

The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.



Photo by Doug Rogers

Judy Phillips (right), Covington Christian Women's Job Corps co-coordinator, prays with a recent CWJC graduate at the Christian Service Center in Andalusia.

God's miracles

Christian Job Corps gives practical help, 'hope in the form of Jesus'

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Elaine Dickson says a lot of stories have come from her years with Christian Job Corps, a ministry of Alabama Woman's Missionary Union, but one woman's story in particular leaps to the top.

The woman wasn't originally from the U.S., and when Dickson met her, she had recently taken her

children and fled from an abusive marriage.

"We worked alongside her and gave her the confidence she needed," Dickson said.

Through CJC's job and life skills training, the young mother got a college degree and started a career that could support her family. She also learned from a mentor and grew in her faith.

Dickson, who serves as Alabama

CJC coordinator, said that's what CJC is about — watching God work miracles in people's lives.

New name, same mission

CJC — now incorporating both women's (formerly Christian Women's Job Corps) and men's sites under that name — is supported by Alabama WMU and is funded in part through the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering.

"What I have gained from serving in Christian Job Corps was the opportunity to see God's power like I had never experienced before," she said. "There are lots of stories."

Dickson first got involved in 2000 as a volunteer at CWJC of Madison County — the oldest continuous CJC site in Alabama — which is hosted by her church, First Baptist Huntsville.

(See 'Undergirded' page 8)

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Photo courtesy of Brian Burdette

Dentist William "Bill" Powell (left) has been on 20 missions trips with either Kelli Burdette (right), who is part of the nursing faculty at Samford University, or members of her family.

Shades Mountain Baptist dentist takes 45th medical missions trip

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Back in 2015, we shared the story of William "Bill" Powell, a dentist who was named the year's Outstanding Alabama Baptist State Missions Volunteer. He was honored then for seeing missions as a "way of life."

He hasn't stopped. In late July, he went on his 45th missions trip.

"I started going on trips in 1981," said Powell, a member of Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Vestavia Hills.

He got a phone call from a gum specialist who asked him if he'd ever thought about going to South America to do dental work for people in need. Powell said no but that he'd pray about it. He quickly realized something — he didn't mean what he said.

"It hit me that those were empty prayers," he said. "I had a talk with the Lord, and I called the man back and told him I would go. That was trip number one."

There have been 44 since, 24 of which have been to Brazil. His most recent was to Peru, where he and

a team from a number of churches hosted a medical clinic in the jungle.

Brian Burdette, pastor of Central Baptist Church in Gardendale, said he and his wife, Kelli — a registered nurse and member of the nursing faculty at Samford University —

have collectively gone on 20 trips with Powell, and on the most recent trip to Peru, three of their sons went also.

"Missions is his heart; that's what God put him here to do," Burdette said. "Dentistry, yes, but God put him here to use dentistry for a purpose."

Powell has story after story of how he's seen God work over the years, from helping a boy walk with leg braces for the first time to see-

ing a man healed miraculously of a spear wound. And they've seen people saved as Powell and others have preached. On this most recent trip, with Burdette preaching, around 500 professed new faith in Christ.

"All 45 trips all have their own memories, and nothing can take those away," Powell said. "I love to tell the stories of what God has done."



Photo courtesy of Brian Burdette

William "Bill" Powell (left), a dentist and member of Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Vestavia Hills, treats a patient on a medical missions trip to Peru in late July.

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The crossword puzzle can be found on page 15.

The Alabama Baptist

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

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RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

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



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Keeping Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief prepped and ready

My friend cried off and on every day for a week following the Aug. 10 tragedy in Maui's historic town of Lahaina.

She lives in Alabama and had experienced the beauty of the area for the first time a little more than a month prior.

"We are all so devastated," she said, sharing the pain she's feeling as a result of the wildfire and how hard it is to be thousands of miles away from family members who live on the island.

Her family and the new friends she met there are safe, but they are connected to the devastation on many levels. Several lost acquaintances, their homes and some businesses.

While we can't really grasp what it's like to be living through it all, many can empathize, like my friend, because of close connections to the state of Hawaii or maybe because of having endured another type of natural disaster.

And we can all look for ways to help and keep the people of Hawaii in our prayers, especially the families of the more than 110 people who have died.

Page 6 provides an update on Southern Baptist Disaster Relief

efforts taking place. At press time, no reports of church damage had surfaced and much of the focus remained on rescue and recovery efforts.

As new DR projects launched in Hawaii, existing work continued on the opposite side of the U.S. in New England following the devastating flooding from the Aug. 8 storms.

Partnership efforts

Leaders from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions are working with officials of other state conventions and the North American Mission Board to develop a long-term strategy to help churches get back on

their feet. Churches in Vermont especially need assistance.

More details will be available soon about how Alabama Baptist churches, missions teams, disciple-making groups and others can partner with churches in New England.

The same is true with needs that will surface in Hawaii.

With mid-August through October historically being the busiest part of hurricane season, DR volunteers also will need to be prepared for what could happen in the Gulf or on the Atlantic seaboard in the coming weeks.

The Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering is a great

way to help with each of these and future DR efforts. A portion of the funds received goes to Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief work. Read more about the offering and the Week of Prayer for State Missions on page 8.

Representing Christ

Another way to make a difference is to go through DR training and carve out time to serve when disasters strike. Learn more at sldr.org.

Those serving in DR like to say they are "giving a cup of cold water in Jesus' name" and when you watch them at work, they certainly represent all of us well in the effort.

The Alabama Baptist welcomes veteran television news and sports anchor Ken Lass to the correspondent team

Supporting the Phil Campbell Bobcats in the late 1980s and the University of Alabama Crimson Tide in the early 1990s while a student at each school meant I also loved to keep up with media coverage related to my teams.

One of the sports anchors I followed consistently was WVTM (NBC) 13's Ken Lass.

Like so many others in central Alabama and beyond, I connected with Ken. He became a friend even though we had never met

and wouldn't meet until recently.

And now, nearly 40 years after first encountering Ken via TV news, it's an honor to welcome him as a contributor to The Alabama Baptist (both print and online) and launch his new column — Lass Words. You'll find it on page 12.

A bit of his journey

Ken served on the NBC 13 sports desk for 17 years, then moved to anchor the morning and midday news shows until 2006 when he left to

co-host the morning drive radio show on WDJC-FM before trying out other opportunities. He eventually ended up back in broadcast journalism (CBS 42 and again at NBC 13) and sitting at the anchor desk until he retired in 2016.

Ken and his wife, Sharon, live in Trussville where he serves as a deacon at First Baptist Church.

He also is a member of the board of directors of Pathways Professional Counseling.

—Jennifer Davis Rash

Your Voice



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

Lessons learned in the trenches of parenting a teen

By Shawn Hendricks

The Alabama Baptist

Before I throw a pity party about parenting a teenager in 2023, let's be clear: it's always been a challenge — with or without the internet and today's cultural challenges.

Well over 100 years ago, Mark Twain said, "When a child turns 12, he should be kept in a barrel and fed through a bung hole, until he reaches 16 ... at which time you plug the bung hole."

I can't help but wonder what he'd say today.

No big newsflash that parenting a teenager isn't easy — and at times crazy difficult. While that statement isn't groundbreaking or anything new, I need to apologize to my wife.

A few weeks ago, she wanted to deploy a similar declaration on Facebook while celebrating our daughter's 15th birthday.

Social media

I advised against it for a couple reasons. First, we have one child, so I didn't expect we'd get much sympathy from parents whose families are closer to the size of the Brady Bunch.

Also, I didn't want her to risk getting "mom shamed" (yea, it's a real thing) by those who thought she was throwing her kid under the bus on her birthday.

Did I overthink it? Probably, but parenting seems particularly treacherous these days — especially with social media. I recall another parent declaring that "Snapchat is from the devil."

Sometimes, I can't help but agree. With that said, we eventually allowed our daughter to have an account — following many conversations about the dangers. Sigh. It's complicated.

All that to say, I've learned some lessons along the way — mostly through trial and a lot of error.

No formula

First, I've accepted there isn't a formula on parenting — I've really tried to find it. I've read a lot of books and articles about parenting and how kids are leaving the Church when they go off to college.

But we all are coming to the table with different stories, personalities, strengths — and plenty of weaknesses.

I get frustrated when I see memes and social media posts on parenting that declare there is only one way to handle education, sports, internet use and screen time, clothing choices, etc. There isn't a one-size-fits-all solution. This is where a lot of prayer, Scripture and guidance from the Holy Spirit comes in handy to help navigate each situation.

Second, I've learned that it's OK to admit when you mess up.

You're going to make mistakes and say and do dumb things as a parent.

It usually seems to help when I acknowledge that I didn't handle a particular situation well. I've found that during these teen years I'm doing more apologizing —

while also learning where I need to stand my ground and change course in other situations.

Third, the earlier you can talk about the important things, the better. If an opportunity surfaces to address a sticky topic, don't miss it.

Even if it's a little awkward, or if I fumble over my words, I've found that it's usually better to get something on the record about an important topic.

You can circle back if you need to clarify something. Don't let the internet and social media be the lone voice on the issues that really matter.

Pointing to the Word

Ultimately, you have to carefully pick the hills you are going to die on. While it's tempting to lead with "no," it's usually better to go with "how about this instead?"

The key is to keep pointing to the Word and praying for your family every day.

Yes, parenting can be CRAZY difficult — and it's OK to admit that.

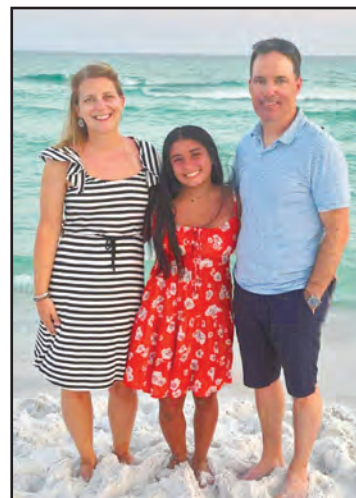


Photo courtesy of Shawn Hendricks
Shawn, Stephanie and Laura Hendricks on vacation near Destin, Florida.

Letters to the Editor

My wife and I are avid readers of The Alabama Baptist paper. I'm 72, and I started reading the paper when I was in my 20s because my parents always subscribed to the paper.

I learned early on it pays to read The Alabama Baptist. There have been hundreds of encouraging articles in the paper along with keeping us abreast of newsworthy stories and news.

Keep up the excellent work you do as our editor-in-chief of The Alabama Baptist!

Dennis Stastka
Robertsdale

Your recent work in The Alabama Baptist has been exceptional. Thank you, and congratulations to the entire team for all the hard work.

Michael Searcy
Canton, Georgia

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“Pray that God’s Church shows up in a big way and ministers to the hurting people of Maui and Lahaina.”

JOHN WILLIAMS

Co-director of disaster relief for the Hawaii Pacific Baptist Convention

“Football will one day end. Life will be based on much more than football ... one thing that can’t be taken from me is my personal relationship with Jesus,” **Kirk Cousins**, quarterback for the Minnesota Vikings.

“[A lot of men] are frustrated because they know in their gut they should be leading: family, church, community and nation,” said **Don Bell**, pastor of Bethsaida Baptist Church in Wilcox County. “It is a great concern that [they] don’t know how to carry themselves and don’t understand manhood. But there’s nothing in our society that couldn’t be fixed if men of faith, biblical men, stand together and lead. It’s time for men to lead again and older men to bring the younger men up.”

“We believe that every child deserves a loving and supportive home environment, and we are dedicated to providing that,” said **Jeremy Woods**, who moved to Romania in 2015 and started the ministry Potter’s House Ministries with his wife, Magda.

“Children are exposed to things at a much earlier age now,” said **Rachel Moore**, director of Discovery Clubs, after-school Bible groups held in elementary schools in Birmingham and surrounding counties. “With the prevalence of social media and outside nonbiblical influences vying for their attention, we need to help instill a strong Christian foundation as early as possible before the world can influence them toward a secular mindset.”

“I write from a spiritual side because that’s a part of my life, but my hope is that people can find hope in these songs whether they are believers or nonbelievers. I’ve found true honesty is (what) connects all of us,” said singer/songwriter **David Leonard**. Leonard’s

album “Plans” and the title single are both about trusting God no matter what.

“Seniors often are forgotten about, but those are the people who sustain the ministries,” said **Nate Brooks**, pastor of Greater St. John Baptist Church in Birmingham.

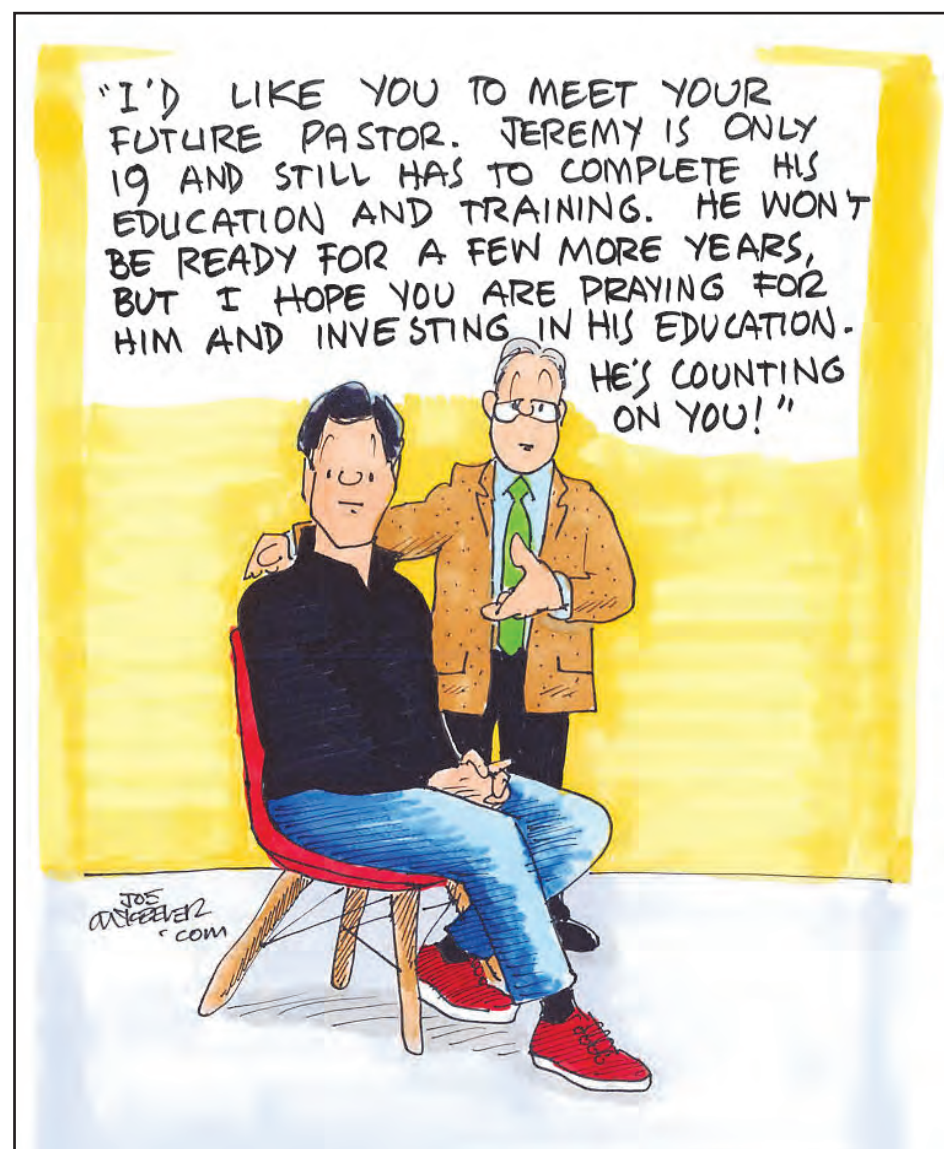
“I understand that playing baseball is a privilege, and not a right. My convictions in Jesus Christ will always come first,” said Dodgers pitcher **Blake Treinen**.

“You don’t have to look far to find a pastor who is better at reaching people than loving them,” said **Mark Dance**, author of “Start to Finish: The Pastor’s Guide to Lead-

ing a Resilient Life and Ministry.” **Dance** is also director of pastoral wellness at GuideStone Financial Resources.

“I see missions as an opportunity for us to disciple our people and expand their worldview,” said **Randy Presley**, associate pastor of Luke 4:18 Fellowship in Mobile. “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.”

“What if the most difficult person in your church is actually evidence from God that you’re supposed to stay there?” said **Brian Croft**, founder and executive director of Practical Shepherding.



Idle moments provide time to refocus

By Pastor Bill McCall

The Baptist Church at McAdory

Have you ever had one of those moments when you lacked direction and clarity?

I think it happens to us all. When those times come, we can become frustrated, disoriented and distressed.

Those floundering moments at first seem like such a waste. We are not accomplishing anything. There’s a sense of emptiness and incompleteness.

God may be taking us through this season in life for a reason, however. Those times may come to help us refocus on what is most important.

The Pharisees in Jesus’ day wanted to hear what Jesus had to say. He had just silenced the Sadducees, which was no easy task. So the law experts of the day asked him, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?”

Of course, they already had an opinion, but they were about to hear from the very Son of God. He was there when the law was given to Moses.

He knew the law better than anybody and took them back to the basics with His reply.

Prioritizing the Lord

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”

It is here where God often takes us when we are empty and seemingly useless. This is the beginning of clarity and understanding. It is the great law that should govern everything we do and say. It is in these moments God is bringing us back to the center.

If you find a lack of spunk and motivation, it may be that God is bringing you back to what really matters and what is really important.

Loving Him with all we have and all we are must remain top priority. It is the core reason we do anything and everything.

3 stories you should know



Facebook photo

Volunteers from Hawaii Baptist churches and disaster relief continue to serve those impacted by the deadly wildfires that devastated the town of Lahaina on the island of Maui. More than 110 people have been confirmed dead at press time. Craig Webb, assistant executive director of the Hawaii Baptist Pacific Convention, urges prayer for all involved in relief efforts and for those who have lost loved ones, homes and businesses in the fire. (TAB Media)

Baylor receives exemption from Title IX provision

The U.S. Department of Education has accepted Baylor University's request for a religious exemption from Title IX's sexual harassment provision.

Baylor, a private institution with historic Baptist ties, asked to dismiss discrimination complaints filed by LGBTQ+ students, asserting they were "inconsistent" with the institution's religious values.

In an Aug. 14 statement, university president Linda A. Livingstone said the school requested the exemption in response to current efforts by the Department of Education to expand its definition of sexual harassment.

The modification could "infringe on Baylor's rights under the U.S. Constitution, as well as Title IX, to conduct its affairs in a manner consistent with its religious beliefs," according to the statement. (RNS)

Will McRaney's lawsuit against NAMB dismissed

The McRaney v. North American Mission Board lawsuit has been dismissed by a Mississippi-based U.S. District Court.

"Adjudication of the Plaintiff's claims in this lawsuit will clearly require the Court to inquire into religious matters and decision-making to a degree that is simply impermissible under the Constitution and the ecclesiastical abstention doctrine," states the Aug. 15 summary judgment report. Also, the court stated it "agrees with NAMB that Mississippi state courts also clearly lack subject matter jurisdiction to adjudicate this dispute."

McRaney filed the suit in 2017, claiming NAMB influenced the decision by the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware to terminate him as executive director and harmed other opportunities. (TAB)

Commitment to 'due diligence' leads to McLaurin resignation

When Alabama's Neal Hughes was elected chair of the second presidential search team for the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee on June 1, he consistently stated a commitment to "due diligence" in the process.

That commitment allowed a potentially scandalous situation related to Willie McLaurin to be handled prior to a nomination, vote and likely election as the next SBC EC president.

McLaurin, considered the recent frontrunner in the presidential search, resigned from his role as interim president and CEO on Aug. 17, effective immediately. The resignation came in response to the search committee's discovery of falsified academic credentials on his current resumé.

The EC has been mired in controversy for several years over various issues. The two previous EC presidents both resigned amid controversy (Frank Page in 2018 for a moral failure and Ron-

nie Floyd in 2021 in a power struggle with the board of trustees).

Still, the news about McLaurin stunned the SBC family and left those closest to him heartbroken.

Randy C. Davis, president and executive director of the Tennessee Baptist Mission Board, where McLaurin was employed for 15 years before joining the EC staff in 2020 as a vice president, said, "I am profoundly saddened right now."

"To say that I am grieved would be an understatement," Davis said in a statement released Aug. 17. "Willie McLaurin has been a shining light of encouragement to pastors and churches, both in Tennessee and across the Southern Baptist Convention.

"Unfortunately, the situation in which we now find ourselves is beyond belief, and I am simply trying to process all that has happened, and the

enormous damage inflicted by the fraud perpetrated on his resumé regarding his educational background," he wrote.

Acknowledging his deep friendship with McLaurin, Davis noted, "I will continue to walk with him through this current storm as a friend."

EC trustees chair Philip Robertson of Louisiana said in an Aug. 17 statement that in a "commitment to transparency" the EC will be issuing "further updates related to next steps to the presidential search team and SBC Executive Committee's staff leadership in the near future."

Davis urged all Southern Baptists "to go before God with our brokenness and run toward humility and holiness. It is not the time to be the kind of army that shoots its wounded."

"It is not a time to posture. It is a time to pray. Together." (TAB, Baptist and Reflector)



MCLAURIN

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

▶ **Jeff Lamar Thomas**, pastor of Bon Air Baptist Church in Sylacauga, died Aug. 1. He was 79.

Thomas, a Samford University graduate, served more than 50 years in ministry. Bon Air Baptist was his first pastorate in 1970, and his last pastorate — he served there for the past decade and preached the Sunday preceding his death. He also served churches in Georgia, Florida and Alabama, including 10 years at Ridgeview Baptist in Talladega and 12 years at Hopewell Baptist in Bessemer.

Thomas is survived by his wife, Carolyn; sons, Jeff and Aaron; daughter, Donna; and six grandchildren.

▶ Longtime pastor and coach **Clinton Graham** died Aug. 3. He was 81.

Graham played basketball and football at Pisgah High School, where he graduated in 1960. He went on to play baseball at Snead State Community College and Samford University, where he was on the track team.

He held a bachelor's degree from Samford and a master's degree from UAB.

Graham was a coach for 35 years, working in Alabama, Georgia and Tennessee at the following schools: Henagar Junior High School, Ider High School, Sylvania High School, Fort Payne High School, Guntersville High School, Chattanooga Christian and Ooltewah High School.

In 1975, he yielded his life to the gospel preaching ministry. He served several churches as pastor: Unity Baptist Church, Henagar; Northside Baptist Church, Fort Payne; Riverside Baptist Church, Lookout Valley, Tennessee; and Happy Home Baptist Church, Henagar.

He also served as interim pastor at Highland Baptist Church and Gault Avenue Baptist Church, both in Fort Payne.

Graham was preceded in death by a son, Vandoran. He is survived by his wife of 61 years, George Annis; three sons, Gregory, Roger (pastor of Henagar Baptist Church) and Sam; 12 grandchildren and 10 great grandchildren.

▶ **Michael "Mike" Arnold Skipper**, a longtime minister of music in the Tuscaloosa area, died Aug. 9. He was 68.

Skipper's ministry spanned 38 years, during which he served as a bivocational minis-



THOMAS

ter of music at Northwood Hills Baptist Church and Northridge Baptist Church, both in Northport, and at Big Sandy Baptist Church and Taylorville Baptist Church, both in Tuscaloosa.

He also spent 12 years as a full-time associate pastor at Five Points Baptist Church, Northport, where he led worship, visited the sick, helped in the church kitchen and served senior adults.

Skipper is survived by his wife, Sharron; two daughters, Kristy and Rebecca; and one granddaughter.

ALABAMA CRENSHAW ASSOCIATION

▶ **Amos Grayson** is the new pastor of **Rutledge First Baptist Church**.

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

▶ **Tristen West** is the new minister to children at **NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville**.

West grew up at NorthPark and began serving in the children's ministry in 2020.

He previously worked for Ascension Health Services and UPS and is a current student at New Orleans Seminary's Leavell College.

West's wife, Kelcie, is a kindergarten teacher at Pinson Elementary School. Bill Wilks is pastor.

MOBILE ASSOCIATION

▶ **Fellowship Baptist Church, Chunchula**, will celebrate its 100th anniversary Aug. 27 at 10 a.m. David Perry, senior adult minister of

Wiggins (Miss.) First Baptist Church, will be the guest speaker with special music by The Chestangs bluegrass gospel group. A potluck dinner will be served at noon. Bob Barr is interim pastor.

PICKENS ASSOCIATION

▶ **Carrollton Baptist Church** is hosting revival services Aug. 27–30. Sunday services will take place at 10:45 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. with evangelist Phil Waldrep. Monday–Wednesday services will start at 6:30 p.m. with chaplain Clay Carroll of FCI Aliceville, Livingston FBC pastor Thomas Fletcher and Samford Ministry Training Institute director Kevin Blackwell, respectively.

TALLAPOOSA ASSOCIATION

▶ **Will Haynes** is the new associate pastor of youth and young families of **Lake Martin Baptist Church, Dadeville**.

Previously, he served as associate pastor of Deerfoot Baptist Church, Trussville. He received his bachelor's in theology from the University of Mobile and his master of divinity from Southeastern Seminary. He and his wife, Kim, have one child.



HAYNES

WALKER ASSOCIATION

▶ **Mount Zion Baptist Church, Jasper**, will celebrate its 150th anniversary Sept. 16. Worship begins at 10 a.m. with special music, presentations and guest speakers. Lunch will follow the morning service. Afternoon activities will conclude at 3 p.m. Patrick Benson is pastor.



GRAHAM



WEST



SKIPPER

Former Alabama Baptist to chair abuse task force

North Carolina pastor Josh Wester, who most recently served as associate pastor under Ed Litton at Redemption Church in Saraland, is the new chair of the Southern Baptist Convention's Abuse Reform Implementation Task Force.

Wester will replace South Carolina pastor Marshall Blalock as chair.

Blalock confirmed the news with The Alabama Baptist on Aug. 11, a few hours after SBC President Bart Barber announced the leadership change in a social media post.

Noting his time as chair wraps up at the end of August, Blalock said, "My family and our church agreed two years was all I could do."

He served as vice chair of the initial Sexual Abuse Task Force for one year (June 2021

through June 2022) and then chaired the implementation task force for one year (June 2022 through June 2023).

When the work of the task force received an extension by messengers to the SBC Annual Meeting in June to continue its efforts, Blalock remained as chair until recently when he asked Barber to seek a replacement.

"I'm thankful for Josh stepping in," Blalock said. "He will be an outstanding chair."

Barber also noted Stephanie Cline of Florida and Kelley Lammers of Arkansas will replace outgoing task force members Cyndi Lott and Jarrett Stephens.

Melissa Bowen, a member of First Baptist Church Prattville, is one of six members returning to the task force. (Jennifer Davis Rash)

Undergirded by prayer

Faith-based ministry helps individuals gain independence

(continued from page 1)

“I started a career clothing closet for the ladies and started helping with placing them in internships,” Dickson said.

In 2003, she became site coordinator, and then in 2007, she took on the role of executive director of CWJC of Madison County, running the main site and its satellite sites. In April 2022, she became Alabama CJC coordinator.

Week of Prayer

The ministry is undergirded by prayer support provided during the Week of Prayer for State Missions, which also assists disaster relief, church planting and church revitalization and partnership missions.

This year’s Week of Prayer is Sept. 10–17, with an offering goal of \$1.2 million. Dickson’s work with CJC is featured on Day 3. (See Week of Prayer preview, this page.)

Currently there are eight CJC sites around Alabama — the Madison County site, plus sites in Andalusia, Auburn, two in Birmingham, Cleveland, Guntersville and Piedmont.

“What I like about Christian Job Corps is that it’s working with men and women who are trying to make changes in their life; it’s not a Band-Aid type of ministry,” Dickson said. “We’re giving them practical things to help them be self-sufficient, and we’re introducing them to a relationship with Jesus Christ.”

Dickson said they use a strengths-based approach that helps men and women make decisions about their



Photo by Doug Rogers

CJC state coordinator Elaine Dickson leads a Level 1 Training for prospective site coordinators at the Madison Association CJC, housed at FBC Huntsville.

future with CJC staff and volunteers walking alongside them as mentors.

She remembers one woman who got involved with the wrong person, went to prison and, when she got out, was nervous about her criminal record keeping her from getting a job.

“We worked with her, and she got an internship and was able to get a job in that field,” Dickson said. “They trusted her, and because she had worked with us, she was able to rebuild her life after being in prison.”

Another woman had moved in with her daughters and didn’t have her GED, and CJC was able to help her accomplish that milestone and

help her go on to get a college degree and a job.

“She said, ‘For the first time in my life, I have health insurance. I can walk into a doctor’s office, and I’m not on food stamps,’” Dickson said. “It gave her a lot of independence.”

Candace McIntosh, Alabama WMU executive director, said the work of Alabama’s eight CJC sites is practical for sure, but it’s so much more than just that.

‘Most tangible’

“Of all the ministry we do (through Alabama WMU), I think Christian Job Corps is the most tangible in that it really meets an everyday need,” she said. “But it doesn’t stop there. At CJC, someone gives them hope in the form of Jesus and helps them understand how loved they are.”

WEEK OF PRAYER

for State
Missions
Sept. 10–17

DAY 1

An unfinished mission:
Week of Prayer overview

DAY 2

Helping the hurting:
Disaster Relief

DAY 3

Job skills and eternal
hope: Alabama WMU
(see article, page 1)

DAY 4

Seeing God move
among Hispanics:
Church planting

DAY 5

Connecting with
overseas missionaries:
Partnership missions

DAY 6

Joining God as
He revives churches:
Church revitalization

DAY 7

Standing with disaster
victims: Disaster Relief

DAY 8

Supporting missionaries’
families: Alabama WMU

Visit [Myers-Mallory.org](https://www.myers-mallory.org)
for downloadable print
and video resources.


Myers-Mallory
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and downloadable
resources, visit
[myers-mallory.org](https://www.myers-mallory.org).**

FINISHING WELL

At 91 years old, seminary graduate continues to inspire, impact lives

By Marilyn Stewart

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

Mary “Glenn” Ingouf, 91, “crossed the graduation stage” in her retirement home apartment in Decatur recently but did so without a cap and gown or pomp and circumstance.

For Glenn, receiving her diploma was as memorable as it was long in coming.

Jamie Dew, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary president, conferred the master of discipleship degree diploma at her home Aug. 4, with husband John at her side.

“I have done graduation ceremonies in chapel. I have done them in prisons. I’ve never done one in an apartment,” Dew quipped.

The “graduation ceremony” closed a chapter in Glenn’s life that had remained open for 66 years.

“Now it’s taken care of at last,” she said. “I’m very thankful that they would do this.”

Timing wasn’t right

Glenn was three weeks away from graduation in 1957 when the couple’s firstborn child — born prematurely — lived just one day.

That spring, she instead watched her husband graduate and soon afterward the couple moved to John’s pastorate, moving later to the international missions field.

After 29 years in Indonesia with the International Mission Board, the couple served 10 more with IMB in Richmond helping others go.

Through the years, Glenn had hoped to finish her master of religious education degree but the timing never seemed right.

“Every time we came home on leave, we’d say, we’ve got to get that finished, but we never did because we had four children by then,” she said.

But what was left unfinished in the seminary classroom was more than completed in the classroom of



NOBTS photo

Jamie Dew (left), New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary president, confers the master of discipleship degree diploma at Glenn Ingouf’s home.

missions service as Glenn discipled women and led them to disciple others.

With family members gathered around, Dew drew from 1 Corinthians 4:1–5 to “charge” the graduating class of one.

While the world defines good stewardship in terms of success and achievement, God looks for something “much more simple, and that is just faithfulness,” Dew said.

Pointing to verse five, Dew said “gifted” and “flashy” youth often garner esteem when a more true assessment of one’s life and work should be taken at the end. Dew said Glenn was worthy of the day’s honor and praised her faithfulness “as a pastor’s wife, as a missionary, as a mother.”

On the field, Glenn often helped with translation as John served as editor and writer for a publishing house for Indonesian churches.

“Anybody can start well,” Dew said. “What the Lord wants to see is people who finish well.”

After family members alerted the seminary earlier this year of Glenn’s wish to finish her degree, the master of discipleship degree was soon recognized as the right fit.

Glenn’s investment in discipleship through the years impacted many for the gospel.

One example is “Mrs. Siti,” who closed the curtains to her store whenever the Ingoufs came to visit so neighbors wouldn’t see her talking to them, Glenn related.

When Siti first visited the women’s Bible study, she carried a basket to pretend she was going to the market. Siti and her family faced ridicule and some loss of business after coming to faith, but they remained faithful.

Today, Siti leads the women’s Bible study Glenn first started.

“Anybody can start well. What the Lord wants to see is people who finish well.”

**Jamie Dew
president, New Orleans
Baptist Theological Seminary**

“Siti was a natural leader,” Glenn said. “I counted on her all the time.” Another woman Glenn discipled, Kosasih, resolved to get up at 4 a.m. to disciple a woman who insisted she was too old to memorize Scripture. Together, the women practiced Scripture memory as they rolled banana leaves with meat to sell as a breakfast item.

Experiencing loss

“Kosasih taught her one verse at a time,” Glenn explained. “They repeated it each time they wrapped a package.”

Life was not easy for those leaving Islam for Christ, and life was not always easy for the Ingouf family either. Another devastating loss would come.

While in Indonesia, the Ingoufs lost their 11-year-old daughter Ann to leukemia.

“After Ann passed away, Mom wrote a booklet,” wrote daughter Susan Lafferty in a recent blog post honoring her mother. Lafferty explained that her mother used “her grief experience to help others who go through such a loss.”

In her booklet, “Comfort in Sorrow,” Glenn wrote, “For His children, God promises that His strength will give us songs of praise in place of a heavy heart (Isa. 61:3). I have experienced the truth of this verse. ... Our Lord never leaves us alone.”

For those considering missions service, Christ’s promise to always be present must be remembered, Glenn said, pointing to Matthew 28:18–20.

“That tells us who has the authority. All authority is given to Jesus,” Glenn said. “Then He said, ‘Go.’ The promise goes with it, that He will be with us until the end of the age.”

EDITOR’S NOTE — This story was originally published by New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.



SECOND OF 5 IN A SERIES

Benefits of good physical health extend into family, community life

By Julie Donovan
The Alabama Baptist

A few years ago, Jennifer Thorne was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis. A mother of four, Thorne experienced days when she couldn't get out of bed. The medicine she was on affected her day-to-day life, causing her to feel sluggish. That led to weight gain.

Upon her doctor's advice, Thorne began an exercise program and committed time to improving her physical health.

The benefits were almost immediate. She saw an improvement in her physical symptoms as well as in her spiritual and mental outlook.

Growing closer to God

"My kids would say, 'You can do it mom!'" she said. "The Lord placed me in better physical health to take care of my family better. God cleared my stress away, and I really have been closer to the Lord. I have more clarity in hearing what He

has to say and how to take care of my family so they can take care of themselves too."

In today's appearance-obsessed culture, physical health is often equated with how one looks. However, good physical health affects not only the individual, but also those the individual is tasked with caring for.

Start simple

Before embarking on a new wellness plan, it's a good idea to check with your doctor. But physical fitness can begin with something as simple as a stroll through your neighborhood, and the benefits begin almost immediately.

Numerous studies have shown that even something as simple as a walk releases chemicals in the human brain that make an individual feel better, with boosted self-esteem, better concentration and improved sleep.

Physical activity also improves one's energy and motivation, provides a sense of achievement and

relieves stress. Not bad for something that costs no money.

Other free or low-cost options might include playing tennis at a local park, doing squats or pushups or finding a group fitness class in your community.

Eating well is also part of a healthy lifestyle. Many people love fried foods, cake, pizza, chips and hamburgers, but there is a limit on what we should eat as we take care of God's temple.

This does not mean that you can't eat pizza or enjoy popcorn at the movies, but as you do, watch your portion sizes and balance out the less healthy foods with fruits and vegetables.

Finding a healthy diet is good for your heart, body and energy level.

Many books and apps are available to help track calories, plan daily menus and learn more about the foods you consume.

A final aspect of physical health is community. Spending time with others by participating in a group fitness class or taking a walk is

valuable for all-around wellness.

"Like (with) our faith, we need both moments of shared experiences and personal reflection," writes Mark Smith, a campus pastor of The Hallows Church in Seattle, in a "Faith and Fitness" series on the church's blog. "Exercising in a community brings healthy accountability and fun to the mix. You realize you are not the only one facing challenges and can turn your introspective tendencies toward celebrating a friend's achievements."



Photo by pch.vector on Freepik

Knowing you have people supporting you in your physical health journey gives you accountability and incentive to keep going.

If you have Christian workout buddies or a running team, you know that they will cheer you on and push you to do better.

As you work out, remember that your main objective is to glorify the Lord and take care of His temple.

Use this as an incentive to gather a group, and start working out together and taking your physical health seriously.

ALLOWING CHRIST TO TRANSFORM YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

THIRD OF 5 IN A SERIES

No matter where you look today, it seems mental health, specifically poor mental health, is a topic of conversation.

As believers, we know our joy comes from the Lord. Proverbs 17:22 affirms that "a joyful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones."

We also know we live in a broken world, and our joy can be stolen by financial hardships, relational conflicts, grief and many other challenges. How can we focus on Christ and allow our mental health to be transformed by Him?

4 tips

Here are four tips that can help:

1. Surround yourself with good Christian friends who support you with godly love. The crippled man in Matthew 9:1-8 was carried to Jesus by people who cared about Him. They cared about him enough that they moved the top of a house to get him in front of Jesus.

Your circle of friends matters. When you are crippled mentally, God can place Christian friends in your life to bring you to Him.

2. Take time for yourself. Too often people are bogged down with taking care of others, getting tasks done at work and tackling chores.

While you do not need to neglect the people around you, you also don't need to neglect yourself. Find time for yourself to read, work out or just relax with a cup of coffee or tea.

3. Practice biblical meditation. Meditation is the practice of becoming more observant of one's internal

and external circumstances. The practice is known to reduce anxiety and improve sleep, among other benefits.

Sometimes Christians hear the word "meditate" with a negative connotation, thinking of Eastern religions that emphasize a spiritual awakening that comes from inside oneself or from somewhere or something other than Christ.

Rosilind Jukic, founder of the website A Little R&R, discusses how Christians should be cautious of practices that encourage emptying your mind, which can allow sinful thoughts to enter in and distract from a focus on God.

But many verses in the Bible include a directive to meditate on God's Word (e.g., Josh. 1:8, Ps. 143:5 and Ps. 119). In these verses, to meditate

implies to "spend time with," "think about" and "ponder." Spending time with God's Word is a proper form of meditation that can lead to improved mental health. Several apps, including Abide, Glorify and Let God, are available to encourage Bible-based meditation.

4. Make a list of things you are grateful for. There are many verses that speak on the reasons we

should be grateful for the day and the things God has placed in our lives. Psalm 118:24 reads, "This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." James 1:17 says, "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." Embrace what God has given you.

Serving as a reminder

Will making such a list instantly remove all stress, anxiety, depression or other mental health issues from your life? No. But they will serve as a reminder during the dark times.

Some people find it helpful to keep a journal of joyful moments from the day as a way to acknowledge that God gives not just the day, but every moment in the day.

Research on gratitude practices shows this has a stress-buffering effect, and reducing stress has a plethora of health benefits. Use this as an encouragement to show gratitude to the Lord.

It is important to acknowledge that there are many mental health issues

that benefit from treatment with professional counselors, therapists and physicians.

The evil one will say you are alone in your mental health struggle, but as a follower of Jesus, you are never alone. Other Christians are with you, and most importantly, God is with you. Find the help you need, and be assured you are not diminished in Christ's eyes because you need help.

If you know of a brother or sister in Christ who is struggling with mental health, pray for them, walk alongside them and show you care.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Julie Redmond Donovan serves as children's and preschool minister at Hollinger's Island Baptist Church in Mobile. She holds an M.Div. from Beeson Divinity School and a bachelor's degree from Jacksonville State University and has served in camp and children's ministry for 13 years.



Photo by xvector on Freepik

"The Lord placed me in better physical health to take care of my family better. God cleared my stress away, and I really have been closer to the Lord."

Jennifer Thorne
mother of four

Training offers leaders 'Bible study basics'

By Michael Brooks
The Alabama Baptist

Every church is a partnership. Every person who serves and every person we serve is important in the work of ministry.

That was the message Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, delivered during the opening devotion at the GroupLife Equipping Workshop at Hunter Street Baptist Church in Hoover on Aug. 5. It was the third of six regional training events for pastors, teachers and leaders.

Developing well-trained volunteer leaders is a critical need for churches, Daniel Edmonds, director of the SBOM office of Sunday School and discipleship, said, citing information gathered by Lifeway Research.

"We live in a generation that doesn't know the Bible. We must teach them what the Bible is, how we got it, what it says and how we can live it out," Edmonds said.

The pastor cannot do this alone. Every believer must be equipped to reach the lost, he added.

"We want to help with this, and we want to bring training closer to the people," he said, noting the GroupLife Equipping series is replacing the annual Pinnacle conference. "We want to provide training in local associations and local churches in the years ahead."

Variety of options

Participants could choose from workshop tracks on topics of general leadership or age-graded groups.

Additionally, Lance and Buddy Gray, pastor of Hunter Street, led a session for pastors.

Ben and Judy Armacost, Southern Baptist representatives in London with the International Mission Board, shared a seminar titled "Leading Others to Share the Gospel."

Ben Armacost said when focusing on making disciples, church leaders should think of their children and grandchildren and the legacy they hope to share by teaching faith to them.

Reversing lostness

"Radical faith simply means obedience. If we serve the Lord and raise up leaders, then we hope to reverse the lostness in our world," he said.

Armacost said the "elephant in the room" preventing sharing the gospel is fear of failure or rejection.

"We have to admit this and ask

God's help," he said. "All Christians must share their faith in some way."

Topper Reid, vice president of the church coaching division of Unlimited Partnerships, directed a seminar titled "Small Group Basics."

"The purpose of small groups is to reach people," he explained. "A Sunday School class is the Church organized to reach and disciple. God

puts people in our 'traffic pattern' who we can invite to our groups for Bible study."

Reid said no leader can do it alone and needs a team.

"Give someone a job, whether it's making coffee or greeting," he said. "This ensures they'll be there and gives them joy in serving the Lord."

Reid said care groups within the larger groups can be effective in keeping people engaged.

"Every week the care group leader calls or texts the two or three members in his 'family' and asks, 'Are you OK?' Life hits us in the face between Sundays, and this helps us discover prayer and ministry needs so that we can love one another."

For more information on upcoming training opportunities, visit makingdisciplesal.org or contact Edmonds at 800-264-1225, ext. 285.



Photo by Michael Brooks/The Alabama Baptist
Topper Reid of Unlimited Partnerships interacts with seminar participants at Hunter Street Baptist Church in Hoover on Aug. 5.

LASS WORDS

BY KEN LASS
The Alabama Baptist



DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS

What does God look like?

The Bible study leader sits in the front of the room, surrounded by a group of adults with special needs. The lesson is about heaven. He reads from John 14:3: "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you with me, that you also may be where I am."

Heavenly outlook

The leader explains that when we get to heaven, we'll actually get to see God — something few human beings have ever gotten to do while on this earth. "What do you think God will look like?" he asks. One young lady raises her hand. "He'll be old," she says. "With gray hair."

The leader asks more questions. "What color are God's eyes? Is he right-handed or left-handed?"

The participation becomes more widespread and excited, some so eager to talk they stop raising their hands and just begin to gleefully shout out answers.

"His eyes are blue, like mine!" "No way! His eyes are brown!" There is consensus in the room that God is right-handed because that's what all of them are.

As various opinions are offered, those who are unable to communicate verbally smile and laugh approvingly, or frown and shake their heads. It is clearly a subject they have warmed to.

The leader decides it's time to steer the discussion toward the central message.

"It's going to be exciting to get to heaven and actually see God,"

he asserts. "But what do we have to do to get there?"

The room falls silent, blank faces all around, looking at each other, shoulders shrugging. The leader feels a little disappointed. He has led this group before. Did it never sink in?

He patiently explains once again that the only way to heaven is to repent of sin and turn toward Jesus as Lord and Savior. Closing his Bible, he asks, "What is the most important thing we have learned this morning?" He wonders if they understand.

What really matters

After what seems like a long pause, a woman finally raises her hand. "We learned," she says with sudden conviction, "that it doesn't matter so much what God looks like. It's more important what we look like to God."

The entire room breaks into nods and squeals of approval. Somebody starts clapping, and suddenly there is a full round of applause. The young lady who gave the answer flashes a smile big enough to light the building.

The leader is smiling too. Yep, they get it. Maybe better than some of the rest of us.

MEET THE AUTHOR

Ken Lass is a retired Birmingham television news and sports anchor, and an award-winning columnist for numerous publications and websites.

Sense of belonging

Unless U provides adults with developmental disabilities chance to learn in life, train in work

By Tracy Riggs Frontz
The Alabama Baptist

As Lindy Cleveland, founder and executive director of Unless U, started maturing from a teenager into a young woman, she noticed that her older brother, Jordan, wasn't able to accomplish milestones like driving a car or going to college that she and her friends could.

Marye Grace Sauermann, director of marketing and development at Unless U, said about that time in Cleveland's life "her heart began to hurt. She was not really able to understand why her older brother, Jordan, didn't get to do those things."

For young adults like Jordan, who has Down syndrome, the majority of educational and social opportunities end at age 21 after extended time in high school.

Many end up sitting at home with only the company of their families because of the lack of options for learning and spending time with peers.

Cleveland took a nonprofit and grant writing class at Samford University in Birmingham. The goal in the class was to dream up a nonprofit and figure out how to fund it. Cleveland decided to address the problem of her brother and his friends having nowhere to go and, with the help of her classmates, dreamed up Unless U.

Unless U started as a program simply for Jordan and his friends.

Cleveland wanted them to have similar experiences to hers — the feeling of college, a place to belong.

The plan was to offer a faith-based program with academics, life and social skills and job training, structuring it using a schedule similar to that of a high school.

Community involvement

Cleveland also had more in mind. One way Unless U was going to be special was that it would give the students the opportunity to develop hobbies and recreational activities.

At first there wasn't space. Unless U quickly outgrew her parents' house. The program began using some Sunday School classrooms at Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Birmingham and then eventually got its own campus in Vestavia Hills.

Blessed with the ability to move into this custom space debt-free in May 2021, Unless U finally had the resources to carry out the program Cleveland

had dreamed about. This new facility has five classrooms, a library, a fully functioning kitchen to work on life skills, a fine arts area and a place to hang out.

Now Unless U has a basketball team, cheerleaders, a readers' theater, a cooking elective and a drama company, and it partners with local celebrities to compete at its annual "Unless U Got Talent" talent show.

And then's there the ice cream shop, Unless U Scoops.



Photo courtesy of Unless U
Unless U Scoops provides job training and community interaction for young adults with special needs.



Photo courtesy of Unless U

The mission of Unless U is to give adults with special needs a place to grow, learn and socialize with their peers after they leave high school. The faith-based program has two campuses in Vestavia Hills.

"The goal and dream with this place was to create a one-stop shop for our students where they can continue to learn and continue to hang out with their friends. There's a recreational component to it and a job training component to it. They are getting fed as a whole person," Sauermann said.

Unless U Scoops not only helps the students but also the community. It's a safe atmosphere for families to come and teach their children about disabilities.

Opening doors

"We want our students to be in the community and have normal jobs and all that, but it's opened the door for people to come into our world.

"This scoop might not be perfect, and they might ring it up wrong, but people are coming to our doors

knowing what to expect," Sauermann said.

A second campus, Post Place, provides classes, care and community for those with multiple physical, developmental and intellectual conditions. The loving learning environment also offers respite for parents and caregivers, something that is not easy to find but makes a huge impact on families, Sauermann said. It's all part of the mission, she added.

"It's really cool what the Lord is doing here. We say that it's the happiest place on earth, and I really do believe that. We believe in our students and lovingly challenge them to be the best versions of themselves, and they surprise us every day.

"We say that we teach them, but they really teach us a whole lot more than we teach them."

For more information about Unless U and Unless U Scoops, visit unlessu.org.

UPCOMING EVENTS

sponsored by the State Board of Missions

Week of Prayer for State Missions set for Sept. 10-17

This year marks a significant anniversary for Alabama Baptists — the 200th anniversary of partnering together for missions. And while we have much to celebrate, there remains an unfinished gospel task before us that demands our greatest efforts.

The Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering was launched in January 2016. Gifts are received throughout the year, with a special emphasis coinciding with the Week of Prayer for State Missions, Sept. 10-17.

The offering is meant

For more information, visit myers-mallory.org, or scan the code below with your smartphone's camera.



to complement vital giving through the Cooperative Program and helps support the Great

Commission Ministries of Alabama WMU, Disaster Relief, Church Planting, Partnership Missions and Church Revitalization.

We invite you to join us in boldly praying for these five strategic ministries and to prayerfully consider your gift to the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering.

As we build off our past and step into our future, know that your gifts provide resources to help Alabama Baptists carry the life-changing power of the gospel to our local communities and beyond.

Annual meeting November 14-15 to highlight bicentennial

Mark your calendars now for a grand celebration coming in November!

The annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention — really a family reunion for all Alabama Baptists — will be held Tuesday and

Wednesday, Nov. 14 and 15, at First Baptist Church, Montgomery. Woven throughout our time together will be a commemoration of our convention's 200th anniversary, with a focus on the theme

“Unfinished” based on Philippians 3:13-14.

You won't want to miss this glorious time of celebrating God's wonderful faithfulness while also stepping into a bright future of missions and ministry for the Lord.

There will be much more information to come, so check alsbom.org/convention regularly for the latest details.



Get Acquainted Day: Sept. 7

Are you new to Alabama or new to your church staff? Or would you just like to learn more about ministry and missions partnerships?

Get Acquainted Day is the perfect chance to find out how the Alabama Baptist

State Board of Missions can partner with you to fulfill the Great Commission.

Hear about all the ministries, meet your state missionaries and tour the SBOM facility in Prattville. You'll also receive a report with

information about the people who live within a 5-mile radius of your church.

Get Acquainted Day is free and will be held Sept. 7, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m., with lunch provided. To register, visit alsbom.org/gad.

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

FULL-TIME 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.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

New Beginnings Baptist Church, a small congregation in Hayden, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor. Send inquiries/resumés to: sonyahumber@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Mitts Chapel Baptist Church searching for a bivocational pastor. Please send resumé to: Mitts Chapel Baptist Church, 935 Cold Springs Road, Deatsville, AL 36022.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

South Hamilton Baptist Church in Hamilton, Ala., is prayerfully accepting resumés, for a God-led bivocational pastor. South Hamilton Baptist Church has a traditional Sunday morning Sunday School and worship time as well as a Bible study on Wednesday evenings. To submit a resumé please email: southhamilton@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

New Providence Baptist Church, 53080 Rabun Road, Bay Minette, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor. Please send resumé to: Search Committee, P.O. Box 503, Bay Minette, AL 36507 or email to: arlene@pfefferflooring.com.

PART-TIME MUSIC MINISTER

Cedar Grove Baptist Church in Leeds, Alabama, seeks a part-time music minister to lead our congregation in worship and further develop our music program. For full job description, visit <https://cedargroveleeds.org/jobs>. To apply, send resumé to: chmassey@charter.net.

OTHER POSITIONS

PREGNANCY CENTER DIRECTOR — FULTONDALE, ALABAMA

Sav-A-Life, Inc. is looking for a full-time center director for its Fultondale location (just north of Birmingham). This team member will manage all routine

operations of the pregnancy center in an efficient, effective and professional manner. The center director trains and manages all staff and volunteers in the implementation of necessary programs, scheduling and meets with clients. Applicants need a bachelor's or master's degree, preferably in a helping field, or need related equivalent experience if no degree. To learn more or to apply, please send a cover letter and resumé to info@savalife.org. No phone calls please.

SIGNS

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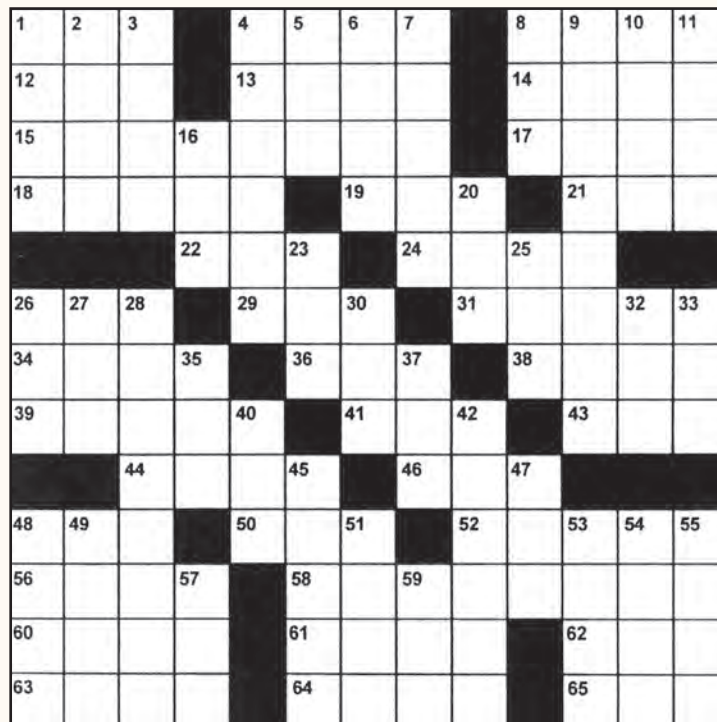
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CHRISTIAN Crossword



ACROSS

1. Thou ____ the Christ. (Matt. 16:16)
4. Ruler of old Russia.
8. He ____ unto his own. (John 1:11)
12. ____ Dolorosa, Jesus' route to Golgotha.
13. A Midwestern state.
14. His ears are ____ unto their prayers. (1 Pet. 3:12)
15. New Testament letters.
17. In the beginning was the _____. (John 1:1)
18. A word peculiar to the book of Psalms.
19. Morning dampness.
21. A ship's distress call.
22. Ye have made it a ____ of thieves. (Matt. 21:13)



By Lee Esch Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

24. Quench all the fiery ____s. (Eph. 6:16)
26. Opposite of on.
29. He that hath the ____ hath life. (1 John 5:12)
31. In the days when the judges _____. (Ruth 1:1)
34. A distinctive quality that characterizes a person.
36. Abraham caught one in the thicket. (Gen. 22:13)
38. ____ ye one another's burdens. (Gal. 6:2)
39. _____, and it shall be opened. (Matt. 7:7)
41. Whether it be good or _____. (2 Cor. 5:10)
43. Pig pen.
44. ____ the Lord in the air. (1 Thess. 4:17)
46. Drew the ____ to the land full of great fishes. (John 21:11)
48. A form of "to be."
50. Puppy's bark.
52. The ____ of one crying in the wilderness. (John 1:23)
56. Rant.
58. In that hour Jesus

- ____ in Spirit. (Luke 10:21)
60. Similar.
61. Jacob's brother. (Gen. 25:26)
62. Adam's helpmeet.
63. Kept in one's grasp.
64. Separate systematically.
65. A tribe of Israel.

DOWN

1. Thoroughfares. (abbr.)
2. The harvest of the earth is _____. (Rev. 14:15)
3. Does the dog wag the _____, or does the _____ wag the dog?
4. A tenth part. (plural)
5. Sun. (Spanish)
6. Filled with reverence.
7. Demolished.
8. Bovine.
9. The chosen twelve.
10. Israel's enemies converged at ____m. (Josh. 11:15)
11. All the _____ of the earth. (Isa. 45:22)
16. Sorrowful.
20. Battle.
23. Neither purse, _____ scrip. (Luke 10:4)
25. "____ my back, please."

26. King Saul was buried beneath one of these trees. (1 Chron. 10:12)
27. Enjoyment.
28. Deliver us _____. (Matt. 6:13; 2 words)
30. Catch.
32. "____ your vegetables."
33. Arid.
35. Expert.
37. ____ shall not live by bread alone. (Matt. 4:4)
40. Lock's companion.
42. Dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, _____ men. (Acts 2:5)
45. The ____ are gathered and burned in the fire. (Matt. 13:40)
47. They ____ I not. (Matt. 6:28)
48. Abraham's wife, S_____.
49. Gather leaves.
51. Mexican coin.
53. Frozen over.
54. This priest had seven sons, S_____.
- (Acts 19:14)
55. Adam's home.
57. Cease.
59. Glass container.

All Bible verses are KJV unless otherwise specified.

Preparing for retirement

If you've got questions about retirement, the State Board of Missions has answers.

The Preparing for Retirement workshop will cover these topics:

- ▶ The basics of retirement planning.
 - ▶ How much do I need to retire?
 - ▶ When can I retire?
 - ▶ Basics of GuideStone investments.
 - ▶ Withdrawal strategies.
 - ▶ Basics of Social Security and Medicare.
- It will be available at two dates and locations:
- ▶ Sept. 18, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., at Canaan Baptist Church in Bessemer.
 - ▶ Sept. 21, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., at First Baptist

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



Church Decatur.

Lunch is not included in this event, but registration is requested to make sure enough materials are available.

For information or to register, visit alsbom.org/preparingforretirement.

Church Revitalization conference Sept. 25

Is your church's vision for the future expanding? Is the congregation growing? Are most of your church leaders under the age of 60?

If your answer to any of these questions is "no," it might be time to consider starting a revitalization journey and get some valuable information that could help you chart the course for the future.

Sam Rainer, author of The Church Revitalization Checklist, will be the speaker for this event.



RAINER

He is the president of Church Answers and lead pastor of West Bradenton Baptist Church in Florida.

The one-day conference will be held Sept. 25, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., at the State Board of Missions in Prattville. The

\$10 cost includes lunch and materials. The Church Revitalization event Sept. 25 will share the latest research on having a healthy church.

To register, visit churchhealthal.org/cr-rainer.

Pay careful attention to your church signage

By Mark MacDonald
The Alabama Baptist

It's fall, which means many people will return to regular church attendance and you may see more visitors and guests too. Does your church signage help everyone find where they need to go?

Remember, you drive onto the church property more than most. So you probably don't notice the signage.

But those who are new to your church need certain signs to feel welcomed.

Five signs

If you have a sprawling campus, you certainly recognize the value of church signage.

But even smaller church properties benefit from helpful directional signage.

There are five signs you need:

1. Main sign to church campus/property.

This large sign needs to be visible by traffic so they can identify the church building or campus.

It can be simple with just the name of your church or it can be more complex with your church logo, brand fonts and colors. Some main signs even have service times.

Be careful about cluttering the main sign with too many details — most only want a church name.

You probably don't need pastor names, website address or other details most discover when they search your name online.

Make the church name on the sign large and use a professionally designed and constructed sign. Resist cleverness.



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/The Alabama Baptist

2. Entrance signs.

The main door needs signage to catch the eyes of guests. This can be a prominent door color with a simple sign that says "Welcome" or "Worship."

You want to lead people from their parking spot into their next location. If there are other doors that could be confused with a main entrance, be sure to identify those doors as secondary and why someone might use them. Be clear.

Additionally, encourage your regular attendees to recognize visitors and guests and to help them transition from one area to another (like from the parking lot to the sanctuary or from a Bible study class to worship service).

Similar look

Church entrance signs should look similar to the main sign.

Match the shape, color,

font and construction type of your main sign as much as possible.

3. Guest parking signs.

If you have designated guest parking, be sure to mark those spots with signs that can be viewed above parked cars. These signs need to match the overall design of all other signs.

Keep the signs simple and legible.

"Guests" over a parking area is all you probably need to get them to park there. Be sure you have

someone at the door to give a special welcome to anyone who parks in the special spots.

4. Directional signs.

Any intersection in your parking area that requires a decision needs simple, legible and brand-controlled directional signs. Ideally, these will match all your other signage.

If you can't see your main entrance from the decision point, be sure to add directional signs to lead people to it.

5. Indoor signage.

Once people arrive inside the main entrance, are there ways proper signage could help them feel more comfortable getting seated in the sanctuary or navigating to the bathroom, classrooms or other spaces?

Key spaces

Keep signs above head level in a busy foyer or hallway. At each decision intersection, be clear where all the important rooms are: Worship, Bathrooms, Nursery, Sunday School, etc.

It also can be helpful to label exits in a way that points people back to the parking lot at the end of the service.

Maintain design standards and brand consistency on interior signs.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Mark MacDonald is a communication pastor, speaker, consultant, bestselling author, church branding strategist for BeKnownforSomething.com and executive director of Center for Church Communication, empowering churches to be known for something relevant throughout their ministries, websites and social media. Find his book at BeKnownBook.com.

"Keep signs above head level in a busy foyer or hallway. At each decision intersection, be clear where all the important rooms are."

Making connections

Huntsville church hopes TV Church can be a bridge to neighbors

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

First Baptist Church Huntsville is a well-known local landmark for its large mosaic of Jesus on the exterior and portrait of the cosmos designed into its stained-glass windows.

But pastor Travis Collins said every Wednesday when he records videos for TV Church, he goes for the opposite look.

“I try not to use churchy

language, stained-glass language,” he said.

That’s because the goal of TV Church is to reach people who might not walk into a church building, Collins said.

Pandemic effects

The idea didn’t start that way initially. For 40 years, FBC Huntsville has broadcast its 10:30 a.m. traditional service live on local CBS affiliate WHNT.

But when the COVID-19

pandemic hit in 2020, the focus began to change.

As many churches halted in-person services for a time and shifted to livestream only, FBC Huntsville also moved to a video-only approach, and Collins found he didn’t love preaching to an empty room.

“So I started going with one camera guy to interesting places around town, and I’d do the message and break it up into segments, and then he would put it all together,” Collins said.

The response was good, he said, and as time went on, he and others on staff wondered if that format could have a future. Their long-standing broadcast had an audience for sure — about 18,000 were tuning in each week.

Over the years, Collins had met many people who said they watched the service, and he assumed from those conversations that many of their viewers had a strong church background.

But he said he and the staff thought this different programming style — the sermon segments shot on location — might have a different reach.

They started brainstorming about a new type of television program that could reach an audience who didn’t know church culture.

Community focus

The result was TV Church, which Collins said stands for “Tennessee Valley” but makes a nice play on words.

“We shoot at spots around north Alabama because we’re trying to expand our reach beyond Huntsville,” he said, noting that the program runs on local ABC affiliate WAAY 31. “The Nielson ratings say there are about 8,000 watching it now.”



Photo courtesy of FBC Huntsville

Travis Collins, pastor of FBC Huntsville, and the church media team shoot TV Church segments at locations around North Alabama.

During each episode, Collins gives a 17-minute, TED Talks-style biblical message from locations ranging from the children’s museum in Huntsville to the side of the Sea of Galilee in Israel. Under Micah Wally, the church’s minister of contemporary worship, they also contracted with a local production company to make music videos of their original worship music.

The program also includes an interview with a local person of influence on a topic related to the message, Collins said.

And in addition to broadcasting the show on TV and streaming it online, they post Facebook Reels from each

episode that are less than a minute long.

As TV Church has grown, it’s been an all-hands-on-deck ministry for church staff, especially Michael Kearney, media director, whom Collins calls a “master editor.”

All of it is to try to connect with their neighbors, Collins said, adding that they “believe we’re finding our part in the Great Commission.”

“The world of church is changing; we all know that,” he said. “There are fewer and fewer people attracted to a building, so we have to figure out how to take the church to people.”

Discipleship tool

Collins said he and others at FBC Huntsville don’t believe watching TV Church is a substitute for being involved in a church and engaging, but they hope it can be a bridge to help people get there. As a first point of entry, on TV Church’s website, there’s a link to get involved with a Facebook community.

Collins said another goal is that viewers would eventually “love

to have groups meeting in homes watching and asking questions and making disciples.”

“This will reach its potential only when people are using it as a tool of discipleship,” he said.

For now, he’s grateful for the connections they’ve already made.

“We have people who have come to the church because of watching it,” Collins said.

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For August 27

Explore the Bible

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



GOOD Lamentations 3:19–33

Lamentations was written shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. A skillful and emotional poet describes the devastation of the city of Jerusalem brought about by the Babylonians but ultimately caused by the Lord's anger against His people. Lamentations consists of five laments or funeral songs that all relate to the destruction of Jerusalem.

From Despair to Hope (19–24)

As Jeremiah focused on the devastation of Jerusalem, he became depressed. By asking God to remember him, he was asking God to show him compassion in the midst of his despair and rid him of his suffering. At the moment of his deepest despair and as he recalled his bitter affliction, his hopelessness turned to hope as he remembered the Lord.

The unbroken mood of despair was displaced by a beautiful affirmation of hope in spite of suffering. The basis for renewed hope was the Lord's "faithful love." The Hebrew word "hesed" can also be translated as "covenant love" or "loyal love."

This precious word means loyalty or faithfulness, especially as related to the covenant initiated by God. It also involves obligations to family, friends and the community.

The writers of the Old Testament most often used this word to describe the Lord's kindness, loving disposition and faithfulness to His covenant people.

Another basis for hope was Jeremiah's remembrance that God's "mercies never end." God's mercies are new every morning, and He is good to those who wait on Him.

The Hebrew word translated "mercies" is related to the womb. It describes the tender, caring love of a mother for her child and God's willingness to forgive the sins of his people. Jeremiah acknowledges in verse 24 that all he truly needs is

the Lord. There is hope because God is faithful!

From Waiting to Seeing (25–30)

In verses 25–27, each verse begins with the word "good" in the Hebrew text. The word "good" can refer to someone or something useful, acceptable or beneficial. It can also refer to beauty, moral uprightness or something desirable.

In the midst of his despair, Jeremiah remembered that God is good in every way. We are to wait on the Lord and accept His discipline because He is good and always knows and does what is right.

Paradoxically, we are to wait on the Lord by seeking Him. We are to set our mind's attention and heart's affection on Him. We must read and study the Bible if we want the faith to trust God (Rom. 10:17).

Christians who suffer do more than suffer. They also wait. This is an active resting in the goodness of God with the hopeful expectation that someday the trials will come to an end.

These verses, in which Jeremiah praises God for His faithful mercies and surrenders to His timetable for salvation, form the climax of the Book of Lamentations.

In Hebrew poetry, the most important truths are contained in the center of the work. In these verses, we see that Jeremiah reaches a place of comfort and hope that marks a turning point for him.

From Rejection to Compassion (31–33)

These verses teach us how we can accept life's trials and tribulations with quiet confidence. Affliction can be borne more easily when we understand that God's rejection and alienation and the suffering that results do not last forever.

God lovingly disciplines His children for a time for the sake of their spiritual well-being.

*"The Lord is good
to those who wait
for Him, to the soul
who seeks Him."*

Lamentations 3:25

Bible Studies for Life

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



ABIGAIL: A WOMAN OF WISDOM 1 Samuel 25:14–17, 23–28, 32–35

In Abigail we find a woman of wisdom who models how godly wisdom, marked by humility and grace, can enable a person to serve as an intermediary in a time of crisis.

Be the kind of person others trust to do what is right. (14–17)

Nabal and Abigail were an odd couple. She was as bright and beautiful as he was mean and miserly, "harsh and evil in his dealings" (v. 3). He was generally foolish as well. David and his men were on the run and somewhat dependent upon the goodwill of others.

Being an extraordinarily wealthy man, Nabal had huge flocks of sheep and goats and thus a major sheep-shearing operation that could be expected to turn a huge profit.

David's men had protected Nabal's flocks and shepherds with the expectation of being rewarded once Nabal recognized how valuable it had been for his profit margin.

Nabal didn't merely rebuff David's request for compensation but went further and sought to shame David publicly as someone's worthless, runaway servant.

One of Nabal's servants decided that Abigail needed to be informed. Abigail was known as an intelligent and reasonable person who could be counted on to do what is right, especially in times of crisis. Heads would literally roll if Abigail couldn't undo the damage caused by her foolish husband.

Take the initiative to exercise and share godly wisdom. (23–28)

Given Nabal's offense of treating David shamefully in an honor culture, Abigail's approach was to humble herself and make it abso-

lutely clear that she considered David to be a man of great honor and her own husband to be the one who lacked honor.

She brought David a king's ransom and bowed low before him in an act of complete humility and submission, referring to him repeatedly as her lord and to herself as his servant. She asked for forgiveness and poured shame on her foolish husband who had sought to shame David.

Most importantly, knowing David to be a man of God, she invoked the Lord and His providence as a sign that God did not want David to shed blood. She urged a course of action marked by grace and mercy rather than revenge.

Praise God when others follow godly wisdom. (32–25)

Abigail's extraordinarily wise response brings David back to his spiritual senses and de-escalates the situation. David recognizes that Abigail's intervention was not merely a cleverly calculated attempt to spare her husband but an act of God Himself.

God was at work through Abigail to keep David from acting on his sinful desire to murder a man and his servants out of rage. Abigail's approach to resolving this conflict anticipated Christ's own approach. Christ "emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant" and "humbled himself" before God that we might be spared (Phil. 2:7, 8).

By going out to intervene, Abigail put her life on the line in order to save the lives of numerous others, including that of her foolish husband. We need more Abigails in our world today, and we should praise God whenever we see godly wisdom, approachability, humility and spiritual discernment put into practice.

*"For the Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house,
because my lord is fighting the battles of the Lord."*

1 Samuel 25:28

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Tracy Riggs Frontz

The Alabama Baptist

Katy Nichole explains how ‘the Lord is always present’ in her writing

Christian singer/songwriter Katy Nichole has rocketed up the charts since her first release, “In Jesus Name (God of Possible).” Her first full-length album, “Jesus Changed My Life,” builds on the artist’s consistent theme of battling mental health issues — a struggle her audience understands well.

Nichole struggles with episodes of anxiety and depression, but she sings of freedom from the battle.

“Hope is my main message — that there is hope, and that hope is in Jesus. My hope is that this music I create, that I’m writing, will reach people in a way that they just feel the presence of God and that they feel that the Lord is wrapping them up in His kind and loving embrace,” Nichole explained.

Released in February, “Jesus Changed My Life” marks a moment for Nichole, who has toured this year with CAIN and David Leonard. Their fall tour kicks off Sept. 20 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

‘Bring meaning’

In 2022, “In Jesus Name” won a K-LOVE Fan Award for worship song of the year, was Dove Award-nominated and was No. 1 on the Hot Christian Songs chart for 20 weeks. The first song on the album,



KATY NICHOLE

Photo courtesy of Erick Frost

it’s one of Nichole’s favorites due to its impact on listeners. “Hold On” is another song she really loves.

“Those two songs mean the most to me on the album,” Nichole said.

“They [bring meaning] to my story and where my heart is.”

Fans have told Nichole how much “In Jesus Name” means to them. They report stories of healing and how their faith in the power of prayer has been strengthened.

At a concert at Red Rocks Amphitheatre in Colorado, the song made a huge impression on everyone there, especially one individual.

‘Presence of God’

“I saw so many people gathering around to pray for this little boy who had cancer. It was pretty mind-blowing. Also, it felt like the presence of God was all over the room,” Nichole recalled.

“Hearing this little boy singing

the song, praying it over himself as well ... there are just quite a few stories of people praying it over themselves through their sickness or so many different things,” she continued.

In spite of success happening quickly and believing in the power of prayer, this rise to fame still came with bumps and bruises.

Her desperation in the midst of the darkness of anxiety and depression was also

the inspiration for “Please,” another new song on the album.

“I was struggling quite a bit, and I felt like I wanted to write something that felt like a cry — like something I would actually sing, like in a prayer. This one really is [a prayer song]. It’s knowing that I need God. I need the presence of the Lord ... and I need it so deeply ... that I have to cry out sometimes,” Nichole related. “I know that there are moments of desperation in people’s

lives, and I wanted to give other people a chance to have someone that feels like, ‘This is what I’ve come to say.’”

Nichole loves touring and has done so with big-name artists such as Jeremy Camp and Matthew West.

She is excited about what is happening on the Live and In Color tour.

‘Hearing people sing’

“Every night you get to hear people singing back to you. It’s a crazy feeling, hearing people sing the songs that you’ve written. It is incredible. That has really warmed my heart, and it [gave] me chills every night to hear people singing so loudly on the tour,” she said.

Audience participation is not the only aspect Nichole enjoys during tours, however. Watching movies, eating snacks, playing games and simply hanging out [with the other artists] are also why she loves touring.

“Being out on the road is so much fun. One of the greatest things about this tour ... is the friendships that were already built, even before we stepped onto the tour together,” she said.

Though her songs are mostly written to encourage Christians, Nichole hopes that unbelievers, those still searching, will find her music and find the hope that Jesus provides.

“The Lord is always present in the music that I’m writing — and always will be,” she said. “Whether that’s through my own life and the stories I have in my own life through my past, or me praising the name of Jesus, I want to incorporate what I know of God and the promises that He keeps and His hope and the joy that He brings.”

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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