The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

Photo by Grace Thornton/The Alabama Baptist

Karen Lee, executive director of the Etowah Baptist Missions Center, displays the center's missions bus full of clothes and supplies.

Missions to go

Repurposed bus allows Etowah Association churches more ministry opportunities

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Karen Lee said she's been "overwhelmed" to see what God has done in the 15 years since she became executive director of the Etowah Baptist Missions Center.

They've expanded from one building to five, and the ministry has "grown by leaps and bounds," she said.

But in recent months, Lee and the board of directors of the missions center began to ask how they could get outside the walls of those buildings and reach their county more comprehensively.

'God just amazes me'

"Somebody said, 'Let's do a bus,' and I thought, 'Yeah, right,'" Lee said. "I thought, 'We're so busy at the missions center. How are we going to fit that in? How are we going to do this?' But God just amazes me all the time; He works all of that out."

And in September 2022, the center's Missions to Go mobile missions bus hit the road.

Lee said a donation from a church in the association paid for the old school bus, and others helped paint it and wrap it in graphics at a discounted price.

Now the bus is filled with boxes of clothes and shoes organized by size, as well as hygiene items and baby supplies, food and Bibles.

They also have seasonal items, like backpacks full of school supplies in the summer and toys at Christmastime.

Lee said she and other volunteers — including her husband, Sonny, who has a commercial driver's

(*See 'Missions,' page 11*)

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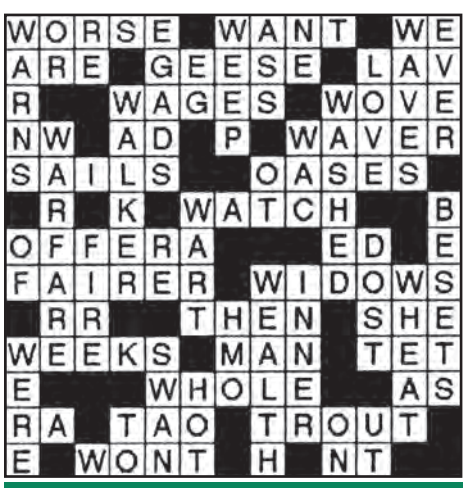

The crossword puzzle can be found on page 15.

Photo courtesy of Sue Woods

After her husband's death in 2021, Sue Woods (left) started using her husband's shirts to make dresses for girls in orphanages in Honduras. Since then, a number of others have joined her in the ministry.

Sewing ministry continues to inspire others to get involved

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

In our March 23 issue, we shared the story of Sue Woods, who lost her husband in 2021 and began using his shirts to make dresses for little girls in orphanages in Honduras.

The story has continued — not only has she continued to gather with her sewing group to make dresses, shorts and tops, others have also been inspired to get involved, like Edith Smith, a member of Lowndesboro Baptist Church.

Smith has been sewing as a ministry for more than a dozen years, making pillowcase dresses for children and lap blankets for cancer patients.

"Right now I'm doing Christmas stockings for the senior center," she said.

Smith enjoys trying new projects, so when she read about Woods making dresses from shirts, she reached out to The Alabama Baptist for help connecting with her to learn more.

Since talking with Woods, Smith has gotten some shirts and started cutting out pieces to make dresses and expand her ministry.

"I enjoy sewing," Smith said.

Woods said for her, the ministry has brought more enjoyment than she ever would've guessed. Right now, her group — made up of women from her Sunday School class at First Baptist Church Jacksonville — is working on making 50 small purses. The group meets at her house every Thursday morning.

"It hasn't seemed like work; it just is a fun time for us to get together," she said. "The ladies who come help me cut the pieces, and I do the sewing. We feel such a blessing from this."

She said getting together with the group to do something meaningful has ministered to her in a big way in the two years since her husband died.

"I could not have made it without them," Smith said.

To read the full article on Sue Woods' sewing ministry, visit tabonline.org/sue-woods.

"It hasn't seemed like work; it just is a fun time for us to get together."

Sue Woods
member of FBC Jacksonville

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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OPINION

RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

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

jrash@thealabamabaptist.org @RashionalThts

Sending fresh sparks of kindness and energy out into the world

Three of our nephews and nieces recently became alums of their respective high schools. Three others did the same in recent years and are leading us quickly toward the college graduation stage.

Much like most of the new grads in your family or congregation, our nieces and nephews also embraced the full range of emotions that come with graduation — tinge of sadness to wrap up this season but mainly reflective, appreciative, hopeful and excited to turn the page on a new chapter.

The opportunity to be present for at least one commencement week activity for each of them sent my mind on a memory adventure back to when their sweet personalities first developed and through the various stages as they grew up to become the strong and confident young adults they are today.

Each brings unique and endearing qualities, but one characteristic they all have in common is kindness. I love how each one allows Jesus to shine through them and isn't afraid of nurturing a compassionate heart.

Can you imagine how many lives they will touch and the difference they will make through the years if they release the full potential of what Jesus can do through them?

The thought truly makes this aunt's heart smile.

Kindness — why would we not want to own it? Why would we not want to treasure it?

Colossians 3:12 tells us, "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience."

First Corinthians 13:4 notes, "Love is patient, love is kind."

Galatians 5:22–23 includes kindness as one of the characteristics providing visible proof of the Holy Spirit living within us — "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."

A quick search of the word kindness in Scripture brings up plenty more reminders of its importance in the Christian life.

Even outside of Scripture, we can find advocates for kindness. Literature has many examples.

Author Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910), for instance, is known for saying, "Nothing can make our life, or the lives of other people, more beautiful than perpetual kindness."

Recent high school graduates

JARED

Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/ The Alabama Baptist

CAROLINE

Photo by Nancy Searcy

CLASS OF 2023

JACK

Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/ The Alabama Baptist

OPINION

Your Voice

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

3 ways for pastors to care well for the abused

By Pastor Keith Myer
Harvest Baptist Church, Salisbury, Maryland

The statistics on sexual abuse are staggering. This should give pastors pause as they consider how to care for people who have experienced sexual trauma.

Fifty percent of women and one out of three men have experienced an unwanted or traumatic sexual violation.

Studies show that many who have been sexually abused do not disclose until they are adults, and the average age of disclosure is 52!

As shepherds, pastors are called to care for others in the Lord (1 Thess. 5:12), comforting and encouraging them in their grief and struggles.

Here are three action steps you can take to move towards developing an action plan for caring well for victims of sexual abuse.

1. Victims of abuse are often protective of their stories and vigilant toward possible threats. They may reveal their story in small pieces to test if you can be trusted or if you will believe them.

Hurrying them along or minimizing the pain of their experience can communicate that you don't care.

Rachael Denhollander, author of "What is a Girl Worth?" says, "The most important thing you can do for a survivor is let them know that what they are suffering matters to you, and it matters to God."

Take time to listen with compassion and empathy. You may need to act depending on the situation, but separate what's happening into two distinct moments: Listen well and then act.

2. Put a caring well team in place. So often as pastors we have to move quickly from task to task, solving problems. If we approach abuse in a similar way, we'll miss what the victim needs most: someone who will listen, believe and help them take the next steps toward healing.

Oppressive trauma can lead to feelings of isolation. Churches are excellent at responding to the death of a loved one, the birth of a new baby and other hardships.

Enact those same practices for victims and survivors of trauma.

They, too, may need help with meals, transportation and child care. They also need to hear frequent messages of encouragement and hope.

Responding well is a long haul, not a one and done. Providing this type of support communicates that they matter and are valuable.

3. Educate yourself and identify resources. Familiarizing yourself and any church staff with local and community resources that can help is a good start.

Visiting your local child advocacy center (every county has one), talking with local counselors and asking for referrals to those specialized in dealing with trauma is a good way to begin to build your list of resources.

Encourage your church to be generous and give to a benevolence fund and reserve some of those funds to help people pay for counseling.

Counseling is expensive, and the people who need it most often refuse to pursue it due to cost and the risk of being vulnerable.

As pastors educate themselves on abuse and familiarize themselves with local resources, they can help their people take steps forward in the most painful experiences of their lives.

There are no easy answers and no simple solutions, but the image of the Shepherd displays the skills needed — patiently guiding those in His care to cool water and places of safety.

EDITOR'S NOTE — This article is reprinted from Baptist Press and adapted for space. Find more resources at tabonline.org/sexual-abuse-resources.

> ***"Again, I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them!"***
>
> **Ecclesiastes 4:1**

Thoughts from the-scroll.com

Be intentional and seek out friendships that encourage you and energize you in your faith. Nurture those friendships and don't shy away from asking hard questions or having hard conversations. Deep relationships with fellow believers will only deepen your love and knowledge of God.

Jessica Ingram
"The beauty of fellowship"

I don't know why I feel a need to hold on to everything myself, but it's something I have to remind myself of hourly, it seems like. I don't have to. He tells us to give everything to Him.

Hannah Muñoz
"Lay it all at His feet"

It's always beneficial to reflect on why you did something and think about the difference it has made in your life. Do you remember when you gave your heart to Jesus?

Amy Hacker
"Like little children"

Let's plan and pray and think and hope with the presence and glory of God in full view.

James Hammack
"God with us forever"

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OPINION

> "Mission discipline is a challenging essential for every church, ministry or denomination."
>
> JEFF IORG
> *President, Gateway Seminary*

They've been together 70-plus years. They also know that they're not in charge. ... Their faith is really grounding in this moment. In that way, it's as good as it can be.

Jason Carter, speaking in a May 23 interview about his parents, former President Jimmy Carter and former First Lady Rosalynn Carter, now 98 and 95 years old

If you can think of a way to volunteer and spread the Word of the Lord, chances are Campers on Mission can do it.

Walt Miller, president
Alabama Campers on Mission

There's so much hate going on that we have to remind ourselves with these films that there's some goodness out there too. ... If you look for it, you'll find it.

Sean McNamara, director
"On a Wing and a Prayer"

An event like the Olympics could really catalyze the church forward in terms of confidence in the gospel.

Jason Harris
IMB missionary in Paris, home of the 2024 Summer Olympics

Prevention is the most pro-life thing we can do. ... If we can prevent someone from even having to consider what they're going to do about a pregnancy, we've done the best thing.

Marty Carrell, CEO
Women's Resource Center
Mobile

One of the reasons Disaster Relief is such an important ministry is we find people at very bad times in their lives and are able to provide practical help and spiritual help.

I've heard stories of people ... who were literally on their knees praying, "God, I don't know what to do," and a volunteer rang their doorbell.

Mark Wakefield
Disaster Relief strategist
Alabama Baptist SBOM

Social ministry is an organized process of Christlike concern for the physical, mental, emotional and relational well-being of persons and groups both inside and outside the Christian community of faith.

Morris Murray Jr.
Jasper, Ala.

Chitchat

What people are sharing on social media

@lauriedaviesauthor

Just finished Elijah study by @priscillashirer and my goodness!

Takeaways:

- "Sometimes the most strategic place is not the center of the action."
- Discernment and dependence happen in the quiet. Ambitions get purified. Backbone forms.
- Seasons of solitude force us to press into God's presence.
- God does deep work when He gets us alone. Isolation and separation can be a gift...
- When it's time to stand boldly or alone, none of us will be able to do it if we've short-circuited that deep work.
- When we fabricate our own fire or pretend like we're on fire through self-promotion or religious activity, there is zero chance others' lives will be changed.
- The fire we generate through our abilities rises. "God's fire falls."
- "Faith is acting like God is telling the truth."

Instagram

Worship doesn't remove your problems, but it does put them in their proper perspective.

Richard Blackaby
Facebook

@jasonkeithallen

"We can preach the Gospel of Christ no further than we have experienced the power of it in our own hearts." —George Whitefield

Twitter

@MichaelCatt

Social media has become a public platform to attack people, specific people. At the same time, I doubt if those throwing the accusations have called and requested a one-on-one meeting. Maybe we should go back to what the Bible says in dealing with conflict.

Twitter

As a Christian, I can be a good or bad witness. I want to be a good witness. ... I'm open with my faith, and I love to learn from others. I pray that I've opened the idea of Christ to them. And they'll know I'm a Christian by my love.

Cheryl Sloan Wray
Facebook

Getting the job done

The 1954 Chevrolet Deluxe fit my needs fine as a high school senior. Especially at a cool $100.

That two-tone green coupe was my first vehicle with four wheels.

My friends called it "the turtle." It was old, ugly and slow.

But she got the job done. To school, church, houses of friends.

How are you at getting the job done? Do you possess the trait of perseverance?

The opposite would be a don't care, uncertain, indecisive, give up kind of person.

Jesus observed the difference between a disciple and a would-be disciple.

He saw some "fall away," others follow "false prophets" and many people whose love grew "cold."

A few latched on to Him, but they didn't stick. Not that they lost their salvation. They just never had it.

What was the proof in the pudding to Jesus? "But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved" (Matt. 24:13).

God appeals to all believers to serve Him. He doesn't care how pretty you are, whether you're the smartest cookie in the jar or how fast you move.

He just wants you to get the job done.

Darryl Wood
"A personal word from a retread pastor"
Facebook

@claysmith79

Jesus' plea for us to come to Him when weary and heavy laden is a call to lay down our self-righteousness and to learn to do life in His ways. His yoke doesn't exclude us from work. It teaches us to do our work in His strength and power.

Twitter

NEWS

3 stories you should know

Photo courtesy of Gov. Kay Ivey

Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey signs Senate Bill 113 into law. The law ensures family and clergy visitation rights for those in health care facilities. It comes after many caregivers were prohibited from visiting loved ones in hospitals, nursing homes, assisted living centers and other facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Greg Davis (left), president of ALCAP, was instrumental in adding the clergy visitation rights provision. Go to tabonline.org for more legislative news. (TAB)

SBC abuse reform task force clarifies 'credibly accused'

SBC's Abuse Reform Implementation Task Force released an update May 25 to clarify the "credibly accused" standard related to the upcoming Ministry Check site.

"Credibly accused" means one or more of the following options, but only individuals falling in the first three categories will be included when the site launches.

1. Confession in non-privileged setting.
2. Conviction in a court of law.
3. Civil judgment rendered.
4. Independent third party decides credibly accused by preponderance of evidence following inquiry.

Category four is "crucially important" and is not being abandoned but requires further study and consideration, task force leaders said.

See the latest SBC headlines at thebaptistpaper.org. (TAB)

Montgomery DOM Hughes to chair SBC EC search team

The new presidential search team for the SBC Executive Committee held its first meeting June 1.

Neal Hughes, director of missions for Montgomery Baptist Association, was named chair.

HUGHES

Also elected to officer positions were Nick Sandefur of Kentucky as vice chair and Nancy Spaulding of Michigan as secretary.

Other members are Corey Cain of Tennessee, Drew Landry of Virginia, Sarah Rogers of South Carolina and David Sons (ex-officio voting member as EC chair).

Details regarding the search process will be available following the June 12 EC meeting. (TAB)

Persecuted church

Christians killed as Nigerian villages raided, homes destroyed in attacks

ABUJA, Nigeria — Twelve Christians were killed in April raids upon numerous villages in Nasarawa State in Nigeria.

Area residents told Morning Star News that local extremists were responsible for the attacks, which happened April 16–19 in the villages of Tattara Mada, Migini, Angwan Barau, Angwan Takpa, Angwan Ayaba and others, according to reports by area officials and sources.

In the raid upon Tattara Mada, homes of dozens of Christians were burned, including that of the pastor of the local Evangelical Church Winning All congregation.

According to Pius Kyubeh, who is associated with Mada Development Association, a total of 86 homes were destroyed in the various attacks.

Many villagers were still missing as of May 2.

Nigeria is No. 6 on Open Doors' 2023 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian. Morning Star states that, in 2022, Nigeria led the world in the number of Christians killed for their faith, kidnapped, sexually assaulted or harassed, forcibly married and physically or mentally abused.

Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

New Christian in Uganda beaten unconscious for converting

IGANGA, Uganda — A Ugandan man who became a Christian in January was beaten unconscious May 2 for converting from Islam.

Before putting his faith and trust in Jesus Christ in January, Ndifuna, 33, had been an Islamic teacher at Noor Islamic Mosque in Mayuge District, reported Morning Star News.

Ndifuna said four Muslims forced their way into his house May 2 and tried to make him renounce his faith in Jesus. When he refused, the men beat and strangled him.

Ndifuna's wife and three children hid in another room. His wife called a family friend who took Ndifuna to get medical treatment.

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

NEWS ITEMS COMPILED BY CARRIE McWHORTER AND LEIGH PRITCHETT

NEWS

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

▸ **Cheryl Harrison Wright,** 76, died in Birmingham on May 27 after an illness.

She was married to Jack R. Wright Jr., for more than 12 years. Wright was in ministry for 68 years, including serving as director of missions for Clarke County Baptist Association, director of Camp Morvin and pastor of Asbury Baptist Church, Grove Hill. He also served as pastor of Gosport Baptist Church, Whatley.

WRIGHT

Cheryl Wright was raised in Marengo County and was a cosmetologist in the Chilton community for many years. She also worked in a local drugstore and created floral arrangements in the flower shop.

She is survived by her husband, Jack Wright; two children; four step-children; three grandchildren; and 10 step-grandchildren.

She is preceded in death by her first husband of nearly 41 years, Eddie Harrison, and daughter, Rita.

BARBOUR ASSOCIATION

▸ **William Bell** is the new pastor of **Union Baptist Church, Clayton,** where he served as interim pastor. He works full time as the receiver at Tractor Supply in Eufaula.

BELL

A Wisconsin native, Bell holds a theology degree from Faith Bible College, Milton, Florida, and is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree from Bethany Divinity College and Seminary, Dothan. He has preached at churches in Alabama, Georgia and Florida and has been involved in youth ministry at Parkview Baptist Church, Eufaula.

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

▸ **Trussville First Baptist** will host Oasis Birmingham with Frank Jones Ministries July 13 beginning at 1:30 p.m.

Featured artists include Christian comedian Dennis Swanberg and gospel singer and comedian Allison Speer. Pre-show entertainment begins at 1:15 p.m. To order tickets, call 205-393-7020 or visit frankjonesministries.org/oasis.

Buddy Champion is pastor.

COLBERT-LAUDERDALE ASSOCIATION

▸ **Fred Karthaus** is the new pastor of **First Baptist Church Rogersville,** where he previously served as associate pastor.

He and his wife, Connie, have two children.

KARTHAUS

ESCAMBIA ASSOCIATION

HILL

▸ **James "Jim" Hill** recently retired from **Nokomis Baptist Church, Atmore,** after 10 years of service. He was previously pastor of Fairhope Avenue Baptist Church, Fairhope.

He is married to Betty.

MARSHALL ASSOCIATION

▸ **Jeff Martin** is the new director of **Marshall Baptist Retreat Center, Guntersville.**

MARTIN

He previously served as pastor of Southside Baptist Church, Albertville.

He is married to Beth.

MOBILE ASSOCIATION

▸ On April 27, the **Mobile Baptist Association** Woman's Missionary Union/Women's Ministry Leadership Team hosted its annual celebration at Redemption Church, Saraland. A record crowd of more than 125 attended, organizers said. International congregations from the area were among those in attendance, and some were part of the program. The theme was "Lord, teach us to pray."

PICKENS ASSOCIATION

▸ **Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Carrollton,** will host its homecoming June 25. The service will start at 10 a.m. with Pastor Rusty Walker preaching. Bob Sellers, formerly of the Kingsman gospel quartet, will sing a few songs in the service and will perform a concert after lunch.

TUSKEGEE LEE ASSOCIATION

▸ **Sarah Yeager** recently retired as financial secretary of **Providence Baptist Church, Opelika.**

YEAGER

CONNER

WALKER ASSOCIATION

▸ **Carol Conner** is the new administrative assistant at **First Baptist Church Carbon Hill.**

June 10 workshop to focus on writing to publish

By Denise George
The Alabama Baptist

With more than 5 billion people around the globe actively using the internet, Christian authors now possess greater potential than ever before to proclaim and teach God's Word, illuminate biblical values and share their own powerful personal testimonies.

Carrying out Jesus' Great Commission (Matt. 28:18–20) has never been so achievable, and never before has our world so urgently needed Christian writers to offer their biblical worldview and scriptural perspectives on pressing societal issues.

Writing to publish gives the Christian believer a platform to share his or her wisdom and to offer desperately needed hope the world needs to hear.

When pastors and ministers write to publish, they spread God's Word far beyond the walls of their churches.

When parents and grandparents write their family histories, publishing them in book form, they transmit their Christian teachings, lasting legacy, Christian heritage and biblical instruction to their children, grandchildren and family members not yet born.

Whatever your age, station or season of life, if you've ever wanted to begin a writing ministry, now is the time to get started.

Tips for getting started

If God has planted a passion in your heart to write, you can learn the necessary writing and publishing skills. Never has it been a better time to get published.

Get started today and reach out to a world of readers who are waiting to hear what you have to say, to learn what you have to teach them and to be inspired, encouraged and offered Christ's eternal hope through the books and articles you write and share.

Christian Writers for Life is an online writers group with more than 3,400 members worldwide.

Visit ChristianWritersforLife.com/conference to register for a free online conference, "How Christians Can Become Published Authors," on June 10, 9–10 a.m. CDT.

The conference will cover a variety of topics and introduce aspiring writers to the online writers group.

Read more online at tabonline.org/cwfl-conference.

ALABAMA NEWS ITEMS COMPILED BY DIANNA L. CAGLE AND DEBBIE CAMPBELL

By the Brook 2023 will feature several speakers, including (l to r) Cassaundra Kemp, Katie Whitmire, Becky Davidson, Kristi Farrow, Chris Beasley and Lori Chatman.

Photo by DeAnna Hammond

Finding community

By the Brook annual virtual retreat offers rest for caregivers, to be held June 23–24

By Tracy Riggs Frontz
The Alabama Baptist

Isolation, burnout, financial strain, lack of support — these are the five biggest challenges caregivers face, according to eFamilyCare.com.

Rising Above Ministries is a nonprofit that not only provides help to those with special needs; it also helps their caregivers in several of these areas.

One of Rising Above's popular events is By the Brook, an annual virtual retreat geared to help meet the spiritual and emotional needs of caregivers. It will be held June 23–24 this year.

"If you live this life, there is such isolation," said Becky Davidson, co-founder and president of Rising Above. "There is such loneliness.

"So often you feel like no one sees you, no one gets your life. You're exhausted from working, from trying to take care of your family, from trying to do all the things you have to do. Then on top of that, there are all of the things that surround your child's disability."

'Weary and exhausted'

"So many of our moms come to us weary and exhausted and worn out and feeling unloved and unseen. Our heart is for these moms to come together for this one weekend to know they are seen, they are loved, they are valued — that God has a plan and a purpose for them, for their child," she said.

Over time By the Brook has branched out to include any caregiver who needs to know she is seen and loved by God, not just moms of children with special needs.

"It's (for) any unique need that your family faces. It can be mental illness. It can be chronic illness. It can be Down syndrome, autism. It can be ADD. It's across the board," Davidson said.

When moms tell Davidson their child's disability isn't as severe as her child's, she reminds them the challenges each caregiver faces are different.

There aren't levels of challenges, she said, noting every caregiver needs support, no matter the level of care.

The retreat is also a good time to bring loved ones who aren't directly involved to give them "a glimpse into what [the caregivers'] lives are like," Davidson said.

This virtual retreat has a ticket price of $10–$20 and several points of access. For those able to travel and who want in-person fellowship and support, there are host churches across the United States.

Two are in Alabama — one at Central Church of Christ in Athens and one at Meadow Brook Baptist Church in Birmingham.

Another option is forming a small group and accessing the retreat in a home or similar location.

Since many caregivers can't be away for two days, there is also an option to stream it directly to a person's home.

The Friday night session, 6–9 p.m. CST, includes a virtual welcome followed by activities to get to know each other. Those streaming individually have a virtual equivalent.

On Saturday, 9 a.m.–3 p.m., there will be various sessions of teaching, time for reflection and journaling and more time to get to know the others attending.

Through the years since it began, many caregivers have been impacted greatly through the By the Brook retreat.

"What I love is when you see a mom who comes in, weary and worn out," Davidson said. "She comes in looking dejected and just beaten down on that Friday afternoon. Then you see her at the end of the event, and she's smiling and has new friends and has community that maybe she didn't have before."

The support doesn't end that Saturday evening. Rising Above has a multitude of other resources, including ongoing virtual support groups for men as well as women.

Friends who understand

"I have moms literally from around the world who are part of my Wednesday group," Davidson said. "You think you can't have community online, but you can. We are good friends. These are some of my dearest friends, even though many of them I've never met."

The group members check on each other throughout the week. They often say that though they haven't had friends in years, they now have friends who understand.

"This is life-changing," she said. "We're seeing lives change before our eyes and it's amazing."

To find out how to be a host church or to sign up for By the Brook, go to risingaboveministries.org/bythebrook.

Photo by DeAnna Hammond

(L to r) Becky Davidson, Cassaundra Kemp and Katie Whitmire participate in a small group table discussion on the set of By the Brook 2023. The annual virtual retreat geared toward caregivers will be held June 23–24 this year.

‘WE HAVE VALUE. WE HAVE PURPOSE.’

Unforsaken Ministry points addicts to redeeming, restorative work of Christ

By Tracy Riggs Frontz
The Alabama Baptist

Glenn Sandifer says the twists and turns of his own life help him better understand those seeking redemption from poor choices, and that’s why he began Unforsaken Ministry.

“God’s never given up on me,” said Sandifer, whose life included homelessness, drinking and drug abuse before he was saved and eventually called into ministry.

“I’ve done more rebelling against God than anybody,” said Sandifer, a member of NorthPark Baptist Church in Trussville. “If God can love me and forgive me, then who is out there that I cannot love and forgive?”

Based in Trussville but reaching as far as needed within the state, Unforsaken is a result of Sandifer’s experiences before getting saved and his life, career and ministry after giving his heart to Jesus.

The ministry seeks to be a conduit between individuals — most often addicts or those in prison — who need help and the people and programs who have the ability to help.

It provides practical support, walking alongside the person through recovery programs and back to a new life.

Photo courtesy of Unforsaken Ministry

Glenn Sandifer (right), founder of Unforsaken Ministry, serves alongside volunteers like Joe and Gwen Tatum. The Tatums recently drove Sandifer to Panama City to pick up a donated car and then helped him put in a new battery.

Collaborative ministry

There is no set group of people Sandifer works with or any specific program he uses.

Currently, he is working with prisoners to plan for new lives upon release. He uses the book “Crossroads: A Step-by-Step Guide Away from Addiction” by Edward Welch as an accountability tool with those he has helped in the past and with those he is mentoring now through Unforsaken Ministry.

Sandifer refers some people to outside agencies. He often collaborates with the Lovelady Center for women, Aletheia House for men and Center of Hope Recovery Center for men and women.

Through the monetary support of churches and individuals, the ministry also pays the intake fees for rehabilitation and helps with housing and furnishings after recovery whenever possible.

Sandifer readily admits he is not a trained counselor or an addiction specialist. He simply hopes to use his own past to give others hope.

“The only thing I have is personal experience of when I was an idiot,” Sandifer said, adding that he also has learned a lot from helping others through the years.

Sandifer knows it’s hard for loved ones to maintain a hands-off approach when a loved one is struggling with addiction. He also knows an addict must often reach rock bottom before he or she can make progress. Every situation is different, he said, and that guides his approach.

“I can’t tell them what to do because I’m not walking in their shoes, and their child is not my child. However, I tell them this, ‘I will support whatever decision you make and help as much as you’ll let me help,’” he said.

Sandifer gets especially excited when the worlds of addiction recovery cross with those of people raised in church.

To find out more about Unforsaken Ministry and hear testimonials, go to unforsakenministry.org.

One woman he worked with had spent nine months in jail. The first Sunday after her release, she attended church. The attendees saw her coming and made a receiving line for her at the door.

Changing attitudes

In another instance, Sandifer became acquainted with a young woman who had recently finished the program at the Lovelady Center.

The woman had told her boyfriend she wasn’t going to be with a man who doesn’t love God and made major changes in their relationship.

She began to attend church, and one Sunday, Sandifer noticed she was sitting in the same row as a woman who was, by all appearances, her opposite — a retired schoolteacher who had moved back home to take care of her mom.

Sandifer saw them worshipping together and thought, “That’s beautiful.”

Later the retiree came to Sandifer, admitting she had doubts at first why a woman like that would be in church — until God revealed to her that it was simply that they both needed Jesus.

“Some Sundays we have more ink on skin than in the bulletin,” Sandifer joked. “These people coming in, not feeling shunned but feeling accepted. It grows my heart.”

The message Unforsaken Ministry shares is that those who are being helped need to get to know who God is and what He says about them.

“We’re created in His image. That means we have value,” Sandifer said. “We have purpose.

“God doesn’t make losers. God doesn’t make failures. Do we fail sometimes? Yes, but that doesn’t have to be our identity.”

Connecting church members and missionaries

CrossPoint Church hosts ministry partners from eight countries across five continents to emphasize value of cooperation

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

After CrossPoint Church in Trussville paid off its mortgage in 2021, the church doubled down on its missions focus — investing $1.2 million in local, national and global missions in 2022.

But as they planned for 2023, the CrossPoint missions team, led by Buck Poole, minister of senior adults and missions, had an idea they thought would help the missions program grow even more, a twist on the church's annual missions expo.

Poole explained that CrossPoint typically begins the year by emphasizing missions opportunities through a missions expo, with booths set up around the church representing ministries and missions teams.

In that setup, church members can learn more about the various opportunities and sign up to participate.

But this year, CrossPoint brought the missionaries too.

"We brought 10 missions partners from eight different countries across five different continents here for four nights," Poole said. "Our thought was to let our folks have the opportunity to meet face-to-face with these partners we pray for and talk about as a church, to meet them and their families, and to really make personal connections."

The concept worked, he said.

Culturally themed meals

Each night for four nights, participants gathered for a culturally themed dinner that represented the evening's focal country. The menus were not announced ahead of time, Poole said, "kind of like when you're on a missions trip."

After dinner, everyone gathered in the worship center for a brief time of worship and prayer. Missions partners and their families read Psalm 117 each night in their native language and prayed for those in attendance and the work in each location.

Then everyone broke out into "missions trips," individual sessions led by missions partners.

"They could do whatever they wanted to do," Poole said. "One is a street evangelist, and he uses art and paintings to share the gospel. Another showed how he does outreach in Ecuador. Others talked about their ministries in Thailand, India and Uganda."

Children had a special area and missions activities too.

A prayer service on Wednesday night was especially meaningful, Poole said. About 400 participants spent time praying for the missions partners. The Holy Spirit's presence was evident, Poole said.

"It was a powerful moment to culminate the week of bringing these missionaries to our people," he said.

Photo courtesy of Buck Poole

Missionaries from around the world learn more about Birmingham's history during a visit to the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute. The missionaries were hosted by CrossPoint Church in January. They also visited 16th Street Baptist Church.

Photo courtesy of Buck Poole

Pastor Ryan Whitley (right) welcomes missions partners during the opening worship service of CrossPoint Church's 2023 Missions Expo. Each night of the expo featured missionaries praying in their native languages.

Greater connections

The overall result was a greater connection between missionaries and church members, Poole said. "The Lord worked through our missions partners," he said, "and we saw the Lord stirring in people's hearts for what he's doing around the world."

Poole recalled an encounter on the second night that captured the goal of the week.

A member came to him and said, "Missions has not ever been my thing, but my wife said we should come last night. I woke up this morning and I just couldn't wait to get back tonight!"

The missionaries were grateful too. "One of our missions partners from India came to me in tears and said, 'I've felt burned out, and the Lord has used this week to do exactly what I needed.' "

'New confidence'

Jenna Haynes, founder of Casa Gloria Children's Home in Guatemala, said she appreciated the effort put into hosting her and others during the week.

"These are the people who walk alongside us spiritually each and every day, through the ups and the downs," she said. "To literally get to come alongside them and get to know them, thank them and feel so much encouragement from them is refreshing and gives us a new confidence that when we go back to our countries and field of ministry, we are not alone."

Photo courtesy of Buck Poole

Pastor J.P. Beaudry of La Chapelle Quebec, a church plant in Quebec City, Canada, talks about ministry in his city during a breakout session.

Hundreds expressed interest in getting more involved in missions this year, with nearly 200 saying they'd like to go on an international missions trip.

Three young people wanted to talk more about full-time missions and ministry service, Poole said.

"This was something only the Lord could orchestrate," he added.

CrossPoint member Lloyd Wright agreed. Wright said that "prior to this missions expo, our missions partners were typewritten names on paper and pictures on the screen; now we are endeared to these people who serve in other countries. They are making a difference in difficult circumstances. Their natural voices have spoken to us in ways that videos can't."

Missions volunteers from CrossPoint are headed to Ecuador, Peru, Romania, Thailand, Guatemala, India, Quebec City and Atlanta this summer.

Jean-Philippe Beaudry, pastor of La Chapelle Church in Quebec City, who was in Birmingham in January, will welcome a team from CrossPoint in August. He said he values the partnership, which makes "a huge difference to us."

Poole said encouraging members to pray, give and go remains the church's focus.

"All believers are called to actively participate in the expansion of the Kingdom of God through making disciples of all nations," Poole said. "Our job as the local church is to continually equip and encourage them to do so. Thanks be to God, I believe that our Expo accomplished that."

> ***"We saw the Lord stirring in people's hearts for what He's doing around the world."***
>
> **Buck Poole**
> **minister of senior adults and missions, CrossPoint Church in Trussville**

Photo by Grace Thornton/The Alabama Baptist

Mat Alexander (left), pastor of FBC Gadsden, and Karen Lee (right), executive director of the Etowah Baptist Missions Center, stand by the center's missions bus. Each month the church holds a dental clinic, and the bus comes to provide families with additional services.

Missions bus allows closer connections with communities

(*continued from page 1*)

license — take the bus to churches in the association to partner with them as they provide ministry to the community.

For instance, when First Baptist Church Gadsden holds its monthly dental clinic at the church, the missions bus comes to provide the families with a variety of services in addition to tooth extractions.

Mat Alexander, pastor of FBC Gadsden and president of the board for the missions center, said having the bus on the church property during the clinic helps them serve their patients well.

More effective

He said it also offers a chance for the missions center to serve the county more effectively by coming alongside churches.

"It's been a really important asset to add to our ministry at the missions center to fulfill the mission we feel like God has given us," Alexander said.

At the missions center, volunteers and staff can meet needs and point people to the local churches, but the bus can make that connection closer.

"This allows not only for the missions center to serve the whole county but the churches to use the resources of the missions center to serve their communities through their church and make gospel connections and ultimately see people come to know Jesus through this ministry," he said.

Photo by Grace Thornton/The Alabama Baptist

When the center's missions bus makes its monthly stop on the campus of FBC Gadsden, it helps the church provide a dental clinic. Services include tooth extractions, a common need among those without insurance.

UPCOMING EVENTS
sponsored by the State Board of Missions

GroupLife workshops coming this summer

Daniel Edmonds says that 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.

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

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.

Financial Issues Conference in seven different locations

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.

It 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 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.

To register, visit alsbom.org/financial.

Famous Christians from previous centuries

Heroes of the Faith

Mohegan missionary Samson Occom ministered to New England Indians

Samson Occom (1723–1792) was a prominent Mohegan missionary who ministered to New England Indians. This year is the 300th anniversary of his birth.

Occom was the son of Joshua Tomacham and his wife Sarah of New London, Connecticut. A member of the Mohegan Nation, he was descended from Uncas, a Mohegan chief. (James Fenimore Cooper fictionally used Uncas as a Mohican Indian in his novel "The Last of the Mohicans.")

OCCOM

When he was a teenager, Occom converted during the Great Awakening. He wrote in his autobiography that he found "salvation through Jesus Christ, and was enabled to put my trust in Him alone. ... I found serenity and pleasure of soul in serving God."

He studied theology at Moor's Indian Charity School's Latin school, founded by Eleazar Wheelock, a Congregational minister. He learned to read and speak Latin, Greek and Hebrew.

In 1749 he became a teacher, preacher and judge among the Montaukett in Montauk, Long Island. He married Mary Fowler, a Montaukett woman. They had 10 children.

He was ordained as a Presbyterian minister in 1759. For two years, he traveled to New York to evangelize the Oneidas. He made converts and mediated conflicts between colonists and Native Americans.

When Occom returned to the Mohegan, Wheelock persuaded him to travel to England to raise funds for his charity school. Wheelock agreed to look after his family.

Occom sailed to England in December 1765 and returned in May 1768. Upon arriving, he accompanied evangelist George Whitefield to meet the Earl of Dartmouth, who contributed 50 guineas.

He met John Newton, pastor and writer of "Amazing Grace," and preached to King George III, who contributed 200 pounds for the school.

Occom was extremely popular throughout Great Britain. He preached about 400 sermons and drew large crowds. Portraits were made of him. He was a celebrity.

Misfortunes

When Occom returned to the colonies, he found his wife and children in poverty. Wheelock had used the money raised by Occom for the education of colonists instead of for Native Americans attending his school.

Occom's misfortunes continued as Wheelock and other colonists spread rumors that Occom was an alcoholic. Ironically, Occom preached temperance sermons.

After securing lands for a multi-tribal Indian settlement in Brothertown, New York, he died there in 1792. More than 300 Indians attended his funeral.

By Joanne Sloan

Joanne Sloan, a member of FBC Tuscaloosa, has been a published writer of articles and books for 30 years.

Made to Multiply

Gospel conversations training equips, encourages hesitant believers to share their faith

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Jason Jarvis said one of his favorite stories shows what it looks like to move from "I want to" to "I am."

It started with a gospel conversations training led by Sam Neugent, who serves with e3 Partners.

"We had a gentleman in our church who was 76, and he said he had been a Christian for 65 years," said Jarvis, pastor of Calera Baptist Church. "He had invited people to church before but never shared the gospel with someone. The week after the training, for the very first time, he invited someone to give their life to Christ."

Jarvis said the training has also helped others in the congregation who have been frightened or hesitant to share the gospel.

"It's been very meaningful for our church and very beneficial," he said.

Neugent said that's his hope for gospel conversation training, which he leads as part of e3's Made to Multiply initiative.

411 tool

The training is built around the 411 tool, which uses questions like: Why should I go out into the harvest field? To whom should I talk? What should I say? When should I get started? When should I start praying and for whom should I pray? And when should I train someone else in what I've learned?

After walking through these and teaching the 3 Circles evangelism strategy, Neugent teaches those present how to begin helping new believers walk down the road of following Jesus.

"If you lead somebody to Christ, it's your job to disciple them," he said.

Photo courtesy of Sam Neugent

As the United States is growing more unchurched, Sam Neugent works with e3 to help them reach their goal to train 1 million Americans to share their faith by the end of 2026.

Neugent has seen this type of training impact believers and fuel evangelism and discipleship time after time. Before transitioning into stateside evangelism training, he served in a role with e3 in which he trained missions teams to share their faith in Latin American countries.

Now, as the United States is growing more unchurched, Neugent is working with e3 to help them reach their goal to train 1 million Americans to share their faith by the end of 2026.

So far, he's led 14 one-day training sessions.

At the end of each session, the group goes out together to knock on doors in a neighborhood and talk with people about faith in Jesus.

"At a recent training, we talked to 50 people in one hour," Neugent said. "Some of those people told us to get off their property. Some were friendly and listened but weren't ready, and some were already believers. But five people we talked to said they wanted to follow Christ."

More confident

Jarvis said the training helped many in his congregation feel more confident in how to get a conversation from "hello" to "let me tell you about Jesus."

"Sam knows how to push you forward and challenge you," he said.

"It helps encourage people to get out of their shell and do what we really, deep down, want to do. I think every single person wants to see people come to Christ but may need some encouragement to go from 'I want to' to 'I am.'"

For more information or to schedule a gospel conversations training, contact Sam Neugent at sam.neugent@e3partners.org or 205-835-7266.

UPCOMING EVENTS

sponsored by the State Board of Missions

Senior Adult Leadership Training offered in two locations in August

Want to involve senior adults in your church more effectively and reach those in your community too?

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.

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

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, also will 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.

Attending SBC in New Orleans?

If you're planning to attend the Southern Baptist Convention and related meetings in New Orleans, be sure to stop by the State Board of Missions booth in the exhibit hall, right behind Lifeway.

The exhibit hall will be open on Sunday, June 11, 3–7 p.m.; Monday and Tuesday, June 12 and 13, 8 a.m.–6 p.m.; and Wednesday, June 14, 8 a.m.–3 p.m.

Come by and connect with other Alabama Baptists, pick up a giveaway or two, and join the celebration as we commemorate 200 years of Alabama Baptist missions and ministry!

Next Intentional Leader Series set for July 27 at the SBOM office

The next Intentional Leader Series, set for July 27, will focus on the Preacher aspect of the four Ps of leadership: Person, Pastor, Preacher and Pathfinder.

The event will be 9 a.m.–2 p.m. at the State Board of Missions office facility in Prattville, and will feature Hershael York, pastor of Buck Run Baptist Church in Frankfort, Kentucky, and dean of Southern Seminary's School of Theology.

The $8 cost includes lunch. Register at leadercareal.org/ils.

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR
Newbridge Missionary Baptist Church in Asheville, North Carolina, a member of the Southern Baptist Convention, prayerfully seeks a man who will preach the inerrant Word of God and has a heart for missions. Email resumé to: NewbridgePST@gmail.com by Aug. 31.

PASTOR
Good Hope Baptist Church, Eclectic, Alabama, is in search of a full-time pastor. Interested applicants can email resumés to: tonymacec13@yahoo.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR
Paden Baptist Church, 900 Padenreich Ave., Gadsden, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking resumés for bivocational pastor. Please send resumés 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 OF STUDENTS & RECREATION
Heritage Baptist Montgomery is receiving resumés for minister of students and recreation. This team member will develop and implement discipleship strategies for 6th grade through college as well as manage the daily operation of our fitness center/recreation ministry. Full time with insurance and retirement benefits. Send resumés to: Jennifer Foster at jennifer@hbcm.net.

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.

FINANCIAL CLERK
Financial clerk needed. Part time average of 15 hours weekly. Payables, payroll, contribution entry, etc. Send resumés to: tplant@sbcandalusia.com.

SIGNS

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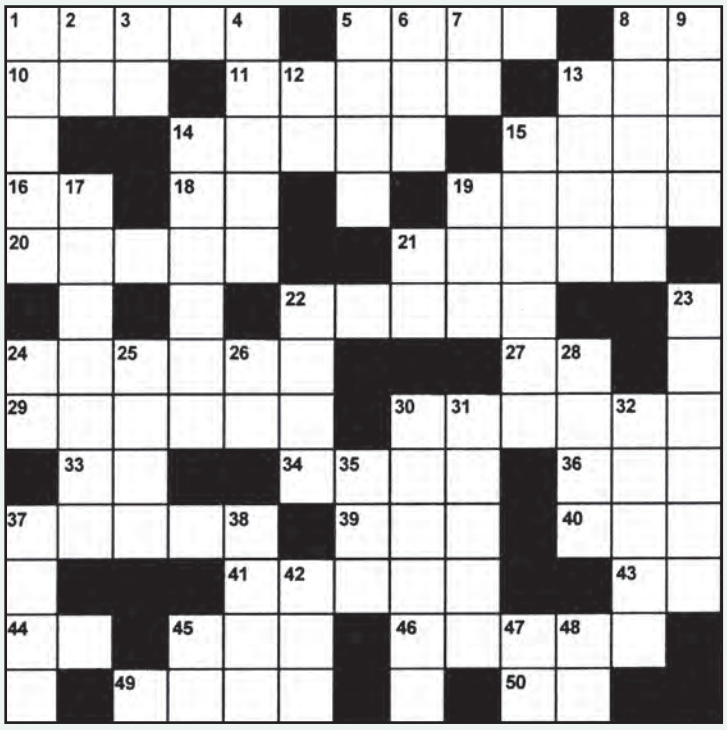
MINISTRIES

POTTER'S HOUSE MINISTRIES
Make a lasting impact. Support Potter's House Ministries. Help us start Christian children's homes for abandoned children in Romania. Donate today — pottershouseministries.org for more information.

CHRISTIAN crossword



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ACROSS

1. Omri ... did ____ than all that before him. (1 Kings 16:25)
5. Fools die for ____ of wisdom. (Prov. 10:21)
8. ____ are his people. (Ps. 100:3)
10. Tempted like as we ____. (Heb. 4:15)
11. Migratory birds.
13. Shortened form of a place to wash up.
14. The ____ of sin is death. (Rom. 6:23)
15. The women ____ hangings for the grove. (2 Kings 23:7)
16. Compass direction.
18. Anno Domini. (abbr.)
19. He that ____eth is like a wave of the sea. (James 1:6)
20. One way to move a boat.
21. Desert places with water and vegetation.
22. Let us ____ and be sober. (1 Thess. 5:6)
24. If he ____ ____ lamb. (Lev. 3:7; 2 words)
27. Children of Gad called the altar ____. (Josh. 22:34)
29. Is not her younger sister ____ than she? (Judg. 15:2)
30. Your wives shall be ____. (Ex. 22:24)
33. Railroad. (abbr.)
34. ____ I go unto him that sent me. (John 7:33)
36. Thy ____ goats have not cast their young. (Gen. 31:38)
37. I Daniel was mourning three full ____. (Dan. 10:2)
39. The Lord is with thee, thou mighty ____. (Judg. 6:12)
40. Vietnamese new year celebration.
41. If he shall gain the ____ world. (Matt. 16:26)
43. Love thy neighbor ____ thyself. (Matt. 19:19)
44. Egyptian sun god.
45. The path of virtuous conduct in Confucianism.
46. A highly prized game fish.
49. Where David ... and his men were ____ to haunt. (1 Sam. 30:31)
50. New Testament. (abbr.)

DOWN

1. Cautions.
2. Northwest state. (abbr.)
3. Symbol for rhenium.
4. Goodness gracious!
5. Blessed are ye that ____ now. (Luke 6:21)
6. Biblical word for donkey.
7. Compass direction.
8. The ship was covered with the ____. (Matt. 8:24)
9. Christ abideth for ____. (John 12:34)
12. For example. (abbr.)
13. The ____ of the Father is not in him. (1 John 2:15)
14. Equipment used to help patients move around.
15. Have ____ their robes, and made them white. (Rev. 7:14)
17. Mightest war a good ____. (1 Tim. 1:18)
19. Women's Army Corps. (abbr.)
21. Old Testament. (abbr.)
22. A growth on the skin.
23. Strong bulls of Bashan have ____ me. (Ps. 22:12, plural)
24. He that is ____ God heareth. (John 8:47)
25. It rained ____ and brimstone. (Luke 17:29)
26. Regarding. (abbr.)
28. Does (biblical variation).
30. I rejoice because my ____ was great. (Job 31:25)
31. Set the cherubims within the ____ house. (1 Kings 6:27)
32. Except a corn of ____ fall into the ground. (John 12:24)
35. Health Maintenance Organization. (abbr.)
37. And ____ not a little comforted. (Acts 20:12)
38. And the ____, and the pelican. (Lev. 11:18)
42. Not cold.
47. The head of Elisha ... stand ____ him this day. (2 Kings 6:31)
48. Utah. (abbr.)

All Bible verses are KJV unless otherwise specified.

WORD search

ABEDNEGO
ANCIENT OF DAYS
ANGEL
BEAR
BEASTS
BELSHAZZAR
BRONZE
COURTIER
CYRUS
DANIEL
DARIUS
DREAMS
EAGLE
ENVY
EXILES
FAITHFUL
FEAST
FURNACE
GOD
HAND
INTERPRET
KING
LAW
LEOPARD
LIONS DEN
MENE
MESHACH
PARSIN
PERSIANS
PLOT
PRAY
SAVED
SHADRACH
TAMED
TEKEL
UNCLEAN
VISIONS
WRITING

M	T	A	N	G	E	L	W	D	N	H	F	R	P	B	C
B	T	Z	E	J	P	R	Q	D	L	M	C	K	E	N	K
N	E	N	L	L	L	M	E	T	E	M	L	L	R	V	Z
P	V	A	O	U	T	E	Z	I	D	V	S	B	S	Y	S
Y	K	T	R	B	F	L	K	L	T	H	A	M	I	Y	Y
M	E	S	H	A	C	H	E	E	A	R	C	S	A	Q	I
P	N	L	Q	T	L	I	T	Z	T	H	U	D	N	Z	N
H	Z	D	B	P	N	V	Z	I	C	R	F	O	S	B	T
L	A	N	R	A	A	A	D	A	A	O	Q	T	C	E	E
F	W	N	D	A	R	R	R	R	T	F	X	S	Q	A	R
Z	R	R	D	L	P	D	S	N	E	R	K	A	E	S	P
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L	V	I	S	I	O	N	S	G	L	S	E	L	I	X	E

Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

DANIEL 12:3

Florida first responder sees career as calling

For Tommy Neiman, firefighter and paramedic, the theme for his vocational calling has become about challenging first responders to be believers and believers to be first responders.

"I remember following firetrucks, any vehicle with lights and sirens going, as best as I could to find out where they were going," Neiman said. "That intrigue led to me going into that kind of work full time after college. I really felt that God's calling in my life was to see the Lord work through my responses."

Numerous emergency calls throughout his career have provided clarity that spiritual opportunities could happen at any time.

One example came when an emergency call resulted in Neiman visiting his childhood next-door neighbor, who was dying of cancer. Neiman had the chance to pray with and minister to this neighbor, with whom he'd had a negative relationship years before.

"[This emergency call] kind of made me look at my career in a new light in seeing that any call I go on, I didn't want to take for granted and just go through the call," Neiman said.

Spiritual impact

"It just seems like a lot of calls that I had you could just clearly see God's presence on the scenes in one way or another or His divine appointments by the impact that it had."

Neiman said God is still using him to share His Word and to encourage others, despite the tragedies and the emergencies that they're going through.

Although no longer working full time "on the line" as a firefighter and paramedic, Neiman still occasionally responds to calls if needed and helps with the training division of the St. Lucie County (Florida) Fire Department.

Submitted photo

Even as a child, Tommy Neiman was fascinated with the lights and sirens of emergency vehicles. He now uses his career as a first responder to minister to others.

Additionally, he has been ministering as a chaplain since his ordination in 1997 and currently serves as a staff associate at the South Beach Campus of Westside Church in Fort Pierce, Florida.

Writing ministry

In 2000, Neiman compiled several noteworthy emergency calls from his career into a book titled "Sirens for the Cross." The book has since been updated several times. The latest version, published in 2019, features more than 15 stories from Neiman's career.

Neiman eventually started his own ministry organization based around encouraging first responders also titled "Sirens for the Cross."

He has spoken at more than 400 churches, often on nights when the church would be recognizing the first responders in their congregation.

Through the ministry, Neiman developed the theme of challenging first responders to be believers, and believers to be first responders.

"I really felt like God had placed me in this role and because He fulfilled my desire to be a career first responder, then I would serve Him through it," he said. (Baptist Press)

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‘The harvest is plentiful’

Missions trip inspires Alabama Baptist church in Mobile to more than double LMCO

Luke 4:18 Fellowship in Mobile gave $20,662 to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering in 2021 — more than double the previous year’s gift. Why?

Because the senior pastor went on a short-term missions trip, serving with International Mission Board personnel in South Asia, and the whole church caught a vision for the work of Southern Baptist missionaries.

David Bullock, pastor of Luke 4:18 Fellowship, became convinced on a missions trip partnering with IMB workers James and Angela Andretti, that he wanted his church to partner with international missions financially and through short-term trips.

That was exactly what associate pastor Randy Presley had hoped would happen when he, Bullock and a church member with a heart for the nations joined in the core missionary task alongside the Andrettis.

Bullock said he’s been a Southern Baptist his whole life, but this trip was his first time on the ground, up close and personal with what the IMB is doing.

Submitted photo

Members of Luke 4:18 Fellowship in Mobile worship during a missions trip to Zambia last summer. After pastor David Bullock went on a missions trip to South Asia, the church more than doubled its Lottie Moon Christmas Offering giving.

In the field

“Seeing it showed me how structured the IMB is and how well the IMB does when it comes to supporting their missionaries and what they’re doing on the field,” he said.

The Andrettis told him how the IMB cared for their son and prioritized his health when there was a medical emergency.

Bullock also got to witness firsthand what continued discipleship and pastoral training looks like in the South Asian context.

“The trip really demonstrated for me not only that they’re doing a phenomenal job, but that every penny we give to the IMB is going to be used properly for the Kingdom,” he said. He is excited to send more of his members overseas to see how the Andrettis are reaching the world from South Asia.

“The harvest is plentiful there. God is moving. And wherever the harvest is, we want to be a part of it as well,” Bullock said.

“We’ve always been a giving church. I want us to focus on not just being a giving church, but a going church.”

Submitted photo

Pastor David Bullock (left) says serving with IMB workers gave him a new perspective.

Presley had been convinced of the value of partnership with the IMB for years, leading his former church on more than 25 short-term missions trips to serve in South Asia.

He’d also led that church to prioritize giving. Now, Presley serves at a church that’s less than 15 years old.

The church has been supportive of giving — just more focused on giving to individual and independent missionaries. Presley was hired to grow the church’s missions program.

“I see missions as an opportunity for us to disciple our people and expand their worldview,” he said. “I want the experience to stretch them outside of their comfort zone to a place where they have to trust the Lord ... to see the Lord use them.”

He said he wants his church members to come home asking themselves either how they can translate what they learned into everyday life at home or whether they’re called to the nations.

Presley was convinced that once Bullock experienced the ministry in South Asia himself, he’d also catch a passion for partnership.

Bullock got to witness “the strategic partnership” the Andrettis have in South Asia, said Presley. “Everything James was doing was on purpose. As [Bullock] heard more of that, he got more excited.”

The Alabama team did more than watch and listen. They came alongside the Andrettis in the field.

By the end of the trip, Bullock was as excited about partnership as Presley was. And they were both ready to go home and share this vision with their church. Two more trips are planned, and the partnership between the missionaries and the church is set to flourish.

Personal connection

Earlier this year, the Andrettis joined Luke 4:18 for a missions conference where they connected with the church members personally and talked about their ministry.

The Andrettis shared how generosity from churches like Luke 4:18 impacts what they do overseas.

Gifts through the Cooperative Program and/or LMCO help provide gospel access that leads to gospel belief and church planting and multiplication, they emphasized.

The ultimate goal continues to be helping more churches understand the role they play in taking the gospel to the nations and introducing the lost to Jesus. (IMB)

EDITOR’S NOTE — Some names may have been changed for security reasons.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For June 11

Explore the Bible

By Jay T. Robertson, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Systematic Theology, University of Mobile

JUDGES
Jeremiah 2:1–13

Remembered? (1–3)

This is one of Jeremiah's early sermons. In the introduction to the sermon, he describes young love in a poetic way. The love was not between two people but between God and Judah. This concept is woven throughout Scripture.

God is portrayed as the husband and His people collectively as the bride.

They are no longer newlyweds, but God remembers when they were. When they were newlyweds, the bride was faithful. God remembers when they were in the wilderness. It was not a perfect relationship, but on the whole the people remained loyal until Joshua led them out of the wilderness and into the promised land.

Whenever Israel would harvest grain, the first fruit was set apart for God. It was dedicated to the Lord. It was holy. It was so special that if anyone came along and ate some of what was to be dedicated to the Lord, he was guilty.

God was saying to Israel that all the world is His, but Israel is special. They belonged to the Lord just as the first fruits belonged to Him. Israel was dedicated to the Lord, and as with the first fruits, there would be more fruit to follow with a future greater harvest that would come from among the nations.

God also declared that if anyone touched His people, He would destroy them. God did wipe out the nations before His people. He drove out anyone who came against them.

Forgotten? (4–8)

God remembers the way things used to be, but the people of Judah had forgotten. The leaders forgot and stopped asking about the God who brought them out of Egypt.

They forgot about the God who led an entire nation through the wilderness and into the fertile promised land.

Their rulers no longer knew the Lord. The shepherds who were to lead them to God were leading them to false gods.

How did this happen? The nation's leaders did not lead in truth.

After Jericho and Ai were defeated, Joshua read the law to the Israelites (Josh. 8:34–35). But the law of Moses was forgotten.

Nearly 700 years after Joshua, Josiah rediscovered the law and read it to the people.

Remember, Jeremiah was ministering during the reign of Josiah. He was trying to remind the people of the way things were and encourage them not to forget God.

The leaders who were to lead the people to remain loyal to the Lord no longer sought the Lord themselves. As the leaders go, so goes the nation.

If the Scripture is not prominent in people's minds, they will forget that God relates to His people through the Scriptures. Blessed is the person who obeys God's Word.

But the person who forsakes God's instruction is like the chaff the wind blows away (see Ps. 1:4). The leaders and the people of the land had forgotten what God had done for them.

Exchanged? (9–13)

In these verses God assumes the role of prosecutor instead of defendant. He charges that other nations did not change their gods, even though they were not really gods, but Israel did.

She exchanged her glorious God for worthless idols. The people abandoned the fountain of living water for cracked cisterns that are not able to hold water (v. 13). They looked to idols that were powerless to provide for their needs.

"I brought you into a plentiful land to enjoy its ... good things. But when you came in, you defiled my land."

Jeremiah 2:7

Bible Studies for Life

Roy Ciampa, Ph.D.
Armstrong Chair of Religion, Samford University

MOSES AND JOSHUA
Numbers 27:12–23

Moses's life would soon be over, and leadership for the next generation would be needed.

We have lessons to learn from the way Joshua was prepared to lead once Moses's ministry had ended.

Seek God's direction in who will carry on after you. (12–17)

In verses 12–14, Moses is reminded that he will not be able to enter into the promised land; he could only see the finish line from a distance.

Most never have a personal warning about their impending death as Moses did.

We are reminded not to wait until the end to prepare leadership that will continue in our absence since we never know when "the end" will come for us (see Ps. 39:4). We must constantly work to prepare gifted leaders to advance God's Kingdom purposes.

That the Lord "gives breath ('ruach,' Hebrew for breath, wind or spirit) to all" reminds us that God intimately knows and cares about each person He has created. This is related to the fact that Joshua is "a man who has the Spirit ('ruach') in him."

God provided Joshua with the spiritual qualifications for the task ahead of him as a reflection of His care for all His people.

Leaders are often described in the Bible as shepherds, and in verse 17 the leadership role that Moses has filled — and that Joshua will fill — is described in language taken directly from the role of a shepherd.

Disciple and empower the one you mentor. (18–20)

Joshua had been one of the men chosen to spy out the promised land and one of only two of them who trusted that God would give Israel success. Moses had worked with Joshua for more than 40 years and had seen his faithfulness and developed him as an effective colleague in the work given to them by God.

People who have been blessed by the work of a great leader often have difficulty adjusting to new leaders when they begin.

It is important for established leaders to use their influence to publicly endorse and empower qualified and capable newer leaders so that they don't have to build up their credibility from scratch.

The Lord directed Moses to do this for Joshua. In this case, the very deliberate process entailed Moses laying his hands on Joshua and commissioning him, not in some private setting, but in the sight of all the people.

"So the Lord said to Moses, 'Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him.'"

Numbers 27:18

Publicly affirm God's work in the life of the one you mentor. (21–23)

God reinforces the directions given in verses 18–20.

The way verses 22–23 repeat much of the language found in verses 18–19 emphasizes Moses's careful obedience.

"Take Joshua" in verse 18 finds its response in "he took Joshua" in verse 22.

"Lay your hands on him" in verse 18 finds its perfect response in the words "laid his hands on him" in verse 23, and "commission him" in verse 19 is matched by "commissioned him" in verse 23.

The importance of affirming God's work in the life of Moses' successor is stressed by the repetition of the precise language used in God's commands.

The importance of preparing younger leaders extends from the time of Moses to our time and even to the end of the age. It requires prayer, planning and intentionality.

May God help each of us recognize how we can mentor those God might use when our days are over.

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Tracy Riggs Frontz
The Alabama Baptist

Christy Nockels emerges from struggles thanks to 'God who sees'

It's easy to believe that certain people have it all together — especially those who are seen on stages, heard through podcasts or met by way of books. However, Christy Nockels, mother of three, worship leader, author and podcaster, admits that at times it's just the opposite.

"[During early motherhood] I couldn't do it all anymore, and I had to lay some things down. What He taught me — how to really trust Him with my career and trust Him with the dreams and plans — is He's better than all of that. Honestly, [it was a time of] learning to be seen and loved by Him in my kitchen when I'm not being productive other than doing dishes," she revealed.

She was taught in church that everyone should steward their gifts well, so Nockels felt an expectation to keep serving at the same level through her music and encouragement ministry after having children as before.

'Ministry of motherhood'

During that time the Lord showed her she needed to rest, trust Him and stop striving, or she would miss the "ministry of motherhood."

"The Lord asked me to lay down my career for about five years.

CHRISTY NOCKELS

Photo courtesy of Meshali Mitchell

"Looking back on it, He allowed me to hit a wall and realize that I couldn't do it all," she explained.

What she learned during this time — to rest, trust and surrender — resulted in the 2021 book "The Life You Long For: Learning to Live from a Heart of Rest."

These concepts have become the overriding theme of all the aspects of her ministry.

In February, Nockels released her first full-length album in five years — "This Is the Hour." The album continues with the idea of surrender, trust and rest, but it emphasizes communicating with God.

"Home" is the central song of the album, and it came out of another season of struggle.

During 2021, Nockels battled major physical issues while supporting her mother who had cancer.

She finally told her husband, Nathan, she was exhausted and wanted to quit. Even though they had already committed to the album, there were many days she couldn't even get up and do the basics.

One night she found herself alone on the porch with only her two dogs. Her husband and children were away for the evening. Though she hadn't stopped consistently reading her Bible and praying, she realized it had been a few months since she had fully expressed her heart to God.

She remembered, "I realized that I had been self-protecting ... from total surrender [to God] in that season. I just started talking to Him on the porch, and it felt like David and the Psalms — the lowest of lows, highest of highs."

'Laying it all out there'

"I was kind of like laying it all out there for the Lord — my frustrations, my lament, my sadness, my fear, my anxiety," Nockels continued. "It really was this homecoming moment that needed to happen, honestly, to rescue me as His daughter."

She even told God she was glad they were "having this talk" because she thought she was dying and would see Him soon. She cried out to Him, asking what He wanted her to do.

'Come home'

And in that moment, He answered.

She elaborated, "In my spirit I heard Him say this, 'This right here is what I want you to do. I want you to talk to Me and communicate with Me. Be My kid. Be My daughter. Come home to Me. Cry out to Me. Tell Me all about it.

"The singing and the podcast — all that stuff's great, but if we don't have this right here, if you can't open up to Me and trust Me and talk to Me, then you don't have anything.'"

"I came home to Him on the porch that night," she continued. "The only way I know how to describe it is that I saw Him see me. The 'God who sees' saw me in that moment. ... I really do think it rescued me."

She told God that even if He didn't heal the physical issues she was dealing with, she chose to love Him anyway and again surrendered to His will.

A few nights later, she woke up in the middle of the night singing the first line of "Home." She wrote almost the entire song that night, saying, "This melody is making me want to sing again."

Nockels summed up what she's learned so far through this difficult season of life — "It's more important that I'm doing what I'm doing from Him, rather than [simply] for Him."

For more information about Nockels' book, podcast, tour, and music, go to christynockels.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.

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