The Alabama Baptist

Toll free 800-803-5201
www.thealabamabaptist.org

October 19, 2023

Vol. 188, No. 41
Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

Formerly imprisoned women bow their heads in prayer during a church service in Bangkok, Thailand.

IMB photo

Raising awareness

International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church highlights global dangers, needs

In a world where someone is killed for their faith every two minutes, believers are uniting in prayer on Sunday, Nov. 5, for the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church.

Startling statistics from Open Doors' World Watch List reveal last year alone, 5,621 Christians lost their lives due to faith-related reasons, 2,110 churches faced brutal attacks and 4,542 Christians were unjustly detained. One in seven Christians worldwide currently faces persecution in various forms.

Each day, dedicated IMB missionaries stand alongside courageous national believers who endure unimaginable persecution for simply living out their faith.

Recent events in Guerrero, Mexico, serve as a stark example of this ongoing struggle. Eduardo, a local believer, was arrested by authorities for renouncing his role as a lay priest/cantor, a position the local Catholic Church had compensated him for.

Unjust detainment

His detainment resulted in an exorbitant fine and imprisonment until the sum could be paid.

Eduardo's church family rallied to his support, approaching local authorities to secure his release from what they knew was an unjust incarceration.

The IMB team in Guerrero earnestly requests prayers for Eduardo and for other believers to remain strong in their faith, despite fear of persecution.

Similar stories come from other countries where it's hard to share the gospel. The Voice of the Martyrs' 2023 IDOP short feature film,

(*See 'Emphasis,' page 12*)

SPOTLIGHT SPONSOR ...

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary — "We are committed to preparing the next generation of servants in Alabama."

SCAN ME

CONNECT WITH US

alabamabaptist

alabamabaptist

thealabamabaptist

YouTube
TABMediaGroup

TABMediaGroup

TAB MEDIA GROUP PODCASTS
tabonline.org/podcasts

Screenshot

Don Bell, pastor of Bethsaida Baptist Church in Furman, speaks at the Brotherhood of Men event with his dog, Eli, on Aug. 26. The topic of that night's message was Time for Men to Lead Again.

Furman church hosts Brotherhood of Men event

In early August, we shared with you about pastor Don Bell's heart to encourage men to step up and lead. On Aug. 26 his church — Bethsaida Baptist in Furman — hosted 80 men from eight counties for the Brotherhood of Men event.

The topic of that night's message was Time for Men to Lead Again. The event drew a diverse crowd, which Bell said "shows that everyone understands that there's a need for men to stand."

On the three Thursday nights after that, Bell also led workshops on these topics:

- Your first impression as a man matters.
- Masculinity is not toxic.
- Man was created to lead.

And on Oct. 19 he plans to host a fourth workshop on the topic of where, when and how to lead.

Bell said he hopes to take the events to churches in other parts of the state. He said it could either be done in a two-night event, or he could speak at a one-night event then leave the workshop curriculum with guidelines on how to lead it for the men in your church after the event.

'Our culture is just gone'

"The need is everywhere," he said. "Our culture is just gone. If the men would stand and lead, you'd have a very different country in a short amount of time."

To contact Bell, call 251-362-5169 or email don@thedonbellcompany.com. (The Alabama Baptist)

M	O	S	E	S		P	A	U	L		G	O
I	N	N		O	V	E	R		A	M	E	N
N	E	O	N		E	R	E	C	T	E	D	
D		W	E	A	N	S		H	E		E	R
	A		V		I	O	T	A		T	R	I
	D	O	E		S	N	A	R	E			S
A		T	R	I	O		R	I	D	E		E
B	A	H		M	N		S	O	I	L		N
B	E	E	S			B	U	T	T	E	R	
A	I	R		T	R	U	S	S		M	A	T
			F	E	E	L			D	E	M	O
E	G	L	O	N		B	A	N	A	N	A	S
	E	A	R	T	H		M	O	N	T	H	S

The crossword puzzle can be found on page 15.

Former TAB Media Group correspondent, Samford instructor Sandra Bearden dies

We learned recently of the Sept. 25 death of Sandra Bearden, who during her long career in journalism and public relations was a correspondent for The Alabama Baptist and a journalism faculty member at Samford University.

Sandra was also part of our extended Alabama Baptist family as a member of First Baptist Church Trussville for 44 years. We send our condolences to Sandra's daughter, Margaret Ann, her granddaughters and her family and friends.

BEARDEN

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

(ISSN 0738-7741; USPS 011-080)
© The Alabama Baptist, Inc.
is published weekly except for one week in July and December by The Alabama Baptist, Inc., at 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. Phone: 205-870-4720. Statewide phone: 800-803-5201.
Website: www.thealabamabaptist.org
Email: news@thealabamabaptist.org
or subscribe@thealabamabaptist.org
Periodicals postage paid at Hattiesburg, Miss.

ANNUAL TAB SUBSCRIPTION RATES
Includes print, digital, app and full web access

Group Rate per subscriber per year — $16.25

Individual — $34.95 per year (50 issues)

JENNIFER DAVIS RASH
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Carrie Brown McWhorter
Content Editor

Content, design and production
Lauren C. Grim
Daniel Gilliland
Malinda McGill, Holly Smith
Grace Thornton

Digital products
Shawn Hendricks
Hannah Muñoz

Digital services
James Hammack

Marketing and subscriptions
Debbie Campbell
Sarah Gill

Advertising
Susan Stevens
Amy Hacker
Pam Holt
Tim Childers

Operations
Maggie Evans
Jessica Ingram, Robin McCall, Dianna Cagle
Annette Brown, Deb Lowery

NEWS SERVICES
Baptist Press (BP)
Religion News Service (RNS)
Morning Star News (MS)

POSTMASTER
Send address changes to:
The Alabama Baptist
3310 Independence Drive
Birmingham, AL 35209

ADDRESS CHANGE
Send old and new addresses, and name of church to:
Subscription Department
3310 Independence Drive
Birmingham, AL 35209
Allow two weeks.

To the best of our knowledge, all of the ads in *The Alabama Baptist* represent legitimate companies and offerings. However, one should always exercise normal business caution in responding to ads.

Full member of Alabama Press Association

Accredited member of Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability ECFA

'Nation's Top Regional Christian Newspaper'
1999, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2022 as judged by Associated Church Press, Baptist Communicators Association, Evangelical Press Association or Religion Communicators Council

OPINION

RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

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

jrash@thealabamabaptist.org @RashionalThts

Sweet spot of communication leads to better quality of life

Access to the location is always a bit tricky and I tend to over-explain when providing directions, causing even more confusion.

Recently, I've attempted to find the precise amount of information to share — exactly which details and in as few words as possible.

Funny thing though, the result is typically the same. No matter if I go into great detail, provide only the street address or share somewhere in the middle, I still end up coaching the person on how to find the entrance. It's not their fault; it's really hard to grasp without seeing it.

Still, I'm intrigued by how many of the tips on what to look for are missed in the explanations. And, of course, the similarity of this situation to our relationship with Christ and to the Word of God definitely jumped out at me.

Do we always truly seek to fully understand by listening carefully, processing thoroughly and applying without shortcuts?

Or do we try to compute all the details quickly in our minds and determine we know generally what to do and where to go, all while tuning out the one giving the instructions?

In some cases, we may not be listening at all. And in other cases, we are so focused on the first few items shared that we miss what is said next.

Because we all process information differently and respond to unexpected situations differently, it's important for communication and comprehension to be clear on both sides of the conversation.

Focus on the conversation

One way to accomplish this is to have the conversation when all parties are fully focused and can absorb the information in the way that best fits them.

Trusting the details will be repeated also helps the one listening follow along calmly in whichever rhythm works best for him or her.

For instance, some people do best with hearing the full set of instructions while not writing any notes or interrupting to ask questions. Then they can go back and write down highlights and personal notes while clarifying various segments.

Others need full written instructions ahead of time so they can read over them carefully on their own. From there, they do best with a follow-up discussion and opportunity to ask questions.

Additionally, while all of us need multiple reminders and contact points, too many touches can actually become white noise and eventually be ignored.

It's a delicate balance attempting to find the sweet spot of communication, but it's one that will improve all of our lives, especially in our walk with the Lord, if we continue to work on it.

One of our favorite parts of the annual associational meetings is to celebrate those who work faithfully behind the scenes. Patsy Seitz is one of those. She is retiring after 18 years of service as financial secretary/ministry assistant for West Central and Selma Baptist associations and was honored Oct. 9 by (l to r) Lonette Berg of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and DOMs Tom Stacey (previous) and Lee Tate (current).

Photos by Jennifer Davis Rash/ The Alabama Baptist

OPINION

Your Voice

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

Evangelicals release statement in support of Israel

Dozens of SBC and other Christian leaders are signatories to an "Evangelical Statement in Support of Israel" in response to the attacks against the people of Israel by Hamas.

The full list of signatories is posted at erlc.com/resource-library/statements/israel. Here is the statement:

"In the wake of the evil and indefensible atrocities now committed against the people of Israel by Hamas, we, the undersigned, unequivocally condemn the violence against the vulnerable, fully support Israel's right and duty to defend itself against further attack, and urgently call all Christians to pray for the salvation and peace of the people of Israel and Palestine.

"While our theological perspectives on Israel and the Church may vary, we are unified in calling attacks against Jewish people especially troubling as they have been often targeted by their neighbors since God called them as His people in the days of Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3).

"Since the inception of the modern state of Israel in 1948, Israel has faced numerous attacks, incursions and violations of its national sovereignty. The Jewish people have long endured genocidal attempts to eradicate them and to destroy the Jewish state. These antisemitic, deadly ideologies and terrorist actions must be opposed.

"Israel stands as a rare example of democracy in a region dominated by authoritarian regimes. The tragic events of Oct. 7 further underscore the importance of democracy in our world and stand as a sober reminder that supporting Israel's right to exist is both urgent and needed.

"In keeping with Christian Just War tradition, we also affirm the legitimacy of Israel's right to respond against those who have initiated these attacks as Romans 13 grants governments the power to bear the sword against those who commit such evil acts against innocent life."

Read more at erlc.com/resource-library/statements/israel.

God's love for all people

"Furthermore, we recognize the dignity and personhood of all persons living in the Middle East and affirm God's love for them, as well as His offer of salvation through Jesus Christ to all people.

"We also recognize the difficult ministry of Jewish and Palestinian believers who labor for the gospel. We pray for their protection and for God's blessing on their gospel ministry.

"Finally, we call on American policymakers to use their power to take all forms of terrorism seriously and call governments and civil authorities to confront evil work to prevent future attacks so that the innocent and vulnerable will be protected.

May God bring peace to the Middle East. (ERLC)

4 ways to pray as crisis unfolds in Holy Land

As we watch devastating events taking place in the Holy Land, we are not mere spectators.

We don't just see headlines. We see people. Right now they are injured, frightened, missing. They are lost. As this crisis unfolds, we will not ignore it. We will not be silent. We will not stand still.

We will cry out to God on their behalf, asking Him to bring about true peace as only He can.

Join us now as we pray together.

1. Pray for physical needs.

Men, women and children are facing unspeakable horrors. While this region has a history of unrest, the escalation of violence demands an urgency in our intercession.

Pray now that God would have mercy on the millions who are suffering and comfort those who have lost loved ones. Ask God to bless the efforts of those distributing aid. Pray that He will provide opportunities for them to share His love.

2. Pray for lostness.

Rockets are launched and the streets are filled with violence. Amid this chaos, the lost are living and dying in darkness. While the nations rage, God is still in control and near to all who call out to Him.

Pray that God will use current events to draw the lost into a relationship with His Son.

3. Pray for gospel access.

Believers are walking through this crisis with non-believing neighbors, friends and family members.

Pray that believers will have attitudes of peace amid the current situation. Pray that the lost will ask them about the peace they have in times of trouble.

4. Pray for the Church.

In a land impacted by years of hatred, believers from diverse backgrounds who are united in Christ can display God's love to each other and to their neighbors.

Pray that they will seek to share and be the light of Jesus to their neighbors. (IMB)

EDITOR'S NOTE — Find a printable prayer guide suitable for bulletin inserts at tabonline.org/israel-prayer.

We want to hear from you! Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org.

OPINION

> "For me, a seminary presidency is not about legacy; it is about stewardship."
>
> JEFF IORG
> *President of Gateway Seminary*

The finger of God is in all of history, and Christ is its central figure. He is as much involved now as He has been through the ages.

@brocraigc
X (formerly Twitter)

"The enemy is targeting our young men; therefore, we must be proactive in helping our teen guys know how to address the things they deal with on a daily basis. It's on us as the older generations to equip them with a biblical foundation to help them navigate a post-Christian culture," said **Larry Hyche,** men's spiritual development strategist and an associate in the office of global missions for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

The abundant life Jesus promises is seen both in eternal life and sustaining grace in this earthly life.

Grace for today, hope for tomorrow. That's who Jesus is.

@DanielRitchie
X (formerly Twitter)

"When we do not pass on to our next generation or to the adults in our congregation the work God is doing around the world and here in the States, we fail to help them see the bigger picture of how to be a part of God's work," said **Candace McIntosh,** executive director of Alabama Woman's Missionary Union.

Broken, humbly weeping at the feet of Jesus.

As much as we tend to fight it, it is such a sweet place to be.

All burdens are cast off.

All pride is laid down.

All fear of man is swallowed up by the greatness of God.

@trailman374
X (formerly Twitter)

"When God puts a call on your life, you're always going to be unsettled until you fulfill that call," **Brenda Rinehart** said. "That restlessness, that 'I can't get comfortable' feeling — I think that, until you do it, you will be restless." Rinehart and her husband, Joseph, adopted three girls with Down syndrome.

For us to have assurance, we need to be looking solely to Christ and resting solely in His work to save us.

@NWBingham
X (formerly Twitter)

"My prayer before I go on stage is, 'Lord, let these people be focused on only You through these words,'" said singer-songwriter **Jordan Feliz.** "Ultimately, the ability for that to happen through a song ... is incredible and so powerful, knowing that these songs can prove to people that Jesus can heal the brokenhearted and that He is the answer for those who are struggling and searching."

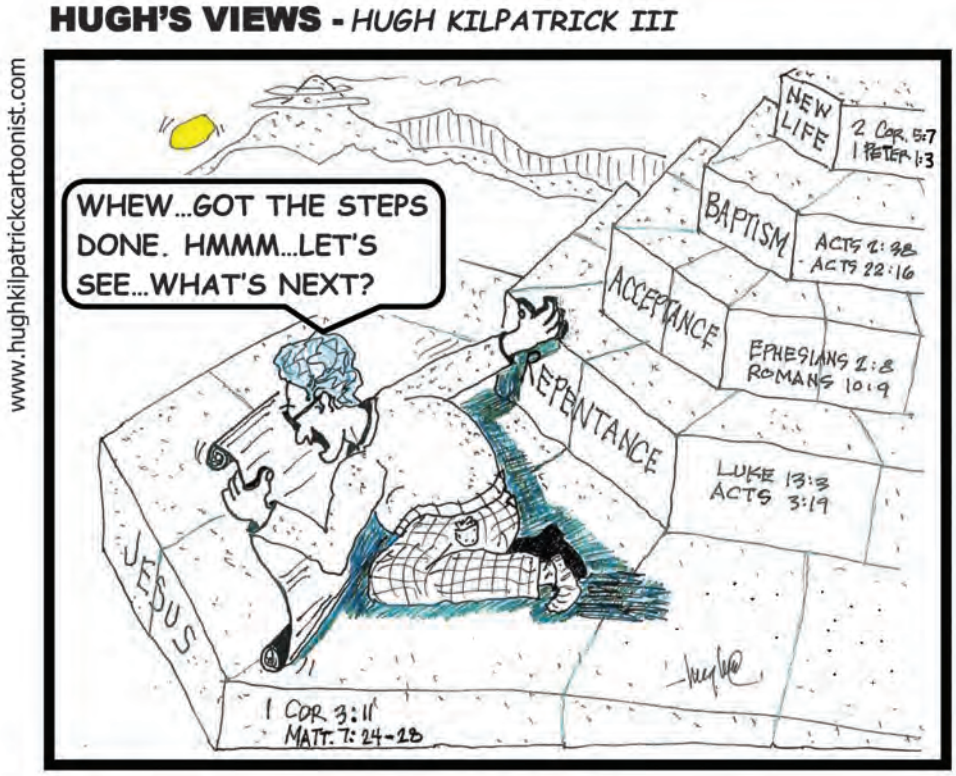
Pastors — and people in the pew — are to make God's redemptive rule and right relationship with Him the highest priorities, and we must concern ourselves with today, not tomorrow, trusting that God will provide for us, our families and our congregation.

Jesus's words here need not be limited in their application to the provision of physical needs ... but may be applied to our need for spiritual sustenance as well.

Jeff Robinson
Director of news and information
Southern Seminary

"As Christ-followers, as Christian parents and as ministry leaders, we need to take [children's worship] more seriously and just become more intentional about helping our kids learn the pathway of running to the Father," said Dove Award-winning worship leader, songwriter and author **Yancy.** "I'm fully convinced that if we can help them taste and see that He is good, they will hunger and thirst for more of Him. That's my desire and my passion."

HUGH'S VIEWS - *HUGH KILPATRICK III*



STEP BY STEP
PSALM 37:23

SBOM photo

Brokenhearted praying for Israel

By Rick Lance
Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

Recent horrific events related to the attacks of Hamas on innocent people in Israel has caught the attention of the world and broken our hearts as Christians.

Understandably, Israel is seeking to protect itself from attacks from Hamas, Hezbollah and other terrorist groups.

Alabama Baptists join the larger family of Southern Baptists in condemning these heinous crimes against innocent and vulnerable people.

We realize that relations in this region are historically complicated.

For 75 years, we have rightly recognized Israel as the only democracy in the region.

Furthermore, we know there are fellow Christians and other freedom-loving people in Israel and beyond in the Middle East, and we offer them our prayer support.

We are praying for our national leaders as the world faces this regional crisis.

We believe it is incumbent upon our national leaders to take action to confront terrorism in all forms and especially to prevent future attacks.

In the days to come, our national resolve concerning this situation will be tested.

May we be found faithful in praying for a just peace knowing that true peace only comes from the Prince of Peace.

NEWS

3 stories you should know

Photo courtesy of Baptist Standard

Trained volunteers serving with Texas Baptist Men are working in a secure location in Israel, cooking meals for Israelis and Palestinians in neighborhoods affected by the war between Israel and Hamas. John-Travis Smith, who coordinates TBM ministry in Israel, said: "People caught in the middle of this conflict are hurting. They're scared. And they're hungry. TBM is seeking to meet their physical needs and provide a reminder that God loves them." (Baptist Standard)

Churches feeling effects of inflation, survey says

About half of U.S. Protestant pastors say the current economy is negatively impacting their church, primarily because giving is not keeping up with inflation.

According to Lifeway Research, just 8% of pastors surveyed said the current economy is a positive factor for their churches.

More than two-thirds of pastors say giving at their churches is at or above 2022 levels, but inflationary pressures have forced them to cut spending and give smaller raises than pastors and staff need.

Small churches, those with under 250 members, seem to be struggling the most, the report said.

"In a smaller church, if economic factors hurt even a couple of families, chances are the church feels it," said Scott McConnell, executive director of Lifeway Research. (TAB)

Iorg asks Gateway trustees to start presidential search

Gateway Seminary President Jeff Iorg has asked the school's board of trustees to begin the search for his successor.

Iorg made the request at the board's Oct. 10 meeting in Portland, Oregon, noting it is the "appropriate time to find capable, fresh leadership to propel Gateway forward."

The board iniated a leadership transition plan adopted in 2018 and revised in early 2023, which outlines an 18-month transition timeline.

J. Robert White, longtime executive director of the Georgia Baptist Mission Board who retired in 2018, was elected as chair of the search committee.

Iorg will continue to lead the seminary during the search process, and said he and his wife, Ann, remain "committed to Gateway's mission." (Gateway)

Persecuted church

Christian family of 7 detained in Laos, barred from village by officials

VIENTIANE, Laos — Christians in two provinces in Laos have faced persecution by government officials in recent months.

On Sept. 3 in Salavan province, a Christian family of seven was barred from Tabong village, their house destroyed and the family members put into detention when they would not renounce their Christian faith. The family has secured temporary shelter, according to information released by Human Rights Watcher for Lao Religious Freedom and reported by Morning Star News.

On Oct. 1, the deputy village chief and local security forces halted the worship service at a house church in Khampou village in Savannakhet Province. Eighteen individuals were threatened with arrest and a large fine if they continue to practice their religion, Morning Star reported.

Article 30 of Laos' constitution acknowledges the right to practice a religion, Morning Star's report noted. However, Laos is No. 31 on Open Doors' 2023 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian.

Unsplash.com

Christians among the dead, abducted in series of attacks in Nigeria

ABUJA, Nigeria — Seventeen Christians in Nigeria were killed in September and 35 were kidnapped in violence that continues to affect believers in the African nation.

Nigeria has led the world in the number of Christians killed for their faith or abducted in recent years, according to Open Doors, an organization that supports persecuted Christians around the world.

Recent reports from Morning Star News include a Sept. 20 attack on a village where one person died and three others were injured, including a Baptist pastor.

On Sept. 15, 15 Christians were killed in Kaduna state and 32 were kidnapped. Two days earlier, armed attackers abducted a pastor of Evangelical Church Winning All and two other Christians from Jos East County in Plateau state. On Sept. 7, a seminary student died in an attack on a Catholic Church in Kaduna state.

Nigeria is No. 6 on Open Doors' 2023 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian.

NEWS ITEMS COMPILED BY CARRIE McWHORTER AND LEIGH PRITCHETT

NEWS

Alabama news

ALABAMA-CRENSHAW

KIRKLAND

▸ **Jesse Kirkland** recently became the pastor of **Bradleyton Baptist Church, Highland Home.** Kirkland was ordained to gospel ministry Aug. 13. He and his wife, Brenda, have one son.

CONECUH ASSOCIATION

▸ **Long Branch Baptist Church, Red Level,** in the Cohassett community, celebrates homecoming Oct. 22, 10:45 a.m. Winston Foshee, pastor, will preach the message, and there will be special music and a reading of the church history during the service. A fellowship meal will follow the service. Everyone is invited.

COOSA RIVER ASSOCIATION

▸ **Steve Hullett** is the new interim pastor of **Mount Olive Baptist Church, Talladega.**

EAST LIBERTY ASSOCIATION

▸ **Paul Howard** (center) retired in August after 36 years as pastor of **Lafayette Heights Baptist Church, Lafayette.** The church honored him with a special dinner and named him pastor emeritus.

Photo courtesy of Harold Harmon

Howard grew up at Lafayette Heights, where his father was pastor. As a young adult, he was the minister of music and youth at Jackson Memorial Baptist Church, Lafayette, and New Pine Grove Baptist Church, Alexander City.

On Father's Day 1987, Howard became the pastor of Lafayette Heights. He passed on the ministry legacy he received from his father; both his son and his son-in-law are pastors.

Howard announced his retirement in January but continued until a new pastor was found. He still teaches men's Sunday School and helps out where needed. Howard and his wife, Donna, have two children and six grandchildren. Also pictured is Harold Harmon (left), former chairman of the deacons. Dave Bearden (right) is the new pastor.

HALL

ELMORE ASSOCIATION

▸ **Darryl Hall** is the new student ministry associate at **Journey Church of the River Region, Prattville.** Hall has served as an educator, leader and pastor for the past 15 years in the greater Birmingham and Montgomery areas. He will work closely with student pastor Tony Mest to make an impact for the gospel on area youth. He and his wife have two children. Mike Mozingo is pastor.

▸ **Jon LaMarque** is the new student minister at **Coosada Baptist Church, Coosada**. LaMarque was baptized and ordained at Coosada Baptist; he then earned his M.Div. from New Orleans Seminary and doctorate from Southern Seminary. After serving as student pastor at First Baptist Church Haleyville, for 11 years, he has returned home to Coosada. Jim Graham is pastor.

LAMARQUE

ESCAMBIA ASSOCIATION

▸ **Joshua Doss** is the new pastor of **North Brewton Baptist Church, Brewton.** Doss grew up in Tuscaloosa and attended the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee.

DOSS

He earned his M.Div. in pastoral leadership from Southwestern Seminary, then returned to Alabama, where he served as pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church, Laceys Spring, and Hamilton Baptist Church, Robertsdale. Joshua and his wife, Kaylie, have three daughters.

ETOWAH ASSOCIATION

▸ **Jerry Epps** is the new pastor of **Riddles Bend Baptist, Rainbow City.** He has served in both the Etowah and St. Clair associations. He was the interim pastor at Riddles Bend for a year. Epps and his wife, Carolyn, have been married for 54 years.

FRANKLIN ASSOCIATION

▸ **Franklin Baptist Association** celebrated its 125th anniversary Oct. 3 at Russellville First Baptist Church. Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, was the guest preacher. Lonette Berg (left), executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented a commemorative plaque to Scott Moore (right), moderator of the association and pastor of Waco Baptist Church.

Photo by Debbie Campbell/ The Alabama Baptist

A special document of the association's history from 1893 to 2023, compiled by Janice Dover, ministry assistant, was given to the more than 100 people attending the meeting, as well as a special bookmark listing member churches from the earliest records (1931–2023) and the directors of missions from 1949 to 2023. Larry Dover is director of missions.

MORGAN ASSOCIATION

▸ **Owen Meadows** is the new minister to students at **First Baptist Church Decatur.** He has a bachelor's degree from Auburn University and is currently taking online classes at New Orleans Seminary. He is married to Aleah.

TALLAPOOSA ASSOCIATION

▸ **Davey Bunn** recently became the pastor of **Fellowship Baptist Church, Dadeville.** He is married to Samantha.

Reports from Israel and how you can help

Members of Hill Crest Baptist Church in Anniston (right) and Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Birmingham were among many Americans who found themselves scrambling to find a way out of Israel after Hamas militants attacked the nation Oct. 7.

The Shades Mountain group crossed the Israeli border into a neighboring country and made it home safely Oct. 10.

At press time, the Hill Crest group had also traveled to a neighboring country and expected to return home Oct. 16.

Southern Baptist personnel are already at work in the region, caring for hurting people and bringing hope in Jesus' name, said Mark Wakefield, disaster relief strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. Those wishing to contribute to relief efforts through the SBOM may do so at sbdr.org/donate. All donations given through the SBOM will be forwarded to the International Mission Board to be used by those serving in the region. (TAB)

Facebook photo

ALABAMA NEWS ITEMS COMPILED BY KRISTI ENT AND DEBBIE CAMPBELL

Transformed by Christ

University of North Alabama BCM celebrates 100 years of ministering to students

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

At the first Baptist Campus Ministries event of the semester, a University of North Alabama student came up to Matt Daniels and said something that surprised him.

"He said, 'Hey Matt, I'm not a believer. I don't believe like you guys or think like you guys. But this is the most genuine thing I've ever seen,'" said Daniels, UNA's Baptist campus minister.

Drawn to that genuineness, the student jumped into a discipleship group and continued coming to BCM events.

Finding Christ

"Some of our male students rallied around him and said, 'Hey man, what are your questions?' And they walked through those with him," Daniels said.

And in late September, surrounded by some of those guys, the student surrendered his life to Christ.

Daniels said he's amazed by that story and every single other life God has changed through the BCM at UNA. On Sept. 30, he — along with alumni, students, parents and former campus ministers — marked the ministry's 100th anniversary with a tailgate and a celebration honoring the past, present and future.

'Special day'

Eddy Garner, who served as UNA's Baptist campus minister from 1988 to 2006, shared with those present about the BCM's legacy from past decades.

"It was a very special day," he said. "There were a lot of students there from all eras, from Jim Warren's time (campus minister from 1970 to 1988) to my years there all the way up through Matt's time."

The oldest alumni present for the celebration — Phillip and Martha Anderson, now members of First Baptist Church Florence — served as International Mission Board missionaries to the Philippines for years. It was a calling no doubt influenced by their campus minister, Jo Randall, who later also served as a missionary in Japan.

Garner said between him, Warren and Daniels, they could think of around 70 former students who went on to serve in ministry, not counting the many more who went on to share their faith through their professions.

Daniels also shared about how God is working through the BCM now.

They're averaging around 150 for discipleship groups and 250 in weekly worship; on one recent night, nearly 300 students showed up. Seven have professed new faith in Christ already this semester, and several football players were recently baptized on the practice field.

"It's pretty transformational what God is doing right now on campus," Daniels said.

He noted that he was confident the future would be just as bright.

"BCM will be a vital ministry long after we're gone," he said.

Photo courtesy of UNA BCM

Nearly 300 students attend a recent BCM worship gathering at UNA. They're averaging around 150 for discipleship groups and 250 in weekly worship.

For more information about the University of North Alabama BCM, visit northalabamabcm.com.

Photo courtesy of UNA BCM

Max Aeschlimann with Campus Outreach baptizes a UNA football player on the practice field. BCM has seen seven students profess new faith in Christ already this semester.

Photo courtesy of 3Circle Church

3Circle Church, a multisite church whose main campus is in Fairhope, baptized 135 people in Gulf Shores recently.

New life in Christ

135 people baptized by 3Circle Church at the beach in Gulf Shores

By Erin Roach
The Alabama Baptist

The flags, signs and blue T-shirts in the crowd of 600 people gathered in Gulf Shores let passers-by know something was up. 3Circle Church was baptizing 135 people who had trusted Christ as Savior and were celebrating new life.

Baptism on a Sunday morning in a church building can be intimidating for some people, said Jeremy Stevens, creative director for 3Circle Church in Fairhope.

"In our main campus, there could be 1,200 people in the room, and you're up there and the camera is on you, and the lights are on you," Stevens said.

But beach baptism takes the pressure off, he said.

"To me, it's what baptism is meant to be — your friends, your family, your small group there watching you, applauding, going crazy as soon as you come out of the water," Stevens said. "It's supposed to be the people you love the most and who are the closest to you seeing you make this decision and applauding you through it.

"It relieves some of the pressure of being the sole focus of the whole congregation on a Sunday morning."

Beach baptisms at 3Circle, a church with five campuses — three in Baldwin County, one in Mobile and one in Thomasville — began during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 when leaders had to rethink baptizing multiple people in one tub of water.

That year, they planned to meet on the beach in August and baptize people in the midst of the beautiful scenery of Gulf Shores, Stevens said. But when they arrived, bad weather prompted red flags, which warn people to stay out of the water.

Photo courtesy of 3Circle Church

People from age 8 to 80 were among those baptized at the beach, said Jeremy Stevens of 3Circle Church.

"The good news about Gulf Shores is that right across the street there is Lake Shelby. It almost meets right up to the ocean," Stevens said.

Lake Shelby at Gulf State Park has picnic tables, pavilions and a playground — a great setup for outdoor baptisms, Stevens said. 3Circle Church, with a name derived from Acts 1:8, has hosted baptisms four times now at that location.

'Biggest year yet'

The most recent time was Aug. 27, and it was their "biggest year yet," Stevens said. They started advertising several weeks in advance, urging people to participate if they had not followed through with believer's baptism.

"People just sign up for it. We have them meet with a pastor and ask questions about their faith journey," Stevens said. "We make sure before we baptize somebody that they're actually ready."

Participants drove from all five campuses to meet at Gulf Shores, and they found a check-in table to assign them to one of five lanes where they would be baptized.

Different lanes

"For instance, there's a lane that's pretty much family ministry, so the youth pastors and kids pastors are there," Stevens said. "Anybody in that age range, that's their lane. They go out, and their pastor gets to baptize them."

Chris Bell, lead pastor of 3Circle Church, spoke to the crowd about the importance of baptism and everyone prayed together, Stevens recounted. It took about half an hour to baptize every candidate, he said, and people stayed for food and fellowship afterward.

"This year we baptized a young couple who were dating, and then as soon as they got back to shore, he proposed," Stevens said. "No one expected that, but it was an amazing moment."

Photo courtesy of 3Circle Church

Individuals, couples and families were baptized in Gulf Shores by 3Circle Church.

Stevens encourages other churches to consider outdoor baptisms if they have the opportunity.

"I always love to see the wide variety of diversity there," he said. "You've got 8-year-olds up to 80-year-olds getting baptized. You have individuals, couples and families. You have Black, white, Hispanic and everything in between."

Being baptized in nature has a different feel than "a tub filled with water on the stage," he said.

"People walk by and wonder what's going on. It's a time to let them know life change is happening in the midst of this chaotic world we live in."

Trey Sullins, a family pastor of 3Circle, told of a woman who went to the event alone.

"She was so excited to be getting baptized. As her turn was coming up, she turned to me and said, 'I can't believe that three months ago I was in rehab, certain my life was done. Now I get to celebrate a new life and a new start. Can you believe it?'

"After she was baptized, she came running up to me for a hug, saying, 'I can't believe this has happened.'"

Though baptism isn't tied to salvation, it's a way to show the world a person is following Christ, Stevens said.

"Now all of a sudden, I have an extra layer of accountability. I have an extra layer of responsibility to the Church, and those people in the congregation have a responsibility to hold me accountable. It's being part of a family and saying we're all in this together," he said.

TWELFTH IN A SERIES

COMMEMORATING 1823–2023

200 YEARS

OF ALABAMA BAPTIST MISSIONS AND MINISTRIES

Alabama Baptists strengthen focus on Jesus' call to make disciples

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Nate Bass said it can be daunting to think about how to reach the entire world for Christ.

But when he looks at his own sphere of influence, the task gets more bite-sized — it becomes about living life with one or two or three people, gauging where they are spiritually and encouraging them to pursue a relationship with Christ.

"Then from there, it's walking alongside them to a place where they are disciple-makers too," he said. "It goes from this big picture thing to this small and intimate thing."

Photo courtesy of Samford University Special Collection

Participants at a Baptist Young People's Union convention in 1906 pose for a group photo on the steps of the Alabama Capitol in Montgomery. BYPU's intent was to train participants to be strong leaders in the church.

Building His church

Bass, a sophomore at Samford University, said before he took a couple of classes in college that dealt with disciple-making, he saw discipleship as a more programmatic thing.

"Jesus tells us to go and make disciples, and He is going to build His church through that process," he said. "I get so excited thinking about it — if every Christian who was attending a church on a Sunday was also going out during their week and making disciples and having one person they were intentionally investing in, that would change the world."

Now Bass spends his life investing in friendships with people in various places in their spiritual journey. He meets with believers to help them grow in their faith, and he has intentional conversations with friends who are not believers or who grew up in church but only have a cultural kind of faith rather than a personal relationship with Jesus.

Discipleship perspective

Daniel Edmonds, director of the Office of Sunday School & Discipleship at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said what Bass describes is the perspective his team is encouraging across the state today when it comes to discipleship — that each follower of Jesus is intended to be a disciple who makes disciples.

Over the decades, what discipleship has looked like in the Baptist church landscape has changed, he said.

From the beginnings of the Southern Baptist Convention, Sunday School — a small-group, age-graded Bible study that met before the Sunday service — was seen as a means for churches to teach gospel basics to anyone who attended.

At the SBC annual meeting in Birmingham in 1891, the convention voted to establish the Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville, which would handle Sunday School curriculum for their churches.

At the same time, the Baptist Young People's Union was gaining steam across the country, with both Northern Baptists and Southern Baptists having BYPU groups. The organization's intent was to train young people to be strong church members who served in leadership roles.

Baptist Training Union

By 1934, the SBC's BYPU had developed into a church training program — in essence, a seminar-type class usually held on Sundays or Wednesdays — and changed its name to Baptist Training Union.

Facebook photo

Robert Mullins, executive director of missions for Madison Baptist Association, leads a discussion on disciple-making with pastors and ministry leaders. Mullins served on the lead team for Disciple-Making Ministries of Alabama when it was founded.

"The idea was that you train the next generation of leaders," Edmonds said.

In many ways, it produced positive results over the years, he said — Training Union helped churches find potential leaders and help them go deep in doctrine.

'Too narrow'

But in other ways, the program's focus on training leaders "muddied the waters" of what discipleship means, Edmonds said. The term "discipleship" for many church members lost the broad mandate of the Great Commission — for every disciple to make disciples — and instead focused on multiplying groups and group leaders.

"We got too narrow," Edmonds said. "But I think we're recovering."

In recent years, his office has been encouraging Baptist church members all over the state to go back to the basics — to be disciples who make disciples.

That can look a variety of ways, Edmonds said. It still involves groups, just groups focusing on making disciples who make disciples both in a small group setting and in their daily life outside the walls of the church.

"I always saw Sunday School or group strategy as an integral part of a disciple's path," he said.

Discipleship can also involve that seminar-style of learning that was found in Training Union, so long as it encourages and empowers participants to personally make disciples.

"We're all family," Edmonds said of the churches using different methods, "but I see especially on the younger side of the spectrum more interest in a disciple-making movement."

Photo courtesy of Phil Brown

Mark Gainey, state disciple-making strategist, invests in helping pastors know how to lead people to be disciples who make disciples.

In recent years, his office started Disciple-Making Ministries of Alabama, which is aimed at supporting pastors and leaders to be disciples who make disciples and create that kind of culture in their church.

Robert Mullins, executive director of missions for Madison Baptist Association, served on the lead team for Disciple-Making Ministries when it was founded and has been a part of that kind of discipleship over the years.

He said he's been humbled to see how God has worked.

'Process-oriented'

As minister of youth at Calvary Baptist Church in Tuscaloosa in the early 2000s, he had begun using the "process-oriented" kind of discipleship he had learned about from Mike Breen's "Building a Discipling Culture."

"The language 'disciple-making' was not officially there, but that's what we were doing," Mullins said, noting that they were practicing the model Jesus has given us by hosting college students in his home, pouring into them and equipping them to disciple youth in the church.

For more information, visit disciplemakingal.com.

Later after moving to serve as pastor of Crossroads Community Church in Elmore, he also began meeting with a "huddle" of seven or eight pastors to learn more about how to be disciples who make disciples.

"We were meeting with those guys around the state," he said, noting that one of those was Mark Gainey, who now serves on Edmonds' team as a disciple-making strategist in addition to serving as pastor of Fultondale First Baptist Church.

Role model

Since joining the SBOM staff, Gainey wrote a book called "4 Invitations: The Four Disciple-Making Invitations of Jesus that Help You Be a Disciple Who Makes Disciples."

Mullins said the idea that they all share now is this — leverage every part of your life to make disciples.

"Examine the life of Jesus — He was a role model for us, and we need to do it the same way," he said. "Everything He did was leveraging — leveraging fish and bread, water at the well, His knowledge of the Jewish texts so He could have conversations with the rabbis. He leveraged everything that was leverageable, and we need to do the same thing."

Jesus made disciples in real time in real life, Mullins said. Nothing is wrong with a curriculum or a tool, but it should add to everyday discipleship, not replace it.

Edmonds said he sees that happening more and more all the time in Baptist churches across the state. "That's what gives me hope for disciple-making in the future — we've really grasped the fullness of the biblical model that Jesus came and breathed life into again," Edmonds said. "It's about being very intentional wherever you live, work and play. The Great Commission is who we are — living out our identity as a disciple and inviting others in."

Photo courtesy of Samford University Special Collection

A Sunday School class meets at Vestavia Hills Baptist Church in 1974. From early in their history, Alabama Baptists have used Sunday School as a way to instill gospel basics into those who attend.

Photo courtesy of Samford University Special Collection

A Sunday School class stands outside FBC Auburn in 1928 during the building's construction. Daniel Edmonds, director of the SBOM office of Sunday School & Discipleship, says he "always saw Sunday School or group strategy as an integral part of a disciple's path."

Emphasis supports all who serve amid persecution

(*continued from page 1*)

"Sejun: Nepal," tells the story of a Nepali boy's journey from life in a Buddhist monastery as a preschooler to finding new hope in Christ.

Fervent prayer needed

As the Day of Prayer approaches, Southern Baptists are encouraged to join in weeks of fervent prayer. Pray not only for the persecuted, but also for Christian workers across the world who support their national partners amid persecution.

Key areas of prayer include:

- Praying for the persecuted, that they may find the strength to live in the power, love and sound mind that only God can provide.
- Praying for those who have suffered brutalization, that they may sense the Lord's love surrounding them and respond to those who have injured them with grace and dignity.
- Praying for followers of Christ to consistently study and obey Scripture, so they are spiritually prepared when persecution inevitably comes.
- Praying for each church to maintain its focus on the glory of God and the growth of His church, even in the face of adversity.

Resources are available from the International Mission Board to raise awareness of global persecution and the church's role in praying for those suffering for their faith in Christ.

To learn more about the Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church visit imb.org/persecuted or persecution.com/idop.

The IMB is providing a range of downloadable resources to guide churches and individuals in focused prayer. These resources include a comprehensive prayer guide, bulletin inserts, social media graphics and promotional videos.

VOM also offers resources, including this year's feature film, prayer guides and a downloadable resource kit churches and organizations can use to raise awareness. VOM resources are available at persecution.com/idop. (IMB, TAB contributed)

Pray for followers of Christ to consistently study and obey Scripture, so they are spiritually prepared when persecution inevitably comes.

IMB photo

Two Christians express their heart with raised hands during prayer in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Christians face threats and persecution, but they continue to meet and worship openly in homes and buildings throughout the city.

Lass WORDS

BY KEN LASS
The Alabama Baptist

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS

Make the Right Call

It's nearly impossible for me to watch my favorite team play football without having some sort of issue with the officiating. It's either "How could he miss that call?" or "How in the world could he make that call?" No matter what they decide, if it goes against my team, the officials are obviously incompetent or have been paid off to throw the game.

As a young man, I did some officiating at the very amateur level, and I can tell you, it's a thankless job. You simply can't please everybody. Yet you must make a decision.

There were times when I knew I had gotten the call correct, but the players and their supporters were still brutally critical. I concluded I didn't have the stomach for it, and I abandoned officiating.

Criticism is common

It's a bit like trying to live a Christian life in a world growing increasingly secular. If you make the right moral decision, you may be ridiculed and called prudish, old-fashioned, holier-than-thou, arrogant or condescending. You know you've made the godly choice, but the result is criticism, not praise.

A football official has to have strong faith in his judgment even if nobody in the stadium or on TV seems to acknowledge it. As Christians, we must have a strong belief that living God's will for our lives is better than blending into the flow of popular thought.

Fortunately, God's Word is full of such encouragement.

In Deuteronomy 31, God says, "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you."

'On guard'

First Corinthians 16:13 states, "Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong." In Philippians 1:20, Paul writes, "I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death."

So the next time you are tempted to stand up in your living room and throw a pillow at the football official on the TV screen, remember he is just trying to summon up the courage to do what he thinks is right. Give him some good ol' Christian mercy and forgiveness.

Unless, of course, his decision costs your team the game. In that case, he is obviously a bum.

MEET THE AUTHOR

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

Unfinished!

PHILIPPIANS 3:13-14

1823-2023 Celebrating 200 years of Alabama Baptist Missions & Ministry

200th ANNUAL MEETING

of the Alabama Baptist State Convention

NOVEMBER 14-15, 2023

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, MONTGOMERY

Buddy Champion
Tuesday Morning

Join us as we commemorate our convention's bicentennial and celebrate all God has done and continues to do through Alabama Baptists!

Neal Hughes
Tuesday Afternoon

SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

Buddy Champion, Tuesday Morning • **Neal Hughes**, Tuesday Afternoon • **Mark Bethea**, Tuesday Evening • **Peyton Hill**, Tuesday Evening • **Jarman Leatherwood**, Wednesday Morning

Mark Bethea
Tuesday Evening

TUESDAY EVENING will be time of celebration, worship and praise to the Lord, featuring a multigenerational mass choir, missions testimonies and more.

Peyton Hill
Tuesday Evening

Jarman Leatherwood
Wednesday Morning

SCAN QR CODE FOR MORE INFO

alsbom.org/convention

UPCOMING EVENTS

sponsored by the State Board of Missions

Alabama Association of Baptist Secretaries annual conference

The Alabama Association of Baptist Secretaries 61st Annual Conference will be held March 3–6, 2024, at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega.

This conference is designed for anyone who serves a Southern Baptist church, association or entity in an administrative capacity. Whether you are full time, part time, volunteer or even retired, you are welcome.

Classes are offered in a variety of topics including financial, technical and computer, and other professional topics. The classes are geared to help whether you are new on the job or need additional training. There are also spiritual classes to help attendees grow in the Lord.

Enjoy times of learning, fellowship, networking, corporate worship and fun.

The General Conference Leader (Bible teacher) is Courtney Veasey, founder of Brunch Ministries. You can read more about her and her ministry at brunchministries.com. We hope to see you in March.

Find out more about AABS and stay connected at alabamabaptistsecretaries.com and facebook.com/1AABS.

Registration is set to begin Nov. 1, 2023 at alsbom.org/aabs, and the deadline to register is Feb. 18, 2024.

There's still time to turn in your ACP

The Annual Church Profile (ACP) is one of the most practical ways churches partner each year with the local Baptist association, the State Board of Missions and the Southern Baptist Convention to prepare for the future. As churches take stock of where they are in key statistical categories, it enables the SBOM to provide resources and offer training to meet needs.

"The ACP allows us to focus on collecting information that will give us a true picture of what's going on in Southern Baptist churches and helps us to be able to share that in ways that will advance the Kingdom of God," said Rick Lance, state missionary and executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

ACPs can be turned in through your association or online at adx.alsbom.org.

If you need help completing the ACP, please contact your local association or contact Sandy Harmann at the SBOM, 334-613-2266 or sharmann@alsbom.org.

Join us in 30 Days of Prayer leading up to bicentennial celebration

You're invited to take part in 30 Days of Prayer leading up to the Alabama Baptist State Convention's Bicentennial Celebration Nov. 14–15 at First Baptist Church, Montgomery. Let's join our hearts in prayer as we express gratitude for all God has done these 200 years and boldly step into our next century of ministry.

To sign up for prayer prompts, visit alsbom.org/convention and click on the 30 Days of Prayer button or follow the SBOM's social media feeds.

WORD search

AZARIAH
BABYLON
BRONZE
CAPTIVITY
CHALDEANS
CLAY
COUNSEL
DANIEL
DIET
DREAMER
DREAMS
EUNUCH
FRIENDS
GOLD
GREAT
HANANIAH
HEAVEN
INTERPRET
IRON
KING
KINGDOM
KNOWLEDGE
MAGICIANS
MISHAEL
MOUNTAIN
NEBUCHADNEZZAR
PALACE
PRAYER
REVEALER
SECRET
SILVER
SORCERERS
STATUE
STONE
TRAINING
WISDOM

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

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

DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRY
Oak Bowery, Ohatchee, Alabama, is in search of a director of youth ministry. Part time. Contact Pastor Sam Fordham: DrSamFordham@gmail.com.

TRAVEL/VACATION

LOG CABIN RENTAL
Lake Guntersville area, beautiful view and fully furnished. Discounts to ministers. Log on to www.paradisevista.net to see pictures. Call for reservations at 205-540-3600.

BUSINESS

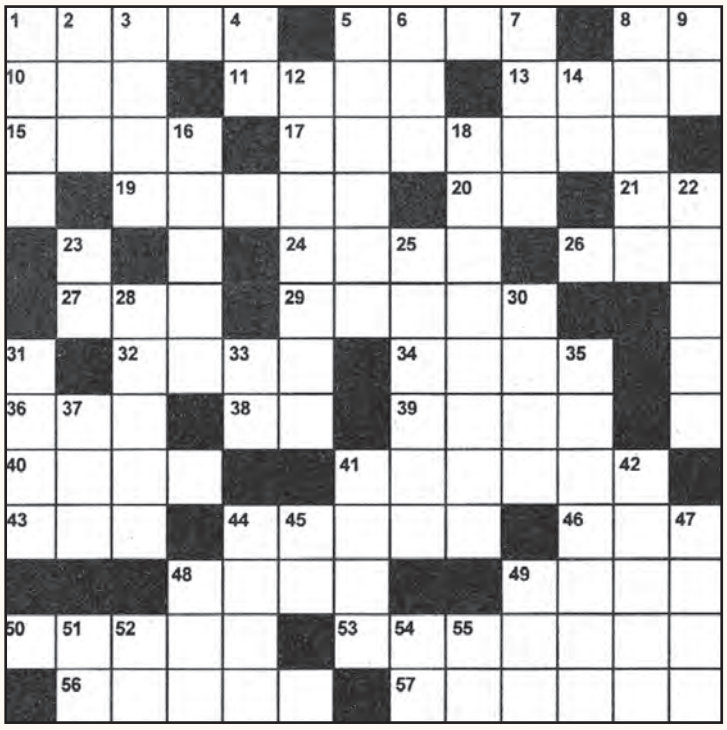
EDWARD F. HUTTON JR. INSURANCE
Medicare Advantage Plans with new benefit options, Medicare Part D or Medicare Supplement Plans with new lower rates on Plans G and N. Visit www.medicareadvice65.com or 850-634-0652. Not connected with the federal Medicare program. Alabama lic. 3002360263.

FOR SALE NEW & USED STAIR LIFTS
Lift chairs, power wheelchairs, car lifts, scooters and walk-in tubs. We service Alabama. 1-800-682-0658

SIGNS

CHURCH SIGN
Signs are your first impression. What kind of impression is your church sign making? Call us to replace/update yours with either digital or traditional. Statewide since 1994. 1-800-729-6844 or 205-664-0955. www.reliablesigns.com

CHRISTIAN crossword



By Teresa Zeek Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

ACROSS

1. He was hidden in the bulrushes. (Ex. 2:3,10)
5. Another name for Saul. (Acts 13:9)
8. ___ ye into all the world. (Mark 16:15)
10. There was no room in the ___. (Luke 2:7)
11. To rule ___ the day and ... night. (Gen. 1:18)
13. ___. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. (Rev. 22:20)
15. Flashing ___ lights.
17. He ___ there an altar. (Gen. 33:20)
19. Stops nursing.
20. Masculine pronoun.
21. Suffix used to make a comparative word.
24. A very small quantity.
26. Prefix meaning "three."
27. Female deer.
29. The wicked have laid a ___ for me. (Ps. 119:110)
32. A set of three.
34. To be carried.
36. Scrooge says, "___ humbug."
38. Minnesota (ZIP code abbr.)
39. It was planted in a good ___. (Ezek. 17:8)
40. A swarm of ___. (Judg. 14:8)
41. Churning of milk bringeth forth ___. (Prov. 30:33)
43. Dominion over the fowl of the ___. (Gen. 1:26)
44. Support or brace.
46. Wipe your feet on our welcome ___.
48. Whosoever keepeth the commandment shall ___ no evil thing. (Eccle. 8:5)
49. Demonstration model (abbr.)
50. King of Moab. (Judg. 3:17)
53. Yellow tropical fruit.
56. God created the heaven and the ___. (Gen. 1:1)
57. Mary stayed with Elisabeth three ___. (Luke 1:56)

DOWN

1. Love the Lord with all thy heart, ... soul, and ... ___. (Matt. 22:37)
2. The Lord our God is ___ Lord. (Deut. 6:4)
3. Sins ... as white as ___. (Isa. 1:18)
4. Even ___, come Lord Jesus. (Rev. 22:20)
5. The express image of his ___. (Heb. 1:3)
6. Blessed ___ the poor in spirit. (Matt. 5:3)
7. It is vain ... to sit up ___. (Ps. 127:2)
8. The king of Debir, one; the king of ___. (Josh. 12:13)
9. Putting ___ the breastplate of faith and love. (1 Thess. 5:8)
12. Take me some ___. (Gen. 27:3)
14. "Jesus loves ___, this I know."
16. I will ___ leave thee. (Heb. 13:5)
18. Some trust in ___, and some in horses. (Ps. 20:7)
22. Christ has ___.
23. Advertisement (abbr.)
25. Saul of ___. (Acts 9:11)
28. Charity ... toward each ___ aboundeth. (2 Thess. 1:3)
30. To revise.
31. ___, Father, all things are possible unto thee. (Mark 14:36)
33. I am (contraction).
35. The ___s shall melt with fervent heat. (2 Pet. 3:10)
37. The first three vowels.
41. Light___.
42. Elkanah's home. (1 Sam. 2:11)
44. They went into one ___. (2 Kings 7:8)
45. Second tone of the diatonic scale.
47. It waves thereof ___ themselves. (Jer. 5:22)
48. ___ God so loved the world. (John 3:16)
49. Rachel's maid, Bilhah's first son. (Gen. 30:6)
51. General Electric (abbr.)
52. Sixth tone of the diatonic scale.
54. I ___ THAT I AM. (Ex. 3:14)
55. Let ___ man deceive you. (2 Thess. 2:3)

All Bible verses are KJV unless otherwise specified.

UPCOMING EVENTS

sponsored by the State Board of Missions

Christmas backpacks

In 2022, Alabama Baptists gave 14,336 backpacks to the Christmas backpacks ministry.

Through that effort, more than 40,000 heard the gospel and 417 people made decisions to follow Christ.

It's time to do it again!

You and your church can make Christmas brighter for children living along the Mississippi River who are among some of the poorest in the nation.

Generation after generation in the region live without basic human necessities.

For instructions on how to pack backpacks, collection points and times and other information about how you and your church can be involved in this effort, visit alabamawmu.org/christmasbackpacks.

For more information, visit alabamawmu.org/christmasbackpacks or scan the code below with your smartphone's camera.

Photo courtesy of Whitney Exline

Abundant Living event for seniors: Oct. 26

Abundant Living, an event for senior adults, will be held Oct. 26 at First Baptist Church Pelham.

Frank Jones will provide pre-service music and lead congregational singing. Special music will be presented each session by Paid in Full, outstanding gospel group from New Albany, Mississippi. Speakers will be Daven Watkins, pastor of FBC Pelham, and Robert Smith, professor of Christian preaching at Beeson Divinity School.

The event will be held from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. with a break for lunch on your own from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The event is free. Registration is encouraged.

Register at alsbom.org/abundantliving.

4 tips to maintaining trust, unity and integrity

By Mark MacDonald
The Alabama Baptist

In our ever-changing and sometimes chaotic world, crisis church communication plays a huge role. Whether you're addressing a crisis within your church or handling challenging situations online, effective communication is essential to maintain trust and unity among your congregation. As you seek to communicate truth and the gospel, here are four practical tips to guide you through trying moments.

Unsplash.com

1. Provide swift and transparent responses.

When a crisis occurs, your congregation looks to its leaders for guidance and reassurance. It's crucial to respond promptly and transparently. Remember, silence fosters uncertainty.

Utilize your church website and social media platforms to communicate important updates as quickly as possible. Of course, communication from the stage is best, but resist waiting for that moment if it would appear to be stalling.

Being honest

Transparency builds trust. Share the facts as you know them, and if you lack answers, acknowledge it. Being honest about your limitations fosters authenticity. People appreciate transparency, even when the news is difficult to hear.

2. Carefully craft empathetic messages.

Crafting messages during a crisis is an art. Start with prayer. Then focus on a lot of empathy. Show you understand the emotional impact of the situation on your congregation. Utilize emails and social media to express compassion and care. Bounce all messaging off a trusted friend to get their outside perspective.

Clearly outline steps your church is taking to address the crisis. Offer practical advice or resources where relevant. Your communication should not only inform but also provide hope and a sense of unity. Remind your congregation that they are not alone in facing the challenge.

3. Encourage two-way communication carefully.

In the era of social media, it's not merely about broadcasting a message; it's about engaging in meaningful dialogue. Encourage your congregation to share thoughts and concerns. But be ready to respond to comments and messages promptly, even if it's just to express gratitude for their support and prayers.

Handling conflict

Careful though: online platforms can magnify conflicts. Therefore, monitor online conversations carefully. During difficult situations, some may voice dissent, criticism or outrage. Approach such comments with grace and a desire for understanding.

Use these moments as opportunities to model Christ-like behavior and encourage respectful dialogue. Your responses demonstrate how your local church handles conflict.

4. Seek wise counsel.

Remember, you don't have to navigate crisis challenges alone. Pray for wisdom and seek advice from fellow pastors, mentors or communication experts within your church community. They can offer valuable insights and support as you navigate difficult situations online. You are not alone.

Consider forming a crisis church communication team within your church before a crisis happens. Having a dedicated group of people trained to handle communication during crises can be a tremendous asset.

As a pastor and/or communicator, your words and actions have the power to inspire and guide your congregation through even the toughest of times.

Stay grounded in your faith, and let your communication reflect the love, grace and mercy of Christ.

Stay strong and may your online presence continue to be a beacon of light and the gospel in our crazy world.

Scripture offers a good reminder to communicators, especially those facing a crisis: "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your cares on Him, because He cares about you. Be sober-minded; be alert." (1 Pet. 6–8a, CSB)

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 10,000+ churches to become known for something relevant (a communication thread) throughout their ministries, websites and social media. His book, Be Known for Something, is available at BeKnownBook.com.

LEEDS STAINED GLASS & CHURCH FURNITURE
SINCE 1995
Toll-free: 888.699.9679
AL local: 205.699.9679
Call for FREE on-site consultation
Ask for Terry Barnes, Owner
information@LeedsStainedGlass.com
Visit www.LeedsStainedGlass.com
for an online gallery of windows and church furniture!

Photo by Tracy Riggs Frontz/The Alabama Baptist

Mark Clifton, senior director of replanting for the North American Mission Board, speaks at the Revive Summit, held Sept. 12–13 at Hope Community Church in Birmingham. Clifton served as interim pastor there in 2020.

God is at work

Birmingham Baptists assist churches in revitalization, replanting efforts

By Michael Brooks
The Alabama Baptist

The Birmingham Metro Baptist Association has helped foster two unique church relationships in the past few years, and both congregations were represented at the Revive Summit, held Sept. 12–13 at Hope Community Church in Birmingham.

As a longtime member of McElwain Baptist Church in Birmingham, Terry Thrailkill was part of the vision team that brought about the congregation's new birth as Hope Community Church.

God's direction

"There were lots of challenges," she said. "We had 30 or 40 faithful people and a large building. We prayed for God's direction for our church."

McElwain members called Mark Clifton, senior director of replanting for the North American Mission Board, as interim pastor in 2020. This was about the time the congregation celebrated its 125th anniversary.

"It was the COVID year," Thrailkill said. "Mark preached online for us for several months and met with our team on Zoom before we could actually sit down and brainstorm about our future."

Richard Phillips, also a longtime McElwain member and part of the vision team, reminisced as well.

"Earl Potts was a great pastor," he said. "He baptized me, and then he married my wife and me. We just celebrated our 60th wedding anniversary, so I've been here a long time. I was treasurer for 40 years."

Phillips said McElwain had no mortgage and was paying its bills but realized the congregation wasn't reaching the community as it once did.

Josh Cook, church revitalization specialist for Birmingham Metro Association, can be reached at 205-599-3245 or joshc@bmbaonline.org.

"One idea we discussed was finding a young congregation that might move into our building, but this didn't work out," he said. "Then Mark found that Shades Mountain Baptist Church (in Vestavia Hills) was interested in an adoption, and we began to talk."

After the adoption process was formalized, Phillips said Shades sent a cadre of volunteers to help, and a number were young families who actually lived in the area.

"They sent us a great pastor too," he said. "Jacob Simmons has done a great job here and we love him."

Phillips said the initial discussion was about a five-year partnership, but he understood the agreement is open-ended.

"I think the idea is that the relationship will end at some point, but I'm not sure when that will be," he said. "It's been a wonderful thing for our church."

Jody Baker serves as minister of education and administration at Hope Community and has been part of the McElwain congregation for 42 years.

"We wanted to grow in this community, so we had to surrender a few things we were comfortable with," she said. "But we're excited about what God has in store for us."

Eric Smoke, member of Faith Church in Midfield, said the birth of his church from the mother church, Fairfield Highlands Baptist Church, was "the work of God."

"Fairfield Highlands realized they weren't reaching their potential, so we began discussions with them, culminating in our church being established last year as primarily an African American church," he said. "We're grateful that the gospel is still being shared in the community because of the legacy and love of the mother church."

Photo by Michael Brooks/ The Alabama Baptist

Smoke explained that Birmingham Metro Association helped guide the new church and other churches have helped.

"We've partnered with Mountain Brook Baptist Church (in Birmingham) for ministry, and we've had volunteers from the Hispanic ministry of First Baptist (Church) Fultondale," he said.

Food pantry ministry

Smoke's wife helped start the food pantry at Faith and this ministry has grown.

"We're now a 'client choice' ministry with shopping carts," he said with a laugh. "This means people have more freedom to choose what they need, and we're grateful that this ministry is touching our community."

Josh Cook, church revitalization specialist for Birmingham Metro Association, said there are many possibilities for unique relationships among area churches, including adoption, fostering and replanting.

"One of our churches is talking now with another congregation in Leeds about a fostering partnership," he said. "We're happy to begin these conversations and assist as we can."

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For October 22

Explore the Bible

By Robert Olsen, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

SERVES
Mark 10:32–45

Death Coming (32–34)

As Jesus headed up to Jerusalem for the last time, He told His disciples what would befall Him. Jesus was going to be executed, but He would rise again on the third day. How could this miracle worker end up being killed? It made no sense to the disciples.

However, Jesus' message was clear from the beginning of His ministry — He was coming to die. Some scholars believe that Jesus was a revolutionary who ended up being killed unexpectedly, but this does not match the biblical text. Jesus' purpose on earth was ultimately to die for His people in order to bring salvation.

Request Made (35–40)

The disciples' lack of comprehension was evident by the request made by James and John. Asking to be seated at the right and left of Jesus was akin to asking to be placed at the highest honor.

This shows their lack of understanding about Jesus' ministry. They believed that Jesus was going to set up an earthly kingdom as in the times of David, and they wanted to be important people in this earthly government.

Sadly, this often becomes the goal of ministry. How many times do we hear or read about a minister of the gospel who becomes so enamored with his position of power that he uses it to gain wealth or power? People in ministry leadership seem susceptible to believing in their own importance instead of focusing on the importance of King Jesus.

We must always be mindful to check our motives in how we serve. Are we serving so that we get noticed? Are we serving so people think better of us? Or are we serving because this is how we show love to God and our neighbor?

Roles Reversed (41–45)

Naturally, the other disciples were not pleased with the request of the brothers. What made James and John more important than the rest of them? Nothing will cause a ministry to break down faster than a fight for power.

But Jesus sets them straight, informing them that their idea of importance is wrong. Jesus says that greatness is based on serving others. Jesus sets the best example of this, serving others even to the point of dying for them.

Jesus came in order to pay the price for sin on our behalf. The sinless Son of Man — truly divine and truly man — was obedient to the Father to the point of suffering on a cross for the sins of mankind so that whoever believes in Him will have eternal life. Christians are to follow this example of also putting others ahead of ourselves, even if it means death.

We see this not only taking place in the Bible, but also in the history of Christianity. How many Christians have died so that others might hear the gospel? This is seen clearly in the work of missionaries, even in recent times.

Think of Jim Elliot and his missionary friends who, in bringing the gospel to the unreached Aucas in Ecuador, were killed by the tribe they were trying to reach. Yet out of his death, the tribe eventually embraced Christianity. If Christ is our model who died for us, then we must be willing to face persecution, suffering and even death for Him.

"Whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."

Mark 10:44–45

Bible Studies for Life

By Jeffery M. Leonard, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Biblical & Religious Studies, Samford University

ARE MIRACLES RELEVANT?
John 10:22–26; 14:8–14

The miracles that populate the pages of Scripture defy easy categorization. Some, like the great plagues that struck Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea, were divine works on an epic scale, while others, like Elisha's making good water out of bad or filling the widow's jars with oil, were much more limited in scope. Some, like manna in the wilderness and water from a rock, were meant to provide for God's people, while others, like deadly quail and fiery serpents, were meant to punish. Some, like the fire that consumed Elijah's sacrifice, were meant to show God's greatness, while others, like His enabling Sarah to conceive in her old age, were meant to show His goodness.

Each of God's miracles seems to have served its own unique function.

The miracles that are recorded in the Gospels are as wide-ranging as those found elsewhere in Scripture.

Some are as dramatic as Jesus walking on the water and calming the wind and the waves, while others are as seemingly small as His cursing an unproductive fig tree. With some, Jesus heals the blind and the lame and even raises the dead, while with others He provides food for the hungry masses.

As varied as the kinds of miracles Jesus performs are the purposes for which He performs them. In Matthew, Mark and Luke, Jesus' miracles are often performed in private. It is interesting to see how miracles appear in John's Gospel.

Miracles point to Jesus as God's chosen Messiah. (10:22–26)

John's Gospel, more than any, points to Jesus' miracles as signs confirming His identity as the Messiah. John tells his readers this directly when He mentions that although Jesus did many other signs which are not recorded in his Gospel, "These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah" (20:31).

This parallels Jesus' own teaching on the matter in John. When asked to say plainly whether He is the Messiah, Jesus replies that the works He does in His Father's name testify that He is.

Miracles point to the divinity of Jesus. (14:8–11)

Jesus' miracles in John's Gospel also attest to the intimacy of Jesus' relationship with the Father.

On one occasion, Philip asks Jesus to show him and his fellow disciples the Father.

Jesus replies that is just what He has been doing as He has spent time with them. "I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me," He insists, and the works that He has done attest to that fact. If the disciples will not believe Jesus' own testimony, then they should at least believe on the basis of the works they have seen Him perform.

Jesus continues to work through us for God's glory. (14:12–14)

John's Gospel also emphasizes the fact that the miracles of Jesus live on in His followers. Indeed, Jesus insists that those who believe in Him "will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father."

This doesn't mean, of course, that followers of Jesus can be expected to run on the sea where Jesus only walked or calm hurricanes where He only calmed a storm. In keeping with the connection John makes between miracles and belief, it seems reasonable to conclude that Jesus has in mind the miraculous manner in which Jesus' message and following will increase through the witness of His followers.

"Whatever you ask in My name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."

John 14:13

MEDIA REVIEWS

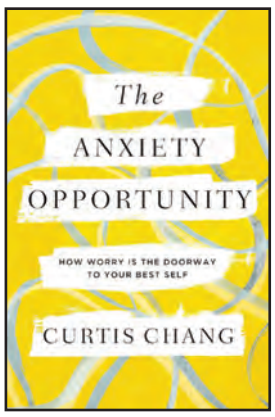
By Steve Potts and Lori White
The Alabama Baptist

Book reviews: Authors explore God's faithfulness amid life's challenges

The Anxiety Opportunity: How Worry is the Doorway to Your Best Self

By Curtis Chang
Zondervan, 2023

Curtis Chang, author, podcaster, seminary faculty member and former pastor, has battled anxiety since he was a latchkey kid in the 1970s. As Chang grew, his ability to hide or cope with anxiety became so sophisticated that even he was surprised when a debilitating bout of anxiety led to a personal breakdown, the loss of his pastorate and months of depression.



Chang knows about anxiety personally.

Curtis Chang also knows Jesus. "For a Christian, anxiety is one of the most powerful opportunities for transformation we'll ever encounter," Chang writes in "The Anxiety Opportunity: How Worry is the Doorway to Your Best Self." He goes on to say that he has grown more in Christlikeness because of his anxiety.

Chang uses a conversational style of writing along with many personal, relatable examples to guide the reader through simple practices for discovering opportunity in anxiety.

Breathing exercises, prayer, community and an accurate perspective of eternity challenge a reader's preconceived ideas about anxiety. When we contend with anxiety through the practices described in this book, we give anxiety the opportunity to transform us into our best selves.

Curtis Chang is a theologian and senior fellow at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. He is the host of "Good Faith," a leading podcast that helps Christians make sense of the world. (Lori White)

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.

God's Faithfulness Through Generations

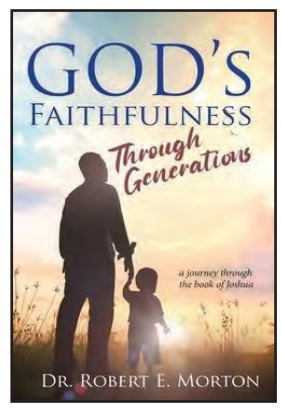
By Robert E. Morton
Wyatt House, 2023

Bobby Morton has seen God work faithfully throughout his lengthy pastoral ministry in Alabama, Mississippi and Florida. In his new volume, "God's Faithfulness Through Generations," Morton gives the reader a simple and engaging overview of the book of Joshua.

But this is more than a Bible study — it is also an account of God's faithfulness in Morton's own life and ministry through the years. It is both biblical and personal in a warm and welcoming style.

Morton walks the reader through Joshua, beginning with his becoming the leader of God's people at the death of Moses to his final farewell and his charge to the people to "choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve" (Josh. 24:15).

Along the way Morton gives practical lessons about God using surprising people like Rahab: "God never ceases to amaze me at how He uses the most unlikely people for the most unusual projects to accomplish the most unbelievable purposes."



Morton also deals with the challenges of defeat and disobedience, using examples of Joshua and the Israelites to show how to move on from discouragement to greater triumphs. Memorable anecdotes drawn from life and ministry season the narrative in practical and helpful ways.

The last chapter is a personal description of how God has been faithful to the author and his family, focusing on a variety of missions trips over the years, both in the United States and internationally. The author has traveled far, and his heart for the gospel shines through his stories.

The book draws the readers into Scripture and out into the world by a careful mix of exposition and personal reflection. It would be a helpful study for a small group or Sunday School class, as well as for individual study. (Steve Potts)

No More Secrets

By Dennis Swanberg
Swanberg Ministries, 2017

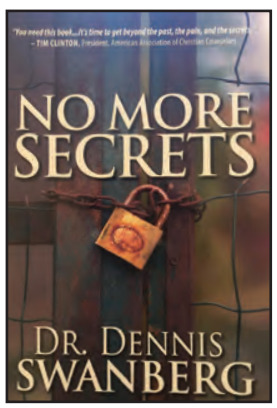
Dennis Swanberg is well known for humorous presentations at conferences and Christian gatherings, and his "ministry of encouragement" has reached thousands over the years.

But in his book, "No More Secrets," Swanberg addresses a serious topic, dealing with the pain and brokenness of addictions, secret sins and personal trauma that can afflict individuals, families and churches.

Swanberg, who has also been a pastor in Texas, Arkansas and Louisiana, has an academic background, including a doctor of ministry degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He writes with gentleness and understanding while addressing difficult and potentially uncomfortable topics.

The book draws on Swanberg's ministry experience and also situations among his own family and friends. This is no cold, clinical treatise on phobias, fetishes and failures, but a warm, caring exhortation from a pastor's heart to help those struggling with their own secrets or those who bear the burden of brokenness in others.

He shows the value of letting go of painful secrets and finding peace that comes from forgiveness and reconciliation, sharing relatable stories about people he has known, including his grandfather and his own sons.



Swanberg's characteristic humor shines through, and he handles these topics with grace and wisdom.

Dealing wisely with how to handle confession and treat people who need to be restored, Swanberg acknowledges that no individual, family or church is immune from problems. This book is short, easy to read, full of grace and hope. (Steve Potts)

SUSTAINED

2023 ALABAMA PASTORS CONFERENCE

TAYLOR ROAD BAPTIST CHURCH

Montgomery, Alabama

NOVEMBER 13, 2023

Session 1: The Sustaining Grace of God
Session 2: The Sustaining Faithfulness of God
Session 3: The Sustaining Power of God
Session 4: What is Revival?
Session 5: The Sustaining Peace of God

GUEST SPEAKERS

H.B. CHARLES
pastor of Shiloh Metropolitan Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Florida

MATT MASON
pastor of The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham

ED LITTON
pastor of Redemption Church, Saraland

JARED WILSON
pastor at Liberty Baptist Church, Kansas City, Missouri

Lunch and dinner will be provided. Registration is required by October 27.

Visit albaptistpc.com to register or for more information.

SPONSORED BY

Alabama Baptist STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS
Wycliffe BibleTranslators
UNIVERSITY of MOBILE
GuideStone
NEW ORLEANS BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY