taylor presided over each ceremony.

Speakers

Retired Alabama Supreme Court Justice Michael F. Bolin addressed 2023 graduates of Cumberland School of Law.

Bolin advised graduates to be versatile and open-minded and to seek the advice of professional mentors.

Julius J. Kim, former president of (and now special adviser to) The Gospel Coalition, told Beeson Divinity School graduates that in their ministries, one of their most important tasks will be "to help people recognize that ultimately their biggest problem is actually spiritual."

Preaching from 2 Kings 5:1–14, Kim exhorted, "They can try to cover it up with their status, their reputation, their success ... but in the end, outside of Jesus and His gospel, we are all spiritual lepers wasting away from the inside out." (Samford)



Photo courtesy of Samford University

Samford University students await the official conferring of degrees. Samford University President Beck A. Taylor presided over six commencement ceremonies held April 28–29.



Photo courtesy of Alabama WMU

Faryn Bush leads a breakout session in American Sign Language on March 4 during Complete, the annual Alabama WMU conference for teen girls.

Watching God work

Alabama WMU enjoys 'sweet season,' looks ahead to summer events for all ages

By **Carrie Brown McWhorter**
The Alabama Baptist

Candace McIntosh says that so far, 2023 has been a “sweet season of watching God work” through Alabama Woman’s Missionary Union.

“I want to brag on what God has been doing over these past six months,” said McIntosh, executive director of Alabama WMU, during an online meeting in late April.

McIntosh and other leaders provided a recap of spring activities and a preview of upcoming opportunities to missions leaders and group members joining in by Zoom.

Annual events

Two of Alabama WMU’s largest annual events were held in March and April.

More than 215 teen girls, leaders and staff members attended Complete at NorthPark Baptist Church in Trussville on March 3 and 4.

Trish Jackson, Alabama WMU missions lifestyle strategist for preschool, children and students, said it was powerful to see the teens worshipping together. The event featured Bible study and worship, a missions focus and breakout sessions on a variety of topics.

Renew, held April 15, brought more than 400 women to Heritage Baptist Church in Montgomery for a “day away with friends,” as the event is informally known.

Pat Ingram, Alabama WMU missions and ministry consultant, said in addition to Bible study and worship, this year’s event focused on caring. A mental health panel provided strategies for “taking care of our souls, taking care of ourselves

physically and taking care of each other,” Ingram said.

A prayer room at the event was dedicated to one of Alabama WMU’s missions emphases, Mission: West Africa.

“It was so nice to have a room that we could go in and literally see faces and learn about some of the children and young adults we’ve been praying for,” McIntosh said.

McIntosh noted that a number of WMU members participated in Serve Tour Montgomery in early March. Similar efforts are underway for local missions projects in Andalusia and Mobile next year, noted Shirley Smith, Alabama WMU president.

Those efforts build on ongoing Alabama WMU ministries, including Strengthening Alabama Schools, which seeks to reach out to local schools and help where needed.

Student roles

Students are not only a missions focus of WMU though; they are also active participants, McIntosh said.

The annual Student Missions Weekend at WorldSong Missions Place in Cook Springs helps introduce high school students to local and global missions, Jackson said.

“The students learned about the nations and lostness. It was a powerful weekend,” Jackson said. “This is a fabulous, gospel-centered event in January that is ideal for small churches.”

Missions Adventure Camp, held throughout the summer at World-Song, also focuses heavily on missions, McIntosh said. With tracks for

elementary through high school students, girls and boys, there is a need for more summer staff members, especially male cabin leaders, Smith noted. She encouraged prayer for the summer staff and all those who will attend this summer.

Teen girls also can be part of this year’s Emerging Leaders class. Held in conjunction with Connect, the annual training and fellowship weekend of Alabama WMU, Emerging Leaders participants are girls who

have completed grades nine through 12 and display leadership potential and a strong Christian witness.

The Emerging Leaders track at Connect includes Bible study, leadership training and fun. Nominations

for the class of 2023 are now open.

Adults who attend Connect, set for July 21–22 at Shocco Springs, will hear from missionaries and church planters, including many impacted by Christmas Backpacks, a ministry partnership between Alabama WMU and the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

Professions of faith

Ingram said 14,336 backpacks were collected in 2022, and 330 professions of faith have been recorded so far as a result of children and families hearing the gospel.

“That’s a lot of backpacks,” Ingram said, “but they represent a lot of children and families who get to hear about the love of God and experience that through a tangible gift in their hands at Christmas.”

Learn more about ministries, missions and training opportunities at alabamawmu.org.



Photo courtesy of Alabama WMU

Women worship April 15 at Heritage Baptist Church in Montgomery during Renew, an annual event organized by Alabama WMU. More than 400 women of all ages came together for a “day away with friends,” as the event is informally known.

SEVENTH IN A SERIES

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OF ALABAMA BAPTIST MISSIONS AND MINISTRIES

Church planting among language groups grows over the years

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

When Richard Alford was hired in 1991 to serve in language missions with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, he had a skill they needed — fluency in the state’s most widely used language behind English: American Sign Language.

At that time, the Deaf were by far the largest language group after English in Alabama. But Alford had barely unpacked in his new office before he started noticing a shift.

“The 1990 census for Alabama was showing 30,000 Hispanics, and as best I could tell, that was probably reasonably accurate,” he said. “But for the first few years I was here, it seemed like two to three times a week I would get calls from a church or a director of missions saying, ‘We’ve got Spanish speakers in our area. What can we do to reach out to them?’”

Alford didn’t speak Spanish or

have any experience with Hispanic culture, but he knew his office’s ministry needed to adjust. At that time, the Spanish-speaking population of north Alabama was growing rapidly because of the pull of the poultry industry, and other areas were starting to gain a Hispanic population too.

Grassroots effort

“We started scrambling,” he said. “And I knew I needed to move beyond my being the focal point for everything that goes on when it comes to language ministries.”

So he and others began developing the Hispanic missionary concept right where it was — not in Montgomery, but all over the state. They began strategizing how associations could work together with help from the SBOM to hire Hispanic church planters, and they organized into four regional Hispanic coalitions.

It was a largely grassroots effort with assistance from the SBOM, and it was happening at the church level just as it was happening at the associational level.

Ramon Vielza, pastor of I-10 Church in Mobile, baptizes a new believer in June 2022. In addition to planting I-10 Church, Vielza has been training other church planters to go out, and four have already planted new churches from Montgomery south.



Facebook photo



Photo courtesy of FBC Montgomery ESL

The English as a Second Language ministry of FBC Montgomery is one of 25 ESL programs run by Baptist churches in the state. These ministries provide a way for churches to connect with internationals, meet needs and share hope.

In 1992, Dawson Memorial Baptist Church in Birmingham planted a Spanish-speaking congregation led by former International Mission Board missionary Brian Harper, and Harper soon suggested they bring Bayron Mosquera, a pastor from Ecuador, to lead the church.

“Our Hispanic congregation at Dawson was started by a small group of people who had the foresight to see the implications of what was happening with our Hispanic population here, though in the early 1990s it was really small,” said Ben Hale, Daw-

son’s evangelism and missions pastor. To say the Spanish-speaking population has grown in 30-plus years would be an understatement.

Now the Hispanic population of the U.S. numbers more than 60 million — the second-largest Spanish-speaking country in the world behind Mexico. More than 200,000 of those make their home in Alabama.

Ministry to Hispanics is growing too, Harper said, though there’s still a lot of work to do to catch up with the population growth. Harper — who has led the SBOM’s

For more information about current church planting efforts, visit plantalabama.org. To learn more about ESL ministry, contact Kristy Kennedy at kkennedy@alsbom.org.



Photo courtesy of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church

The Hispanic congregation of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church holds a Spanish VBS in 1992, the year after it was planted. Dawson’s Hispanic church has grown over the years and now hosts a residency program to train new church planters.

church planting efforts since 2020 — said in some areas of the state, the Hispanic population is over 50%.

“We’ve got some locations in the state that are loaded with Hispanics,” he said. “We saw 14 new works start last year in the state.”

One of those is at First Baptist Church Hoover. Within a one-mile radius of the church, there’s almost an even split between households that speak English and those that speak Spanish.

That reality encouraged The Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham to move its Spanish-speaking congregation from its campus to FBC’s facilities in fall of 2022 to help it move toward becoming a self-sustaining church plant, Iglesia La Conexión.

Brook Hills also moved its evening co-ed English as a Second Language classes to FBC, and it became a joint effort of volunteers from Brook Hills, FBC and Hunter Street Baptist Church in Hoover.

‘Powerful partnership’

“When churches are bringing the love of Christ in tangible ways to a community together, the gospel is made alive in a powerful partnership,” Harper said.

Other partnerships around the state are fueling the spread of new Hispanic ministries and churches too, Harper

said, including Dawson, the place where his journey of Hispanic ministry in Alabama started more than 30 years ago.

In 2011, Dawson helped plant a Hispanic church led by Pastor Joshua del Risco at Fultondale FBC, and in 2022, they started a Hispanic church planting residency.

As part of the residency, Hispanic church planters serve and train alongside del Risco for 12 to 18 months before planting a church in another area.

The first two planters have been training and are preparing to plant churches this year — Humberto Medina in Huntsville, and Juan Felipe Arizabal in Alabaster in partnership with Westwood Baptist Church.

Two additional church plants are in the early planning stages for 2024 in Athens and Albertville.

Something similar is happening in the Mobile area, where Ramon Vielza has planted I-10 Church and has helped train church planters to plant four more churches from Montgomery south.

The effort has been a partnership between the SBOM, local Baptist associations, the North American Mission Board and local churches, including FBC Tillman’s Corner, which houses I-10 Church.



SBOM photo

Richard Alford, retired language missions strategist for the SBOM, answers a question at a missions conference in Montgomery in 1992.

“I’m proud of Alabama Baptists for being missions-minded people.”

Richard Alford
retired language missions strategist

“They’re seeing people come to the Lord, people being baptized,” Harper said. “God has really opened the doors.”

And all over the state, ESL ministries are providing an opportunity for churches to reach out to internationals in their area.

Kristy Kennedy, who leads community ministries at the SBOM, says many of the internationals who live in Alabama have never had their own Bible, and many have never heard of Jesus specifically.

“For me personally and my experience, ESL ministries are one of the best ways to reach internationals with the gospel, not only in the U.S. and Alabama but around the world,” she said. “There’s a huge opportunity here.”

Alabama Baptist churches currently run 25 ESL ministries, including the one at FBC Hoover.

“Through ESL, you’re able to make that connection with internationals and help meet their needs,” she said. “It’s an amazing ministry to get to be

a part of. You get to see lives change because of the gospel.”

The ministry is part of reaching the state’s Hispanic population, but it reaches past that into dozens of other nationalities, all of which are on the radar of Alabama Baptist work.

Over the years, state Baptists have supported missionaries at the state level focusing on Deaf, Hispanic and Asian peoples.

They have also helped plant churches with Arabic, Cambodian, Chinese, Choc-taw, Creek, Deaf, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Messianic Jew, Thai and Vietnamese language and culture focuses.

Alford, who retired in 2007, said Alabama Baptists’ ESL ministry “was vitally involved” with reaching many of those language groups.

“I’m proud of Alabama Baptists for being missions-minded people,” he said, noting that all glory goes to God for the way the ministry has grown over the years.

“It’s God’s expansion,” Alford said.



Facebook photo

Montgomery Chinese Baptist Church celebrates a baptism. For years, churches among numerous language groups have been growing in the state.



Photo courtesy of The Church at Brook Hills

A group from Iglesia La Conexión gathers in front of FBC Hoover. La Conexión, which previously was the Hispanic congregation of The Church at Brook Hills, now meets in FBC’s building as part of a partnership to reach Spanish speakers in the neighborhoods around the church.

Famous Christians from previous centuries

Heroes of the Faith

John Henry Jowett possibly 'greatest preacher in the English-speaking world'

John Henry Jowett (1864–1923) may have been the “greatest preacher in the English-speaking world,” according to author and pastor Warren Wiersbe.

This year is the 100th anniversary of Jowett’s death.

Jowett was born Aug. 25, 1864, to Josiah and Hannah Jowett in Halifax, England. Brought up in a Christian home, he attended a Congregational Church.

He was interested in being a lawyer, but his Sunday School teacher challenged him to consider the ministry. At the age of 17, Jowett felt a strong calling to be a preacher. He studied theology at the University of Edinburgh and Mansfield College, Oxford. In 1889, he was ordained into the Congregational Church.

First pastorate

Jowett’s first pastorate was at a large church in Newcastle, England. Saint James Congregational Church could accommodate a thousand people. He served successfully for almost six years. There he married Lizzie Winpenny.

His next ministry was at Carr’s Lane Church in Birmingham, England. He had a strong vision for

bringing people to Christ. After serving 15 years, the city’s mayor said the church had changed the town, with “crime and drunkenness having decreased.” During his time there, he was elected chairman of the Congregational Union and president of the National Council of Evangelical Free Churches.



JOWETT

Jowett spent many hours preparing his weekly sermons, selecting just the right words to convey his thoughts. He wrote his sermons and read them from the pulpit. A gifted speaker, he was called the “stylist of the English pulpit.”

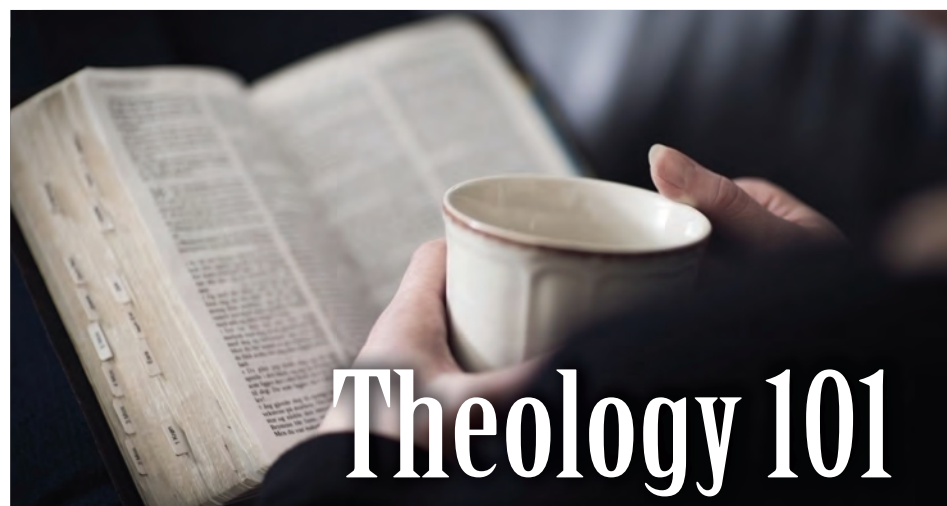
In 1909, he was invited to speak in Massachusetts at the Northfield Conference, founded by Dwight L. Moody. While there, Jowett preached twice at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York. Church leaders immediately asked him to become the pastor. He refused after receiving a petition signed by 1,400 members of his English church asking him to return. When Fifth Avenue Presbyterian called him a third time, he felt that God was leading him to accept. In 1911 his family moved to New York.

Jowett returned to England in 1918 when Prime Minister David Lloyd George asked him to become pastor of Westminster Chapel. George conferred upon Jowett the Order of the Companions of Honour in 1922 for his outstanding contributions to England. King George V awarded the designation to Jowett, and at the same time, to Winston Churchill.

He was pastor of Westminster Chapel until his death in 1923. Jowett’s life can be summed up in one of his famous quotes: “Preaching that costs nothing accomplishes nothing.”

By Joanne Sloan

Joanne Sloan, a member of First Baptist Church Tuscaloosa, has been a published writer of articles and books for 30 years. She has a bachelor’s degree double majoring in history and English from East Texas State University (now Texas A&M–Commerce) and a master’s degree specializing in English from the University of Arkansas (1978).



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

The Holy Spirit

Inspiring Spirit, Inspired Book

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
The Alabama Baptist

The relationship of the Holy Spirit with the Bible lies at the heart of the authority of Scripture.

Through the ages, Christians have confessed that the Bible was inspired in its origin. The Holy Spirit was integral to the message spoken by the human writers, as attested in 2 Peter 1:21, “Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”

The Apostle Paul put it pointedly when he wrote, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches” (1 Cor. 2:12–13).

Oversight

The Holy Spirit was active in the writing of the Bible and has overseen its transmission across the centuries into numerous languages. This can only be accounted for through the Spirit’s activity in translation.

As believers are blessed to hold in their hands the Bible written in their own heart languages, we can only deduce that the Spirit of truth has been active in the production and preservation of God’s written Word for such a diverse assortment of languages.

The Holy Spirit is also essential to the interpretation and understanding of Scripture. We know biblical truth through the

enlightening and enabling work of the Holy Spirit. So it is written, “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God” (1 Cor. 2:9–10).

Application

Not only has the Holy Spirit been actively involved in the origination, translation, transmission and interpretation of the Bible, but the presence of the Spirit is also essential to its application.

In short, we confess that the Spirit who illuminates our understanding of God’s truth in Scripture also inspires and enables our practice of that truth in daily life.

God announced this truth through Ezekiel the prophet: “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them” (Ezek. 36:27).

We have a Bible due to the Spirit’s inspiration. We understand it by the Spirit’s illumination. We live it out by the Spirit’s enablement.

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.



STEPPING IN TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Chickasaw students take on challenge to solve global problems

(continued from page 1)

With a background in construction and a love of teaching, Copes landed in the classroom as a profession, starting in Chicago, then Indianapolis and then a couple of cities in Alabama.

“My teaching was really transformed when I started taking the things I learned on the missions field — the global problems — and challenged my students to solve these global problems, whether it was basic transportation needs, prosthetics or solar suitcases capable of running a laptop and charging cell phones,” Copes said.

Since the power grid is being bombed in Ukraine, people there have only an hour or two of electricity per day, Copes said. But a solar suitcase designed and built by his students can run a laptop all day, allowing some education to continue amid the strain.

The projects began about 15 years ago when Copes’ eighth grade students in Alabama invented a utility vehicle that could be assembled with simple hand tools by low-skilled laborers.

First place

“At the end of the year, the little vehicle ran, so I entered the eighth grade students in a collegiate engineering competition in Indiana,” he said. They ended up winning first place, ahead of teams such as Purdue University.

Soon the state of Alabama asked Copes to add a biomedical component to his lessons. Though he was a woodworker with no biomedical training, he and the students started thinking.



Photo courtesy of skyyouth.org

Amputees in developing nations have few opportunities, but they are being helped by students in Alabama who are using their skills to change the world.

They came up with the idea of making prosthetic legs for amputees.

“We found out that 80% of all amputees live in developing countries,” Copes said. “Amputees are treated like second-class citizens. They become shadows in the community. They can’t work, so they have to beg for a living, and the suicide rate goes up.”

“That’s when my students decided we needed to step in and make a difference — change some lives.”

Copes and his students went to the workshop and made their first prosthetic leg using old Toyota Corolla motor mounts for the knee and ankle joints.

“The local artificial limb specialist working with us at the time said, ‘Man, I think this will work.’ He fit it onto an amputee. He said,

‘It’s heavy, but it works,’” Copes recalled.

The next year, Copes challenged his students to make the leg lighter, and they shaved three pounds off the weight.

Meanwhile, other students were ready to take two utility vehicles to Honduras. One is being used as an ambulance, and one is equipped with a freshwater drill, traveling from village to village drilling wells. The team also delivered 14 prosthetic legs and fit them to amputees.

“We have 24 partner schools around the United States that are helping us manufacture our prosthetic legs,” Copes

said. “Our legs are now 3D printed in the classroom. We have a school in Chicago that machines the leg bones for us. We have a school in New York that makes pivot pins.”

Help from others

“We have a school in the Washington state area that makes the rubber torsion spring that we need. They bring it down to us, and we assemble them here in Chickasaw. Then my students go on trips to Latin America.”

This school year, a handful of Chickasaw students at a time have been to Guatemala and to two cities in Mexico, delivering what they have made to help others.

Of all the missions fields he has been on, which includes six continents, Copes considers the public school one of the most important.

“We tell kids they can be anything they want to be, they can change the world, they can change lives, but we never teach them how to change lives,”

Copes said. “It’s my job as a career and technical educator to teach the students how to use their math, their English, their science — their core subjects — to change lives.”

Many Chickasaw students have to overcome poverty and other obstacles in order to succeed, Copes said, but he is seeing slow progress in the community.

“Get the kids to believe in themselves, and there’s nothing they can’t do,” he said.



Photo courtesy of skyyouth.org

Students traveled to Latin America to deliver prosthetic legs they made in class.

For more information, visit skyyouth.org.

UPCOMING EVENTS

sponsored by the State Board of Missions

Senior Adult Leadership Training offered in two locations in August

Want to be more effective involving senior adults in your church and reaching those in your community? The Senior Adult Leadership Training can provide basic ways to expand the scope of your church's senior adult ministry. Senior adult ministers and lay leaders are invited.

SALT offers two dates and locations — Aug. 22 at Lindsay Lane Baptist Church in Athens, and Aug. 24 at Southside Baptist Church in Greenville, both

from 9:15 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The event will have three sessions:

▶ Engaging Senior Adults, led by Bob Smith, minister to seasoned adults at FBC Trussville.

▶ Reaching Boomers, led by Edwin Jenkins, LifeLift Ministries pastor/teacher.

▶ Discipling Senior Adults, led by Robert Mullins, pastor of Crossroads Community Church in Elmore.

Frank Jones, senior adult event coordinator for the

Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, will emcee the day and provide music, and Guy Anderson, minister of music emeritus at Elkdale Baptist Church in Selma, will also provide comedy and music.

Both events are free, but registration is required for the included boxed lunch.

For more information, contact Frank Jones at fjm1117@gmail.com or call 205-393-7020. To register, visit alsbom.org/salt.



JONES



SMITH



JENKINS



MULLINS

GroupLife workshops this summer equip group leaders to thrive

Daniel Edmonds said in his experience, group leader training is vital.

“Untrained leaders tend to burn out and go their own direction,” said Edmonds, director of the SBOM office of Sunday School and discipleship.

That's why GroupLife Equipping Workshops are coming to your area this summer to encourage and equip your church's Sunday School and group leaders to love well and

focus on God's Word.

Join an event near you:

▶ First Baptist Church Prattville — July 29

▶ Woodward Avenue Baptist Church in Muscle Shoals — July 29

▶ Hunter Street Baptist Church in Hoover — Aug. 5

▶ Lindsay Lane Baptist Church in Athens — Aug. 19

▶ First Baptist Church Dothan — Aug. 19

▶ West Mobile Baptist Church — Aug. 19

The training is for all

types of groups, from Sunday School to weekday small groups in homes, from adult to youth to preschool. A video and workshop guide also will be available for individuals who would like to train on their own or train their church's leaders.

There is no cost to attend the event. Registration is required.

Visit makingdisciplesal.org/grouplife to register or find out more about GroupLife training.

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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

CHURCH POSITIONS

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

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Paden Baptist Church, 900 Padenreich Ave., Gadsden, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking resúmes for bivocational pastor. Please send resúmes to church address, ATTN: Pastor Search Committee or to: padenbaptistchurch@yahoo.com.

WORSHIP LEADER/CHOIR DIRECTOR

Calvary Baptist Church in Fayette, Alabama, has an opening for a worship leader/choir director. Duties include leading congregational singing on Sunday morning, choir specials and children's music. Send resumé to: hthigpen@hotmail.com.

MINISTER TO CHILDREN

NorthPark Baptist Church in Trussville, Alabama, is looking for a full-time minister to children. The minister will lead programming and events for children, mentor young families, and train and oversee volunteer children's ministry workers. Email your resumé and questions to team@NPonline.org.

OTHER POSITIONS

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

North Shelby Baptist is currently seeking a full-time administrative assistant, to provide general administrative and office support. Two to three years administrative experience is required as well as proficiency in Microsoft Office Suite products. In depth database entry

and membership management experience preferred. The ability to be accurate, detailed and multi-task are necessary. Website maintenance, social media knowledge and understanding of the Baptist Church a plus. Please email resumé to: finance@northshelbybaptist.org.

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MINISTRIES

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CHRISTIAN Crossword

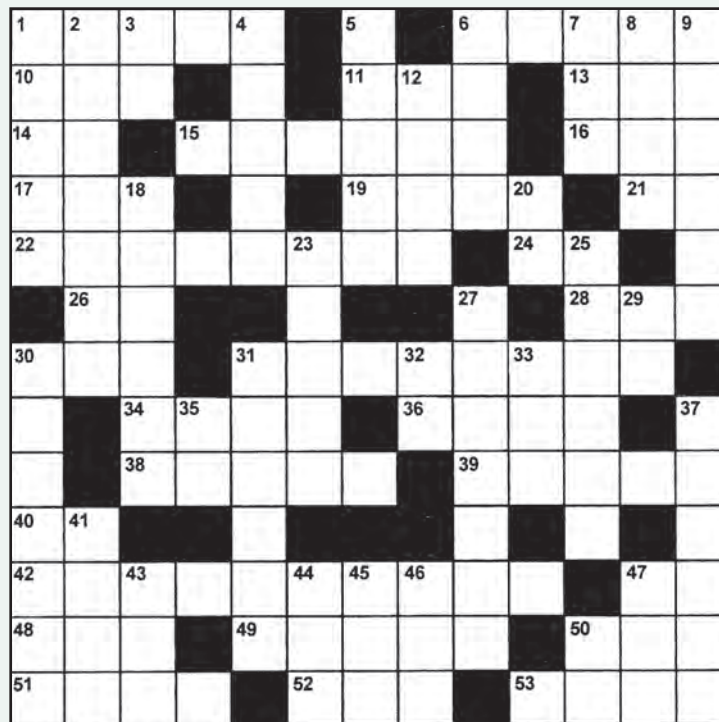


UPCOMING EVENTS

sponsored by the State Board of Missions

ACROSS

1. The name of the second river is _____. (Gen. 2:13)
6. If it please the king ... send me unto _____. (Neh. 2:5)
10. Registered Nurses. (abbr.)
11. River, in Spanish.
13. Why make ye this ____? (Mark 5:39)
14. He that doeth good is ____ God. (3 John 11)
15. _____, the abomination of the children ... (1 Kings 11:7)
16. A sorcerer ... whose name was _____-Jesus. (Acts 13:6)
17. Eithers/_____.
19. Captains over _____. (Deut. 1:15)
21. I in them, and thou in _____. (John 17:23)
22. The _____ became David's servants. (2 Sam. 8:2)
24. God _____ my strength and power. (2 Sam. 22:33)
26. New Mexico. (abbr.)
28. Immigration and Naturalization Service. (abbr.)
30. A boy named Stuart is probably called _____.
31. Jonah rose up to flee unto _____. (Jonah 1:3)
34. Town in central England with a famous school.
36. _____ there not ten cleansed? (Luke 17:17)
38. Rebekah's brother. (Gen. 24:29)
39. Used for sending greetings on holidays.
40. _____, king of Bashan. (1 Kings 4:19)
42. Do unto them as



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- unto the _____; as to Sisera. (Ps. 83:9)
47. To _____ or not to be.
 48. Eggs. (Latin)
 49. _____ king of Tyre. (2 Sam. 5:11)
 50. The way of an eagle in the _____. (Prov. 30:19)
 51. Moab shall howl over _____. (Isa. 15:2)
 52. To forbid something is to _____ it.
 53. A slight coloration.

DOWN

1. He that hath the bride is the bride _____. (John 3:29)
2. The porch that was _____ the _____ of the house. (2 Chron. 3:4; 2 words)
3. High School. (abbr.)
4. Elimelech's wife was _____. (Ruth 1:2)
5. Left I thee in _____. (Titus 1:5)
6. Mary the mother of _____. (Acts 12:12)
7. A little _____ will do you.
8. _____ gave names to all cattle and ... fowl of the air. (Gen. 2:20)
9. Belonging to a certain mountain. (Ex. 3:1)
12. Decorates a cake.
18. Hannah ... called his name _____. (1 Sam. 1:20)
20. Yes, in Spanish.
23. What is stranger _____ lion? (Judges 14:18; 2 words)
25. The captain of (Jabin's) host was _____. (Judg. 4:2)
27. Jacob came to Shalem, a city of _____. (Gen. 33:18)
29. New Hampshire. (abbr.)
30. _____ built the house, and finished. (1 Kings 6:14)
31. Sanballat ... and ... _____ ... heard. (Neh. 2:10)
32. Compass direction.
33. Irish Republican Army. (abbr.)
35. _____-ta.
37. To state something with confidence.
41. Such as I have _____ I thee. (Acts 3:6)
43. A small amount.
44. Part of a pen.
45. Individual Retirement Account. (abbr.)
46. To cure a skin.
47. Place for storing grain or other small items.
50. _____ is spoiled. (Jer. 49:3)

All Bible verses are KJV unless otherwise specified.

Financial Issues Conference

All year long, churches call Lee Wright with questions related to their finances.

So each year Wright, SBOM church compensation specialist, takes those questions and builds a Financial Issues conference to help church leaders stay up-to-date on topics like doing benevolence right, having good internal controls for electronic transactions and knowing what forms are needed to hire a new employee.

The conference will be offered seven times in different locations:

- ▶ First Baptist Church Decatur — July 11
- ▶ SBOM Office Facility in Prattville — July 20
- ▶ First Baptist Church Silverhill — July 25
- ▶ Southeast Alabama

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



Baptist Association in Dothan — July 26

▶ Northport Baptist Church — Aug. 8

▶ Calhoun Baptist Association in Anniston — Aug. 15

▶ Woodmont Baptist Church in Florence — Aug. 22

The event is 10 a.m.–3 p.m. The cost is \$15 and includes lunch and materials. Register at alsbom.org/financial.

Church Administrative Guidelines workshop

It's important for a church to know the need for and benefit of proper legal and operating documents. Church Administrative Guidelines covers the process for developing your church's articles of incorporation, church constitution,

bylaws, policies and procedures.

This workshop will be held June 20, 10 a.m.–3 p.m., at the SBOM Office Facility in Prattville. The cost is \$15 and includes lunch.

To register, visit alsbom.org/churchadmin.

Attending the Southern Baptist Convention in New Orleans?

Stop by the State Board of Missions booth right behind Lifeway in the SBC exhibit hall for a visit and

join the celebration as we commemorate 200 years of Alabama Baptist missions and ministry!

Indy racer's 'momager' reflects on God's provision

By Tracy Riggs Frantz
The Alabama Baptist

On most weekends, Kimmie Serrano can be found cheering on her favorite Indy driver, her son Sting Ray Robb.

Serrano is Robb's "momager," an affectionate catch-all title that provides a snapshot of what she does to help her son pursue his auto racing dreams — a passion that began early.

"I can tell you from a mom's perspective, I had no idea what we were getting into," she said.

From the moment Robb could speak, she said he would urge, "Go faster, Mom!"

Robb started begging his mom for a go-cart during his preschool years.

To keep him from pursuing motorcycle racing, she granted his request, hoping they could quickly move on to the next thing.

"It literally never changed," she said. "That drive in him, that desire in him, that passion in him was apparently quite ingrained. That is what he is meant to be doing because he has literally never wavered from that."

As a typical mom worried about her son's safety, Serrano tried to get him into other sports — anything but race car driving. When her best efforts failed, she finally agreed to support his dream.

However, Robb's dream wasn't easy to support. Both Serrano and Robb's father, Larry Robb, were constantly working, managing the 100-plus employees at the grocery store they owned. Nothing came easy — they had to work for every opportunity.

"We would roll up in our Tahoe with a cart and a pop-up tent in the back and park



Photo by Tracy Riggs Frantz/The Alabama Baptist
Kimmie Serrano gives her son, IndyCar driver Sting Ray Robb, a special pre-race handshake, a tradition the two share. Serrano does all she can to help her son pursue his racing dreams.

next to a semi-trailer that had a big, fancy rig that had 15 engines, and we've got the engine we've had for 2 1/2 years," Serrano said.

Character formation

She credits Robb's character being formed by the hardships they endured, the many mistakes made and a family with a strong faith in Christ.

"Sting Ray has said on numerous occasions that our identity is not found in those successes or those failures; our identity is found in Christ. Honestly, I think that's what has kept all of us level through all of the ups and downs," Serrano said.

Serrano has no doubts this is God's plan, even if it seems "ridiculous" to think that God would create someone to be a race car driver.

"But He truly did," she said.

Robb recently moved up from the developmental level Indy Lights (now called Indy NXT) to IndyCar racing.

"I honestly believe it's because this is a platform," Serrano said. "Here we are on the biggest stage in the U.S. in the motorsports industry. Sting Ray's got this platform to share about God. What an incredible opportunity," she said.

"This is his mission. This is where God intended him to be."

Serrano also wholeheartedly knows that her main role in life is being there for Robb. She also considers it her mission to support others who don't have that support as much as she can, planting seeds along the way.

Difficult journey

Serrano's journey has included many highs and lows.

One year she and her family were devastated by a losing season, only to win the championship the next year.

Serrano and Robb's dad divorced. However, they continue to have a good relationship and support their son in his racing.

Having a child in such a high-risk sport drives Serrano to God every time he's on the track.

"I'm insane. I'm an absolutely crazy mother who

allows her child — who even supported and encouraged him — to do that. Keep in mind that he's my only child. I often ask myself,

"What am I doing?"

"With the Indy 500 coming up, they're driving 240 (mph) out there," Serrano said. "I am taking comfort in God's arms at this point, knowing that He's got him. He is here because God put him here, and I'm walking in that faith."

Biggest supporter

In spite of the fear and the struggles, Serrano loves her life.

"More than anything, I love the relationship that he and I have. He's often described me as his biggest supporter and also his biggest critic."

"Maybe that's why it's my job in life — that's why God gave him to me. It's not always roses. ... [But] it's just been such an incredible experience from day one," she said.

"I can't wait to see what's next."

To learn more about Sting Ray Robb's racing and how he uses that platform for Christ, go to stingrayrobb.com and follow his social media.

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PAVING THE WAY FOR NEW CHURCHES

Digital engagement in Ukraine helps ‘prime the pump’ for church planting

What do you do when you want to plant a church in a new area, but travel is restricted?

How do you know where in the city to plant the church and how to generate interest when canvassing and prayer walking aren't possible?

Missionaries with the International Mission Board are employing digital engagement as a new entry strategy for planting churches. IMB missionary Brant Bauman uses evangelism ads and QR code stickers on humanitarian relief packages to point people in Eastern Ukraine to an evangelism resource website.

IMB missionaries and Ukrainian Baptist pastors hope to plant churches in two cities in far eastern Ukraine — a region under an onslaught from Russia. Great need is coupled with great devastation in these areas, but people are coming to faith. Evangelism efforts are reaching the lost.

In many locations, prayer walking and canvassing neighborhoods to meet people and invite them to visit are strategies to help a church plant. Given the dangers that come with war, this isn't possible in Ukraine.

Hope for Ukraine

Instead IMB missionaries are engaging these cities through digital media.

Hope for Ukraine is a website launched by the IMB in the spring of 2022 to provide gospel resources, links to download a digital Bible and a chat feature where Ukrainians can reach out for prayer.

Bauman helped create the website, which opened the floodgates for digital engagement in Ukraine



Oksana scans the Hope for Ukraine QR code at the station established by Romanian Baptists and now manned by a Southern Baptist Disaster Relief team on the border of Ukraine and Moldova. IMB photo

and Europe. Bauman and his team are running evangelism video ads in the cities where IMB missionaries hope to plant churches. Nearly 12,000 people have watched the videos to completion, which is a large number given the size of the towns.

He is hoping the videos will help “prime the pump” so that when church planters arrive, more people will be open to the gospel.

Bauman recently traveled to Ukraine with fellow IMB missionary Mike Domke, who served in Ukraine before evacuating during the onset of the war. They traveled to visit partners, check on Send Relief projects and for Bauman to connect with digital

first responders who answer when someone contacts the website and investigate future opportunities for digital engagement.

“What we primarily know is that the greatest need is the gospel because the greatest problem is lostness.”

Brant Bauman
IMB missionary

He'll continue to look for ways to propel the work of church planters forward faster and further despite the limitations they experience because of the war. Bauman said they plan to continue running the video ads in the area, and they are looking at using this strategy in other countries.

Humanitarian aid is another way digital engagement is pushing the gospel forward.

Send Relief has facilitated 98 projects to serve Ukrainians. In Ukraine, there have been 45 proj-

ects, with 35 of them still in progress.

But as they try to aid Ukrainians in a humanitarian way, Bauman said, “what we primarily know is that the greatest need is the gospel because the greatest problem is lostness.”

God is on the move

Bauman said his trip was eye-opening, and it quickly became evident to him that God is on the move. His goal was to determine how to get people the resources they need. They asked themselves, how do we incorporate the gospel into humanitarian relief?

An ongoing method of digital engagement is affixing QR code stickers to humanitarian boxes being sent to eastern Ukraine. Nine hundred boxes were shipped in a single day. Bauman said attaching a sticker increases the likelihood someone will see it, because brochures may be lost or discarded. With a scan of the QR code, people can have access to the gospel message.

Since the launch of the Hope for Ukraine website, QR codes leading to the website have been scanned 626 times.

Bauman said they will continue to look for ways to intertwine digital engagement with Send Relief. He hopes the opportunities resulting from digital engagement opened in Ukraine will be an example for other cities.

“We want to continue to be faithful to let this be a shining example of how God is working in and through digital engagement strategies,” Bauman said. “If we give God the ability to work in all ways and through every means possible, He comes through.” (IMB)

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For May 21

Explore the Bible

By Ben Stubblefield

Visiting assistant professor of Christian studies, University of Mobile



REACH OUT YOUR HAND John 20:19–29

Commissioned (19–23)

Though likely astounded by Mary's report of the resurrected Christ, the disciples remain confused and fearful for their future. They gather, and their doors are shut "for fear of the Jews." Jesus presents Himself to them, apparently bypassing a locked door, and shows them the scars on His hands and side.

The rest of the New Testament indicates we'll receive a resurrection body, freed from weakness, disease and death. Yet Jesus retains the branding of His crucifixion because His disciples would need evidence He truly rose from the dead.

For the disciples to risk their lives for Christ, there could be no misunderstanding.

Jesus breathed on them, saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit." This is an unusual and hard-to-understand moment. It does not reconcile easily with Luke's account of the church's reception of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

The simplest, most believable solution is also one of the oldest solutions, put forward by Theodore of Mopsuestia (350–428 A.D.), who said Jesus enacted here a symbol of the commissioning the church would receive at Pentecost as detailed in Acts 2. It's not in competition with the scene detailed in Acts; it's a pre-figuration of it.

The Lord continues to instruct, in what is yet another much-interpreted verse about the disciples' authority to forgive and retain sins. One reading connects verse 23 to the church discipline passages (Matt. 16:19, 18:15–20). Jesus is not suggesting His disciples have the final authority of salvation and condemnation, but that His people, the Church, have the responsibility to confirm or deny, based on the evidence of visible obedience or disobedience, that individuals possess saving faith.

Demands (24–25)

Thomas gets a bad rap, but I think he was really just a normal guy. In today's world, I too would be incredulous about the resurrection. I rarely take anything at face value, particularly if it's too good to be true.

While you may be frustrated with people like me or Thomas, notice that the Lord doesn't throw him out of the group. He's patient. He works with Thomas and wins him over. Perhaps you're not a doubtful person but someone dear to you is. It's good to remember the Lord is patient with the skeptic. Our churches have folks still struggling to believe. Let's be lovingly patient with them too.

Believed (26–29)

Eight days later, Jesus reappears to His disciples, this time with Thomas among them. And He goes about proving His authenticity to the doubter. Thomas makes the good confession: "My Lord and my God!" In many ways, this declaration is the aim of John's gospel. It's the thesis of the prologue and the conclusion of the book, indeed, the very reason John wrote.

There is a special blessing for those who will make Thomas' same confession and yet have not seen Him at all (1 Pet. 1:8–9).

I sometimes wonder what we would call the best evidence for Christ, after His ascension, that would continue to win over today's Thomases. I think Jesus' intention was for the visible Church, you and me, to be one of the most persuasive proofs of His resurrection (John 13:35). We are His body, His ambassadors, His vessels. The question worth considering is: Are we exhibiting the character of Christ so clearly that the skeptics in our generation cannot help but conclude that Jesus is alive?

***"Blessed are those who have not seen
and yet have believed."***

John 20:29

Bible Studies for Life

By James R. Strange

Professor of biblical and religious studies, Samford University



THE STRENGTH TO STAND AGAINST TEMPTATION Ephesians 6:10–18

Today we conclude our series on dealing with temptations with a well-known passage from Paul. In Ephesians, which was written to Gentile believers (4:17; 5:8), Paul reminds his readers of Christ's saving power, aims to tear down the barrier between Jewish and Gentile followers of Christ and insists on the abandonment of Gentile ways (4:17–5:21). Success will not come without a battle.

Standing against temptation is a spiritual battle. (10–13)

Remember that every "you" is plural. Paul is not addressing Christians acting independently but the body of Christ acting corporately. It is the Church, therefore, that is to be armored.

Read the passage, emphasizing "in the Lord," "His" and "of God." Human strength and Roman armor impart no advantage in this battle, and both status and wealth are equally useless. After all, Paul has just addressed Christian households of the Roman Empire, including children, who have no strength, and slaves, who have neither status nor power (5:21–6:9). Yet these must also join the fight.

The darkness is temporary but for now, the rulers, authorities and cosmic powers have control.

To call the battle spiritual doesn't mean the Church ignores social systems and realities. We work as God's agents in the world, as Jesus did. We are Christ's body (4:15–16). If some behaviors and systems won't exist in God's Kingdom, they are immoral and unjust now as well. As the body of Christ, the Church calls them out.

Standing against temptation necessitates God-given equipment. (14–16)

What is the Church fighting? Why must it stand firm? The Church

resists not only desires that lead to sin but also the temptation to do nothing in the face of immorality and injustice.

This is why Paul primarily talks about defensive equipment. The Church cannot defeat the devil. Only God will do this at the eschaton. The Church stands against the schemes of the devil lest its members believe that the way the world

***"Put on the whole
armor of God, that
you may be able
to stand against
the schemes of
the devil."***

Ephesians 6:11

works is inevitable, that you can't beat the system or that it should not work for change because it can make only a small difference in the world.

These misconceptions are all "the flaming arrows of the evil one" that must be extinguished.

Armor implies defense, yet Paul doesn't call for passivity. If the Church fastens on the belt of truth, it speaks truth. If it wears the breastplate of righteousness, it does what is righteous. Ironically, the armored Church proclaims God's gospel of peace.

Standing against temptation requires God's Word and prayer. (17–18)

As Jesus demonstrated in Gethsemane, the Church takes up the shield of faith, which is obedience to God's call in spite of great cost. If Paul is still working with the metaphor of 4:15–16, then it is Christ who bears the helmet of salvation, who is salvation, for the Church.

The only weapon of offense is the sword of the Spirit, another reference to the proclamation of the gospel, to speaking truth to these powers.

To make a difference, even a small difference, the Church must speak truth, do righteousness, remain faithful and proclaim the gospel of peace. The work to which God calls the Church is good, not because it is effective (we pray that it is) or successful (with God's help it will be) but because it is God's work.

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Tracy Riggs Frontz

The Alabama Baptist

'In God's hands': Christian artist JJ Weeks reflects on music, life

When news of the spiritual movements on college campuses earlier this year started spreading, Christian recording artist JJ Weeks felt a burden to not take it lightly.

Touring with Justin Warren on the "My Porch Tour," Weeks decided to include a worship set chosen from songs that were personally speaking to him and the other band members.

The set became the main emphasis of the tour, a powerful part of the concert and affirmation of following God's will, even when it isn't easy, Weeks said.

"I think if I were in any other space, I would really lean on what [I] can do and [my] abilities," Weeks said. Instead, the musical selections have refocused him on "who [God] is and the faith that I have in Him."

"I can say, 'All right, God. You control it all.' I still struggle with trying to pick up the mantle and carrying it myself instead of leaving it in God's hands. I think that's probably what this whole thing has taught me the most — is to just learn to trust Him."

Born in Birmingham and spending his early childhood in Fulton-



JJ WEEKS

Facebook photo

dale, Weeks had always felt called to the ministry. However, while he was studying to be a youth pastor, an encounter with God changed his life's trajectory. The call came during a night he was leading worship for the youth at his uncle's church during a college break.

"We started (with) an upbeat song at first (but) I felt the presence of God so strongly that I just ended up shutting the music off and saying, 'Hey, we're going to play some soft music, and I'm going to spend some time with the Lord at the altar. You're welcome to do that with me.'"

Difficult path

Weeks ended up lying on the floor at the altar. That was when he felt God call him to do this full time.

Even with the support of friends and family, Weeks' path in music hasn't always been easy. He did

music independently all over the Southeast for 12 years until, while playing at Dollywood in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, a record label took interest in his work. He soon signed with them.

The first single released by JJ Weeks Band, "Let Them See You," exploded. The second did well, but then the record label he was with broke apart, leading to a new record label. The next song didn't gain much traction.

"For the next seven years we were just fighting to get any radio play," he said. "Just looking at it from the world's eyes, there's no reason for JJ Weeks to keep going if you just look at it from radio play, etc."

"Long story short, when I really stepped back and said, 'God, is this what You still want me to do?'"

"I had a moment that I felt like God was telling me it was time to close the doors."

During the same time, Weeks was invited to become the worship director of a big church in his hometown. This seemed like confirmation he was heading in the right direction. One night he was praying about how to end his Christian music career well.

Change of direction

"I said, 'In Jesus' name. Amen,' and I'll never forget it — it was probably 3 a.m. (I was) doing some balancing on a spreadsheet — how I could sell this and pay this off to close the ministry and have it end on an even spot financially. As soon as I said, 'Amen,' I heard God say, 'You may be through, son, but I'm not. Just put one foot in front of the other,'" Weeks said.

About a week later, he was reading a devotion that highlighted how the greatest victory of all time happened in a graveyard.

"God works His best miracles in our deepest, darkest moments," Weeks said. "I think that us Christian folks think that we share Jesus better on the mountaintops.

"But the truth is, we show people Jesus better in the darkest valleys when we don't know what in the world God's doing. He pulls things from the dead and brings them back to life."

After these experiences, Weeks knew he needed to keep going.

He changed his name from JJ Weeks Band to simply JJ Weeks, and after using the time off during the pandemic to reconnect with his family, he had a busy 2021 and 2022 writing and touring.

He is releasing those songs now, starting with the single "Graveyard," based on what he learned when he almost gave up.

Weeks also plans to release a new album this fall.

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.

To learn more about JJ Weeks and his music, go to jjweeks.org.

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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
Michelle Norwood says on a much smaller scale, she might know what South 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 its 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
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
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

us'

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)

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