

The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

Grow
in grace

“BUT GROW IN THE GRACE AND KNOWLEDGE OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST. TO HIM BE THE GLORY BOTH NOW AND TO THE DAY OF ETERNITY. AMEN.”

2 P E T E R 3 : 1 8

Photo by Katelyn Maten on the University of Mobile's campus in late March

University of Mobile names next president

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Montgomery native Charles W. Smith Jr. has been named the sixth



SMITH

president of the University of Mobile and steps into the role May 6.

UM's board of trustees elected the nearly 40-year-old Smith on March 21.

Outgoing president Lonnie Burnett, who is retiring at the end of May after five years as president and 20 years total on the UM staff, anticipates a “smooth transition.”

‘Good fit’

“The board of trustees and search committee have had the time to do a thorough search and vetting process,” Burnett told The Alabama Baptist.

“I have promised Dr. Smith my full cooperation. ... We have had great conversations. I believe he will be a good fit for our university.”

UM trustee chair Terry Harbin said, “Dr. Smith's proven leadership, commitment to faith-based higher education and passion for developing the next generation of Christ-centered leaders make him the ideal choice to guide the

(See ‘Excited,’ page 7)

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SCAN ME

I See Jesus

Where God is Working, Christ is Shining and the Holy Spirit is Moving

From a personal testimony and life experience

Testimony from TAB Media Group's Jennifer Davis Rash:

At least two sets of parents and grandparents have shared with me lately how they have seen the Lord work through a simple decision to attend a different church on a Sunday morning they weren't able to be at their home church.

While it would have been easy to watch their home church online instead of working to find out the service times of a different congregation, they said they felt a pull toward a particular place where they were on those specific days.

And in each case, a child or grandchild was exposed to a sermon and worship experience that tied in with something they were going through at the moment.

While this isn't a negative toward the home congregation, it is an opportunity to watch the Holy Spirit move no matter where we are and no matter who shows up for church Sunday morning.

We never know what people are dealing with and how God might use any one of us at any given time.

It reminds me to always be seeking His guidance on the who, what, when and where.

From Maryland, following the tragic bridge collapse

A response from Tom Stolle, executive director of the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware:

We are saddened to hear of the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge earlier this morning (March 26). Please join us in praying for the heartbroken and traumatized individuals and families who are impacted by this tragedy.

We thank God for and also pray for the brave rescue workers and others giving of their time and skill, and for churches who will be ministering to those affected.

Our BCM/D ready director, Ellen Udovich, is working to mobilize churches to assist in ministering to the communities near the bridge.

Additionally, Baltimore's Port

Ministry workers will minister to crews who are unable to leave for an unknown period of time.

From page 11 of the March 21 edition of TAB

From the article "Seeing God work: Alabama Baptists work to build camp like Shocco Springs in Alaska":

Cody Schwegel, pastor of Liberty Baptist Church in Craig, Alaska, said he's seen God work in a big way, much of which was "in direct response to the partnership" that Alabama Baptists have had with Alaska Baptists since 2021.

"We see Alaska as the forgotten frontier because there's not a lot of resources for churches to be successful in some of the things that we do (such as camp)," Schwegel said.

"The partnership with Alabama has been so amazing, because we've seen Alabamians come in and support — it's made a huge impact."

After seven years without a baptism, the church baptized nine people in 2023.

Baylor students seek revival move similar to past

In 1945, a group of Baylor students began leading a series of worship gatherings that came to be known as the Waco Youth Revivals. The meetings sparked a nationwide Youth Revival Movement that is registered as one of the largest student-led revivals in American history.

Many want God to "do it again." "The components of God doing it again are prayer and more prayer, in the enthusiastic aspect and the expectancy," said Drew Humphrey, who serves as FM72's chief of operations and college pastor at Highland Baptist Church. "We're ready for God to do it again. ... People are fired up in prayer. People are fired up in unity. People are fired up in outreach. So, why not again? Let's do it

again. Why not us? Why not now?"

FM72 began in 2018 as a 72-hour worship and prayer gathering on Fountain Mall — the heart of Baylor's campus. Beyond nightly worship gatherings at 8 p.m. from Sunday to Wednesday, the defin-

ing symbol of the meeting is a large prayer tent, which is open for 72 consecutive hours to anyone who wants a space to pray.

(Excerpt from an article by Jackson Posey in The Baylor Lariat and republished by Baptist Press)

SHOUT OUT

We love hearing from all of you from around the state about how much you enjoy when our own Debbie Campbell, director of communications, drops by for a visit, sets up an exhibit at your event or serves as the guest speaker or devotional leader.

A recent note came from the West Jefferson Coffee Club that sums up what so many of us think about Debbie: "It's always a pleasure to see you and we definitely enjoy your bubbly personality. You spread sunshine wherever you go."

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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JENNIFER DAVIS RASH
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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The crossword puzzle can be found on page 19.

Rashional Thoughts

By Jennifer Davis Rash
President and Editor-in-Chief

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🐦 [@RashionalThts](https://twitter.com/RashionalThts)

Celebrating special moments, bonds with Spring events

It's been 30 years since Robin Mark wrote "Days of Elijah," but it remains a crowd favorite to sing when worked into worship settings today.

While we heard singer Judy Jacobs' voice on the original soundtrack, the group Voices of Mobile would have made her proud with the energy they brought to the song the evening of March 21.

Part of a full set of musical contributions by all parts of the Alabama School of the Arts at the University of Mobile, Voices had the crowd repeating and emphasizing "there's no God like Jehovah" during the outdoor Spring Spectacular event.

You might guess I attended Spring Spectacular as part of my visit to campus to cover and welcome the newly elected UM president Charles Smith (see story, page 1).

The UM campus truly is a special experience, and who knew outgoing president Lonnie Burnett could put on a fireworks display like what took place at the close of the Spring Spectacular event.

He knows how to make a statement for sure, and all of us in Alabama Baptist life wish him well as he prepares for his final few weeks in office.

Lonnie and his wife, Lynne, have been good friends to The Alabama Baptist and to me personally. We have no doubt he'll be keeping busy in this next season. One thing we know for sure is that Lonnie Burnett won't sit still for long.

While in the area, I also attended one of the Making a Difference Mobile events.

Church members across Mobile County put extra effort into engaging their communities throughout the month of March (see story pages 14–15).

My stop was at Turnerville Baptist Church in Chunchula (in north Mobile County), and I had the best time visiting with church and community members there.

Interim pastor Billy Ray Robinson and minister of music Jerry Pugh took great care of me, and I got to meet several from the Sunday School class that uses the lessons we provide in The Alabama Baptist.

The Mobile Bay A Capella group invited me to join in their performance, but I assured them no one wanted that to happen. I participated in the free throw competition instead — and came away with a decent showing.

As I waved goodbye while the block party wrapped up and pointed my car north toward central Alabama, I realized how tight our bonds really are as Alabama Baptists.

Our daily lives, career paths and ministry opportunities vary. The views we see outside our

homes and area commutes also differ. But we are connected through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and we are journeying together toward our forever home.

"And though these days of great trials/Of famine and darkness and sword/Still we are the voice in the desert crying/ Prepare ye the way of the Lord!"

"Behold He comes, riding on the clouds/Shining like the sun at the trumpet's call/So, lift your voice, it's the year of Jubilee/ And out of Zion's hill, salvation comes!"



Photo by Sarah Koeplinger

Voices of Mobile is one of several Alabama School of the Arts groups displaying their talents during the March 21 Spring Spectacular, an outdoor family event held on the University of Mobile campus and culminating with a fireworks display.

Your Voice



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

Theology 101 – Incriminating Mismatches

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.

The Alabama Baptist

I recently found an amusing anecdote in an old file. I do not remember how I came into possession of it, but the story serves as a good illustration of an important observation: as followers of Christ, our conduct should match our confession.

Here is the story: A driver saw the traffic light turn yellow just in front of him. He did the right thing by quickly braking to a stop rather than racing through the intersection on a yellow light. A tailgating woman behind him furiously braked while honking her horn. If he had not stopped, she could have whizzed

through the yellow light right behind him.

She not only honked her horn but also was screaming in frustration. As she was still in mid-rant, she heard a tap on her window and found herself looking into the face of a police officer who ordered her to exit her car with her hands up. He proceeded to take her to the police station where she was searched, fingerprinted, photographed and put in a holding cell.

A couple of hours later, an officer approached her cell and unlocked its door. She was led back to the booking desk, where she faced the

arresting officer who returned all her personal effects. He said, "I am very sorry for this mistake. You see,

I pulled up behind you while you were blowing your horn and cursing the guy in front of you at the top of your voice, while giving him a finger. It was then that I noticed the 'What Would Jesus Do' bumper sticker on your car, as well as the 'Choose Life' license plate holder. I also noticed the 'Follow Me to Sunday School' bumper

sticker, as well as the chrome-plated Christian fish emblem on the trunk. So I naturally assumed you had stolen the car."

Jesus had a descriptive term for people who live with a mismatch between their confession and their conduct. We find that term in Luke 6:42: "hypocrite." Jesus also had an illustration for this kind of mismatch, saying, "A good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit" (Luke 6:44). Such mismatches do not occur in nature.

Jesus ended His teaching about such a mismatch with an architectural analogy. He explains that such persons whose conduct does in fact match their confession are "like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock."

Sturdy Christians are those who live out their confession that Jesus is Lord. One day, they will hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."



BATSON

Concerns about gambling push

I hope everyone understands that gambling in our state is not being pushed so our citizens can have a little recreation as we help fund our schools. This is about money. Lots of money. Hundreds of millions of dollars.

With that kind of money at stake, some unsavory forces quickly become involved.

Get off the main streets and take a walk in the cities where casinos are active and you will find misery, poverty and homelessness.

Gambling is not the wonderful cure-all for government needs

and richer communities as is promised.

In fact, I believe it to be a sad day when the state government becomes dependent on its citizens losing their money.

Tony Barber, pastor

Church on the Bluff, Hoover

What can we do?

1. Pray for our local and state representatives.
2. Vote.
3. Pay attention and be alert.

Lyle Dease

Associational missionary
Pickens Baptist Association

Whenever you read or study the Bible, pray for God to open your mind to the understanding of who He is and what He requires. The theme and purpose of God's Word is to reveal Himself to humanity and provide an understanding of the person of Jesus and the salvation He graciously offers the world.

Bobby McKay, pastor

New Liberty Baptist Church
Morton, Mississippi

Dear Pastors,

Please remember that your walk with Christ is far more important than your work for Christ. Focus on your relationship with Him. Walk in intimacy with the Father. Your ministry will flow out of that.

Carl Williams

@carlmwilliams on X

The leader in fight creates conflict.

The leader in flight avoids conflict.

The leader in fawn feigns empathy, gaslighting those in conflict.

The leader in health is an ambassador of shalom, inviting honesty even when it's uncomfortable, prioritizing truth and transparency.

Chuck DeGroat

@chuckdegroat on X

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Personal perspective: Jeff Iorg – A difference maker

By Rick Lance

Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

Jeff Iorg has been unanimously elected as the new president and CEO of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee. In one way, this is not a surprising event. In another way, given our recent past experiences, this is almost miraculous.

I see Jeff Iorg as a true difference maker as our new leader in this most important position. He has a resumé that speaks volumes about his leadership gifts.

As a longtime president of a seminary and a well-known author and preacher/public speaker, Jeff is well known in SBC life.

When he was nominated, I indicated that he and I have been friends and colleagues for almost 26 years. During that time, I have witnessed how the Lord has used him in strategic positions of influence. In my mind, the Executive Committee made the right choice, especially at this juncture in our history.

What do I expect of him? Several words come to mind.

Faithful is one of them. He is the epitome of faithfulness to God and to his calling. Excellence is another word. In all things, Jeff strives for excellence. Difference maker is my favorite description.

Clarity, stability, unity

Jeff also will seek to provide CLARITY as to our mission. In this time of confusion, we are in much need for someone — or someones — to offer the kind of clarity to see us through some divisive issues and difficult situations. Jeff is that kind of leader.

Any church or group can experience what the military calls “mission creep.” In the fog of war, this often



Photo by Adam Covington/Baptist Press

Neal Hughes (left), director of missions of Montgomery Baptist Association and chair of the SBC Executive Committee presidential search committee, congratulates Jeff Iorg following his election as the new president and CEO on March 21.

happens to the military. How do you operate or function when you cannot see clearly?

Perhaps we are in a fog as Southern Baptists. We need someone who can help provide clarity so we can reaffirm our mission as a people of faith.

Jeff Iorg will seek to promote STABILITY at the SBC Executive Committee. I think in looking back at the history of the EC we would be hard pressed to ascertain a time when stability is more needed than now.

The Executive Committee has struggled in recent years in ways in which many of us would never have imagined. Good people have different views as to why this has happened, but the most essential matter before us is how can this important leadership position regain stability. A leader who provides clarity as to

our mission and seeks to promote stability will be one who can lead best in the present and in the future.

Granted, this clarity and stability will not happen overnight. No one leader can do this alone. Dr. Iorg will need assistance, but he is the kind of person who will find that help as needed.

Jeff Iorg will seek to personify UNITY among our people. Clarity leads to stability, and then there is an opportunity for unity. Of course, unity does not mean uniformity. After all we are Baptists. However, I believe that 95–98% of us agree on the major issues. I believe Jeff Iorg is the kind of leader who will remind us of that reality.

Like you, I will be praying for Jeff Iorg as he assumes his new duties. I commit to being a good partner with him in Great Commission ministries. I will do my best to help him to be effective as our leader.

The biblical phrase “For such a time as this ...” is often quoted, but I am not sure that I have known a time when this is more applicable than right now. We are with you, Jeff Iorg. We want to be a part of the team of difference makers for today and tomorrow.



LANCE

In case you missed these nuggets

Excerpts from the March 28 edition of *The Baptist Paper*:

We can fight for our beliefs without demonizing each other.

In a world bursting with diverse opinions and beliefs, it's easy to find ourselves at odds with others.

As followers of Christ, we're called to stand firm in our beliefs while also extending love and respect to those who differ from us. This balance isn't just a nice idea; it's a scriptural mandate and a practical pathway to peace and unity in a diverse world.

Let's embrace our differences, not as barriers, but as opportunities to demonstrate the love, understanding and grace that are at the heart of our faith.

Tony Martin of Mississippi
Guest editorial

No matter where you are in your leadership development, you can grow and improve as a leader.

Here's why:

1. Leaders help us advance the mission.
2. Leaders keep us from drifting.
3. Leaders often inspire and encourage us.
4. Leaders identify emerging problems.
5. Leaders set the pace in caring for people.

Todd Gray of Kentucky
Opinion piece

Communities along the path of the upcoming total solar eclipse on April 8 prepare for an influx of eclipse chasers, with churches considering how to welcome visitors and share the love of Jesus.

Baptist Standard

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“A leader who provides clarity as to our mission and seeks to promote stability will be one who can lead best in the present and in the future.”

Rick Lance

executive director, Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

3 stories you should know



Photo by Kristi Ent/The Alabama Baptist

The Children's Honor Choir, directed by Karen Gosselin, sings at FBC Fairhope on March 2. The choir gathers children grades 4–6 from across the state to grow in their leadership and service skills through the common love of worship through music. The auditioned group also uses dance, media, painting and other worship arts to enhance the worship experience. It is part of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions' worship resources office.

TAB SS writer, Samford prof Gardner headed to Truett

Tyshawn Gardner, associate professor and director of the Pre-Ministerial Scholars Program at Samford University and adjunct professor at Beeson Divinity School, has been named associate professor of preaching at Baylor University's Truett Seminary.

He begins his new role on the Waco, Texas, campus in the fall of 2024.

A Navy veteran, Gardner previously served as senior pastor of Plum Grove Baptist Church in Tuscaloosa. He also has been in the rotation of Sunday School lesson writers for Bible Studies for Life for The Alabama Baptist for several years. (TAB)



GARDNER

Samford's Coach McMillan earns contract extension

Samford University recently announced that men's basketball head coach Bucky McMillan has been signed to a contract extension.

"I want to thank Dr. (Beck) Taylor (Samford president) and Martin Newton (athletic director) for their confidence in the direction of the program as I am extremely grateful for the contract extension," McMillan said.

"We are building a special program ... and I look forward to continuing to work, along with my staff and players, to compete for championships and have a basketball program that is relevant on a national level." (Samford)



McMILLAN

Persecuted church

Christian charged even though another confesses

PUNJAB PROVINCE, Pakistan — Even though someone else has confessed to being the guilty party, a Christian man has been in a Pakistani jail for six months on a blasphemy charge that carries a mandatory death sentence.

Zimran Asim, a Catholic and the father of a 3-year-old girl, was arrested Aug. 27, 2023, in the Chak No. 37 village in Punjab province for allegedly desecrating pages of the Quran and displaying "blasphemous" messages.

The news services Christian Daily International and Morning Star News say Akash Masih, a 17-year-old neighbor, has confessed to two "blasphemy" incidents in July and August.



en.wikipedia.org

According to a relative, Zimran apparently was implicated because he had given Akash a ride to a business. The two were charged under four sections of Pakistan's blasphemy laws, one being Section 295-C (blaspheming Muhammad), which mandates a death penalty.

Zimran's family has had to leave the village for security reasons, a relative told the news services.

Pakistan is No. 7 on Open Doors' 2024 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian.

Iranian Christian faces expulsion from Turkey, prison in Iran

DUZCE, Turkey — An Iranian Christian may be expelled from Turkey, which would leave him to face a prison term in Iran.

If Mojtaba Keshavarz Ahmadi is made to return

to Iran, a three-year prison sentence awaits him for allegedly "carrying out propaganda activities against the holy regime of the Islamic Republic" (of Iran), reported Morning Star News.

Although Ahmadi has been in Turkey more than a decade and has applied for refugee status, he has yet to be given protection, stated Morning Star, quoting the advocacy group Article 18. Those seeking United Nations refugee status in Turkey are assigned a city and are required to reside there. Ahmadi's assigned city was Duzce.

He was arrested Jan. 29 for supposedly leaving Duzce without permission from the Turkish government. He was taken to a detention center near Ayvacik, Turkey.

Turkey is No. 50 on Open Doors' 2024 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian. Iran ranks No. 9.

‘Excited to join UM family’

Smith: ‘I look forward to linking arms with [those] that make this place so special’

(continued from page 1)
University of Mobile into a future where we not only continue to excel in our academic and spiritual missions, but also expand our influence and impact on the global stage,” Harbin said.

Fred Wilson, chair of the presidential search committee, said the university launched a nationwide search for a visionary leader in October 2023.

“After a thorough and prayerful search, it became clear that Dr. Charles Smith was the person God has prepared to lead this institution,” Wilson said.

“His impressive background, exemplary leadership qualities, and commitment to

academic excellence and spiritual calling have prepared him to lead [UM] into its next chapter of growth and success.”

Smith has been serving as senior vice president for institutional relations and assistant professor of Christian Leadership at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and Spurgeon College in Kansas City, Missouri.

“Virtually every day I meet men and women whose lives were radically changed in college,” Smith shared.

“Places like the University of Mobile shape minds, move hearts, identify gifts, cultivate friendship, strengthen communities



UM trustee Fred Wilson served as chair of the presidential search committee.



UM photo

Charles Smith and his family were introduced on the UM campus March 21. “I really do believe ... the best days are ahead for this institution.” UM is a Cooperative Program-supported school and part of the Alabama Baptist State Convention.

and launch lifelong careers. But even more important, Christian universities like UM encourage and equip students to follow Jesus,” he noted.

“Over the past few months I’ve seen UM faculty and staff mentor students and describe how God’s good design not only informs their field of study, but their entire life. These are the things we feel called to give our lives to, which is why we are so excited to be joining the UM family.”

Smith and his wife, Ashley — who grew up as part of Morningview Baptist Church in Montgomery —

have three daughters, Ellie, Annie and Susie.

Ashley’s father is Greg Belser, who previously served as pastor of Morningview and now serves in Clinton, Mississippi.

‘Coming back home’

“We are thrilled to be coming back home to Alabama ... and excited to build a new life in Mobile and continue the rich legacy of this institution,” Smith added.

“While universities are facing unprecedented challenges, I truly believe UM’s best days are ahead.

“Like anything worth doing, such a future will require our very best effort, and at times, even sacrifice. But I am convinced that if we are willing to serve, God is eager to bless,” he said. “I look forward to linking arms with the countless faculty, staff and supporters that make this place so special.”



UM photo

Advice outgoing UM president Lonnie Burnett (right) recently shared with incoming president Charles Smith: “Be yourselves. Don’t try to be what you think a president and first lady should be if it is not your style.”

Alabama news

ALABAMA-CRENSHAW ASSOCIATION

► **Jeremy Bunnell** is the new pastor of **Patsburg Baptist Church, Luverne**. Bunnell holds a bachelor of science degree from University of North Florida, Jacksonville; a master of divinity degree from New Orleans Seminary; and is a doctor of ministry candidate in church revitalization at New Orleans Seminary. He previously served as pastor of Goshen Baptist Church and in various ministry positions in Florida and Georgia. Bunnell currently works as the safety coordinator at Rex Lumber, Troy. He and his wife, Hannah, have three children.



BUNNELL

► **Shane Thompson** is the new pastor of **Spring Hill South Baptist Church, Luverne**. He also has served as a youth minister and pastor of several churches in Alabama including New Haven Baptist Church, Elba, and Bethel Baptist Church, Opp. Thompson and his wife, Laura, have four children.

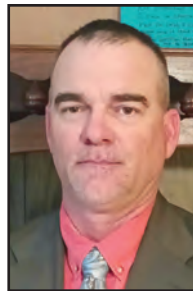


THOMPSON

AUTAUGA ASSOCIATION

► **Adam Gomillion** is the new pastor of **New Prospect Baptist Church, Marbury**. Gomil-

lion holds three certificates in biblical studies from Samford University Ministry Training Institute, and is working on a fourth. He served as pastor of Tunnell Chapel, Wetumpka; Brooks Baptist Church, Red Level; and Old Town Baptist Church, Evergreen. Gomillion works for the Russell Do It Center, Wetumpka. He and his wife, Tracey, have three grown boys.



GOMILLION

BETHEL ASSOCIATION

► **Nanafalia Baptist Church** is hosting homecoming April 14 at 11 a.m., followed by lunch. Don Newton is the special speaker, and an offering will be taken for the church cemetery. Tommy Campbell is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

► **Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Birmingham**, is hosting "Full Circle Parenting Conference," April 19–20, led by Jimmy and Kristin Scroggins.

The couple, who wrote the book with Leslee Bennett, on having crucial conversations, plan to tackle foundations for biblical parenting, as well as issues related to sexuality and technology.

Child care is available for both Friday evening and Saturday morning sessions. Visit shades.org/parenting or call 205-822-1670 for information.

BLOUNT ASSOCIATION

► **Pleasant View Missionary Baptist Church, Holly Pond**, will host a spring revival April 7–10. The guest evangelist is Jared Dixon. Services will be Sunday, 10:45 a.m. and 5 p.m., and Monday through Wednesday, 7 p.m. Earl Harper is pastor.

CALHOUN ASSOCIATION

► **Garry Ragsdale** retired from **Mount Zion Baptist Church, Alexandria**, where he served as senior pastor for 35 years. He holds a bachelor of arts degree in biblical studies from Luther Rice College, Lithonia, Georgia; and a master of ministry degree and a doctor of ministry degree from Covington Theological Seminary, Ringgold, Georgia. He previously served as student minister at Greenbrier Road Baptist Church, Anniston; Eastaboga Baptist Church, First Baptist Church DeArmanville (now Parker Memorial DeArmanville Campus), Anniston; and Mount Zion Baptist. While serving as pastor of Mount Zion, the church grew from 60 to 600; built a worship center, a student space, an education building and a Christian Life Center; and made the top 50 churches in



Photo courtesy of Garry Ragsdale

OBITUARIES

RICHARD E. MARTINDALE

Richard E. Martindale, a former Navy chaplain and Baptist pastor, died Feb. 25. He was 83.

When he was growing up, Martindale — a native of Texas — moved to Germany with his family on a U.S. Army assignment. He returned to the U.S. in 1955, finished high school in Georgia, then earned his bachelor's degree in theology from Howard College (now Samford University). He also earned a master of theology from New Orleans Seminary.

Martindale and his wife, Roselyn, lived in New Orleans and then Pensacola, Florida, before



MARTINDALE

he enlisted in the U.S. Navy. Following chaplain school in Rhode Island, he was commissioned into the U.S. Navy Chaplain Corps and stationed in the Philippines. His military service took the family all over the world, with duty stations in the Philippines, Florida, California, North Carolina and Italy. He retired as a lieutenant commander in 1988.

Martindale retired to Thomasville, where he pursued two more master's degrees and a teaching certificate at Livingston College (now the University of West Alabama) and the University of Montevallo. He taught English, speech and ethics at Alabama Southern Community College (now Coastal Alabama Community College) for 20 years.

Throughout his career, Martindale served as pastor and interim pastor of numerous churches, including several in Alabama — County Line Baptist, Arlington; Salem Baptist, Dickinson; Center Point Baptist,

Coffeeville; Chilton Baptist, Grove Hill; Oak Grove Baptist, Pine Hill; and Dixon's Mills Baptist. Most recently, he was pastor of Bashan Baptist Church, Thomasville.

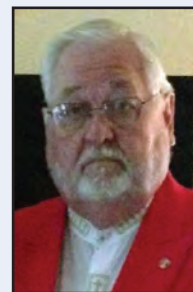
He also served at Warrington Baptist Church, Pensacola, Florida, and Walnut Hill Baptist Church, Walnut Hill, Florida.

Martindale is survived by his wife of 60 years, Roselyn; two daughters, Rachael and Rhonda; four grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; and two step-great-grandchildren

EDDIE MORRIS RAPE

Eddie Morris Rape, pastor of River Road Baptist Church, Alexander City, died Feb. 19.

Rape served in the U.S. Army for 30 years and led churches for 40 years in several states. Most recently, he was



RAPE

pastor at River Road, where he had served since 2021.

He was a graduate of Faith Bible Theological Seminary in Milton, Florida.

Rape is survived by his wife, Nancy; daughter, Alecia; son, John; four grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

MARVIN SMITH

Former pastor Marvin Smith died March 10. He was 77.

Smith served as a pastor and supply pastor of several churches in Alabama, including serving as pastor of County Line Baptist Church, Hampden, from 2007 to 2012. He also served as moderator of Bethel Baptist Association from 2011 to 2012.

He retired from MacMillan Bloedel Inc.

Smith is preceded in death by his grandson, Jacob. He is survived by his wife, Diane; son, Mark; daughter, Sherry; and five grandchildren.

NEWS

baptisms in the state every year. In honor of Ragsdale's retirement, many pastors who were raised up and called to ministry at Mount Zion returned for his final Sunday. They honored him during the service and at a reception afterwards. Ragsdale and his wife, Debbie, have two children, six grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

CENTRAL ASSOCIATION

▶ **Brett Oakes** is the new pastor of **Central Coosa Cowboy Church, Hanover**. Oakes felt called to ministry 18 months ago and became the associate pastor. He retired 10 years ago from a career as a police officer with the Coosa County Sheriff's



Photo courtesy of Brett Oakes

Department and Wetumpka Police Department. Oakes was ordained March 17. He and his wife, Colleen, have three sons and eight grandchildren.

ESCAMBIA ASSOCIATION

▶ **Phil Johnson** is the new associate pastor of music and worship of **Catawba Springs Baptist Church, Brewton**. Johnson retired as pastor of Robinsonville Baptist Church, Atmore, in 2022, where he served 25 years as associate pastor and minister of music, and five years as senior pastor. Previously he served as minister of music and youth at



JOHNSON

First Baptist Church Atmore; minister of music and senior adults at Brooks Memorial Baptist Church, Atmore; and as minister of music and youth in Tennessee and Kentucky.

Johnson holds a bachelor of music degree in voice with a minor in piano from Belmont University, Nashville, Tennessee, and a master of divinity and church music degree from Southern Seminary. His wife and pianist of 38 years, Shea, passed away February 2022. They have two children. Jeff Edwards is pastor.

MADISON ASSOCIATION

▶ **Ron Lynch** retired as church and community ministries director of **Madison Baptist Association**, where he has served since 2002. Lynch holds a bachelor of science degree from Shorter College (now Shorter University), Rome, Georgia, and a master of religious education degree from Southwestern Seminary.

He has served the local church through music, youth, education and missions. He was associate pastor of education/administration/missions at Gilliam Springs Baptist Church, Arab, where he helped lead the church to receive four Eagle Awards for Sunday School and church growth.

Lynch led associational, regional, state and church conferences for training in Sunday School, deacon ministry and church leadership. He led missions teams to Wisconsin, Indiana, Ohio, Mississippi, Tennessee, Pennsylvania, Brazil, Ukraine and Romania.



LYNCH

He worked as an associational coordinator with World Changers, served on the Northeast Alabama Fellowship of Christian Athletes Board, Huntsville, and the board of the Real Life Pregnancy Center, Guntersville. He was an officer and member of the Religious Education Association.

Lynch will continue to serve Madison Association as a consultant for missions projects. He and his wife, Debbie, recently celebrated 50 years of marriage. They have three sons and five grandchildren.

MOBILE ASSOCIATION

▶ **Randy Grim** recently retired after 38 years as minister of music for Spring Hill Baptist Church, Mobile, and 51 years total in ministry. Grim also served FBC Prattville and earned degrees from Mississippi College and New Orleans Seminary. He and his wife, Marsha, have two children and four grandchildren.

PINE BARREN ASSOCIATION

▶ **Camden Baptist Church** will host its annual Spring Renewal event for women April 18, featuring guest speaker and worship leader Lyndsay Lyon and Nathan Lyon, pianist. Dinner will be served at 5:30 p.m. followed by the special program beginning at 6:15. Call 334-682-9142 by April 15 to RSVP for dinner and/or child care. Justin Nelson is pastor.

SHELBY ASSOCIATION

▶ **Southcrest Baptist Church, Bessemer**, will host Trusting Grace southern gospel group April 6, at 6 p.m. Doors open at 5 with food available for purchase. For more information call 205-425-4991. Scott Bush is pastor.

Bethel breaks ground for new Connection Center



Photo courtesy of Bethel Baptist Church

Bethel Baptist Church, Dora, in Sulphur Springs Baptist Association, holds a groundbreaking ceremony March 17 for its Connection Center — a youth sanctuary and event building. John Foles is pastor.

School of the Arts at UM bringing back summer camps

The Alabama School of the Arts at the University of Mobile is bringing back theater and music summer camps with options for students in grades 2 through 12.

The camps offer an opportunity to learn from world-class instructors who are committed to providing an encouraging and professional experience.

Theater camp

The 10-day theater camp is for students ages 14–18 or who have completed grades 8 through 12.

It will take place Mondays through Fridays, June 10–14 and June 17–21, with a final showcase on the last day.

Options include intensives and rehearsals, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, or intensives only, 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Music camp

UM's music camp is for rising 2nd–5th graders.

Students will explore different kinds of instruments, learn music theory, sing, dance, perform and more. The camp will take place Monday through Friday, June 24–28 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., with a final showcase on the last day.

Discounts are available for down payments before April 5. Learn more at asota.umobile.edu/summer-camps. (UM)

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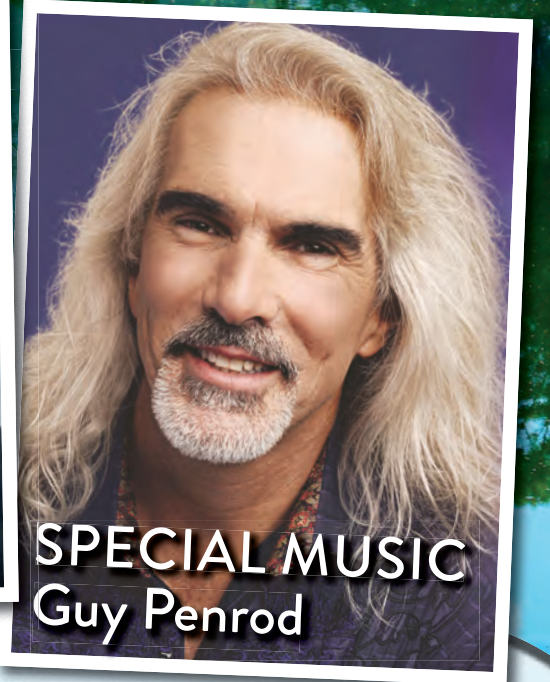
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For more information, contact Lisa Montgomery at
(334) 613-2245 or lmontgomery@alsbom.org.

evangelizeAL.org/revive

This event is made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.

Tax law changes, regulations important to note

By Michael J. Brooks
The Alabama Baptist

Lee Wright, church compensation specialist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, reminds churches of the importance of understanding and following IRS guidelines.

Wright specifically points to church contribution records and how they must be “contemporaneous.”

“This means that our members should wait until they have the contribution statement in hand before they file their taxes if they plan to itemize,” he said. “I suggest churches declare this in their printed materials in January as a reminder.”

Wright said his most

often-asked question around the state is about proper handling of contributions.

“Gifts to churches can be cash or property, not gifts of time or labor,” he said.

“And these gifts must be given by Dec. 31 to be recorded for the current year. For electronic gifts, the date the donor hits ‘send’ is the date of the gift, no matter if the post date is later.

“Additionally, gifts must be given without tangible benefit to the donor, and a statement to this effect should be printed on the contribution records provided to members.”

Designated gifts continue to be a special concern.

“The key is church authorization and control,” he said. “This means that the

Lee Wright provides resources on tax and financial-related items at alsbom.org/ccs. He can be reached at 800-264-1225, ext. 2241, or lwright@alsbom.org.



Photo courtesy of Toni Wall

Lee Wright, church compensation specialist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, leads a recent workshop for the churches of Birmingham Metro Baptist Association.

church oversees the designation, and it cannot be for personal benefit of the donor or for a particular individual if the gifts are regarded as deductible for tax purposes.”

Another new item is how long-standing designated funds of 10 years or more can be repurposed.

“Alabama law now of-

fers help in this area,” he said. “If the original intent is impossible, impractical or even illegal and is less than \$50,000, the church can vote, seek permission from the original donors, if possible, and send a declaration of intent to the state attorney general’s office. After 60 days, the congregation can

redirect the funds for use in similar ministry.”

Gifts also must be substantiated. Wright suggested contribution records be kept for at least seven years and contribution envelopes be kept for two to three years.

Good steward

Wright said churches must be good stewards of all God has given them, including accurate accounting of gifts and disbursements and adequate compensation plans for staff. A minister’s housing allowance should be requested by the minister and approved by the church.

Wright encourages churches to be familiar with laws on reimbursable expenses and traditional business expenses as they relate to expenses a pastor incurs during the course of ministry. The reimbursable mileage expense is 67 cents per mile in 2024, he noted.

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PROVIDING HELP AND HOPE

Book offers perspectives, tips on caring for a loved one with dementia

By Lonnie Wilkey
Baptist & Reflector

When Jim Henry first learned of his late wife Jeanette's diagnosis of dementia, he did what came naturally most of his life: pray.

"Most of my life I have been a caregiver for God's people," explained Henry, pastor emeritus of First Baptist Church Orlando, Florida, and a past president of the

Southern Baptist Convention. "Now I was being called to be a caregiver for the one person to whom I was most important — the love of my life who has stood by me and with me."

Encouragement

Jeanette died in 2019, and in 2020, Jim published a book, "Alzheimer's Dementia, What Now?: Help and Hope for Caregivers, Family and Friends," co-authored by Deb Terry. The book address-

es the challenges families face in dealing with Alzheimer's disease and dementia.

When Jeanette was diagnosed, Jim acknowledged he was "entering a world about which I knew very little. I did not have a clue about what I needed to do or what I needed to know to assume this role."

"However, I do know this now," Henry wrote in the introduction to his book. "That is why this book was written.

"Our journey took off on that wild roller coaster ride. Yours may have just begun, or perhaps you have been on this ride for a while. This book is intended to encourage you on your journey as you care for your loved one while walking each step of 'the long goodbye,'" he wrote.

Walking with a parent

The book is co-written by Deb Terry, former children's director at FBC Orlando, who resigned her position in 2007 in order to care for her dad who had Alzheimer's disease.

Jeanette Henry shares in a celebration of her husband Jim's 28 years as pastor of First Baptist Church Orlando, Florida, prior to his retirement there in 2006.



BP photo

Terry noted that it has been more than a decade since her father died, and she has had many opportunities to tell her story. She was often asked if she had written a book or planned to write one.

"God's perfect provision and timing allowed Dr. Jim Henry and me to collaborate on this project. We found much commonality in our experiences of walking with a loved one through the ravages of this horrible disease. "However, we were certain God had a plan. God faithfully revealed what we needed day by day and step by step as we put our trust in Him to take care of our needs."

"There are lessons we both learned through this process that will help others gain insight, offer hope in times of despair and point to the kind of healing only God can provide. Our message to you, the caregiver, is to take heart. You are not alone," she said.

Practical advice

Henry observed that the book "is a blending of our stories with practical advice from us and others who have lived with loved ones who have suffered this horrific disease and in the midst of it have found help and hope.

"Even more importantly, they have ultimately found healing for the pain in their own lives because of a

deepening relationship with Christ Jesus," he said.

He stressed that the book is written with the caregiver in mind and addresses 18 central questions which caregivers will eventually seek answers for. Among them are simple questions like "What are the things I need to know?" or "What are the first steps I need to take?" and move on to "What financial and legal preparation do I need to make?" and "How do I tackle the daily care of my loved one?"

Each chapter addresses one of the 18 questions that Henry and Terry developed and also provides stories and struggles of being a caregiver. Henry noted that at the end of each chapter, they provide Scripture and prayer to share hope with the caregiver.

"This very real hope has made the difference in our lives and our individual journeys with Alzheimer's," Henry said.

The book is available from major booksellers.

EDITOR'S NOTE —
This article was originally published by the Baptist & Reflector.

Faith Moments

7 ways you can impact this next generation

This "next generation" is the most unchurched in American history. Many of us look around our churches, which are admittedly aging, and wonder if we can make a difference. There is hope for you and your church. Here are seven suggestions for how you can impact this next generation for Christ:

1. Pray. Pray for specific children. Ask God to reach young people with the gospel. Pray that your church might be more effective in reaching young people. Camden Baptist Church, for example, started with a few women praying earnestly for babies. Their nursery was empty. Today, they are asking for more workers to help care for all the children.

2. Give. Give your time, talents and treasures to invest in this next

generation. Make sure your church's budget adequately reflects the concern we claim to have over our children and youth.

Show you care

3. Be present. Let young people see that you care about them. Volunteer to keep the nursery. If you have youth services, attend from time to time. You might not like the music, but it's not about you and me but about furthering the Kingdom. Babysit some children so their busy mom and dad can have a date night. Ask God how you can be present in a young person's life.

4. Go on a "trip" or "field day." Again, being with them shows you care. Cyrus was a member of a church I pastored. Even though he was 80, he attended their youth services. Moreover, he volunteered

to go on their trips as a chaperone. Guess what? They loved him, and he loved them.

5. Disciple. Make it your aim to share the love of Christ with these young people. Intentionally invest in their spiritual growth. Teach children in Sunday School or VBS. Perhaps ask your pastor if there is a student you can mentor.

One lady didn't have much money but had time and a desire to make a difference, and she made a "mean" peanut butter and jelly sandwich. She invited a youth to come to her house. She prayed with her and disciplined her as they ate sandwiches and chips and drank sweet tea.

This dear lady is now with the Lord, but her legacy lives on.

6. Celebrate. Be there and celebrate their big days. For example, give a present when they are "gradu-

ating" from K-5 to first grade. Rejoice with the family when they are baptized. Remember their "rites of passage," and they will remember you for life.

7. Listen. Young people hear a lot of "do's and don'ts." They don't need your sermons (until you first build a rapport); instead, they need a listening ear, a godly influence, love and a prayer warrior.

These are only a few suggestions. I would like you to know that you can make a difference in the lives of young people. Let's not curse the darkness. Let us shine the light of the gospel into this next generation.

By Rob Jackson
Director of evangelism and church revitalization, Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions



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Caring for wife with Alzheimer's shows pastor how God loves His Church

"Therapeutic lying" was a new concept for Grady Caldwell Jr. As the primary caregiver for his wife Kathleen in the latter stages of Alzheimer's, surely he shouldn't allow her to believe her mother Lois, deceased for years, just visited them at home.

Caldwell, senior pastor of New Mercy Baptist Church in Griffin, Georgia, tried telling Kathleen the truth when she talked of speaking with her brother, Bruce Jones, who had passed 20 years earlier.

Learning curve

"She fell into a state of depression that was unbelievable. And that's what got me to begin to walk in the truth of that term, [therapeutic lying]," Caldwell explained.

"It's better to live in her reality, than to try to bring her into the reality of what's actually going on."

Caldwell, 74, is among 11 million Americans who

serve as caregivers to Alzheimer's and dementia patients, the Alzheimer's Association reports of the disease that afflicts an estimated 6.7 million adults in the U.S. By 2050, nearly 13 million Americans are projected to have the disease.

Kathleen, 73, was diagnosed five years ago after Caldwell began to notice changes in his childhood sweetheart and wife of 55 years. Usually meticulous in keeping financial records for the church, she'd begun to slip. Bills were paid late or not at all, which was nothing like the Kathleen he had loved since eighth grade. She couldn't recall

names, and sentences were no longer cohesive.

He cares for Kathleen while serving as a full-time pastor, utilizing a home



Grady and Kathleen Caldwell at a community event before her diagnosis with Alzheimer's, now in its latter stages.

office that allows him to keep her safe while leading the church of about 100 worshippers. His daughter Carmen, who serves on New Mercy's staff, lives on the top floor of the Caldwell home, and a caregiver

comes in twice a week. "Through this, God has really given me a greater sense of His love for the Church," Caldwell said, "and He compels me to love her as He loves the Church. ... And that's amazing to me, how much God loves us." (BP)



In the little moments and major milestones of childhood, we are here for our patients and their families — helping, healing, teaching and discovering.



ChildrensAL.org



Making a Difference

35 Mobile-area churches hold 48 outreach events throughout the month of March

Mobile

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Donna Wright said years ago someone invited her to a self-defense class at a martial arts studio, and she went — and learned more than just how to defend herself.

She also learned the art of putting out an invitation that's hard to turn down.

"I hardly knew the friend who invited me, but I was interested in knowing more about how to defend myself," said Donna Wright, who serves as education minister at West Mobile Baptist Church.

So recently when her church was brainstorming ideas for Making a Difference Mobile, a countywide outreach effort held throughout the month of March, she suggested they think the same way — to come up with events that people were already interested in.

And she started with the same invitation she'd accepted — she



Photo by Thomas Wright

Members of Bethel Baptist Church in Citronelle hold a Spring Fest event March 24 to serve their community with food and games and invite them to their Easter service the following Sunday.

suggested they hold a self-defense class of their own.

"I was trying to think of something our women could do that would be an outreach but that would be easy to invite ladies to," Donna Wright said. "We wanted to get people into our building and get them to meet some ladies from our church."

It worked. On March 14, when West Mobile Baptist held a

Health care volunteers conduct medical screenings at the Love Is Here community outreach event hosted by Highpoint Baptist Church in Eight Mile on March 9.



Photo by Doug Rogers

much as normal for an unchurched person walking into one of our buildings."

Their self-defense class was one of 48 events put on by 35 congregations throughout March as part of Making a Difference Mobile.

Variety of events

Events included block parties, revivals, health fairs, dental clinics, door-to-door prayer, a men's steak night, a sports clinic and home repairs for foster families. The purpose was to engage people who don't typically attend church and invite them to attend, with Easter Sunday as the target.

Thomas Wright, executive director of missions for Mobile Baptist Association, said Making a Difference Mobile "has proven true to its name."

He said he saw God work through both small and large churches throughout this effort.

For smaller congregations especially, Making a Difference Mobile was an opportunity to have teams from other churches in the state come alongside them to help them conduct a bigger outreach push than they would normally be able to do on their own, he said.

"Making a Difference helped respond to three challenges to event evangelism: knowing how to conduct an effective event, funding the cost of the event and providing workers to participate and follow up," Thomas Wright said.

Every church in the association was offered help with planning, and funds from the Myers-

women's self-defense class, 15 guests joined 35 church members to learn pressure points, escape moves and the most important things to keep in mind during an unwanted encounter with someone.

Being prepared

"After it was over, I shared the gospel by talking about us preparing for the unexpected and how we also need to prepare for the expected — the day we die," Donna Wright said.

She said she and the other women at West Mobile Baptist thought it was a success for several reasons, one of which was that their guests "could kind of picture what they would be coming to — it didn't have that element of the unknown as



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/The Alabama Baptist

Barbershop quartet-style singing by members of the Mobile Bay A Cappella group was part of the March 23 block party festivities at Turnerville Baptist Church in Chunchula.

Mallory State Missions Offering undergirded the effort, he said. “Statewide promotion helped connect volunteers with events, and online resources will continue to help every church with future events even if they weren’t able to participate [in March].”

Those resources include a prayer guide, evangelism tools, a community survey, demographic information and three sermon outlines from Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

Wright said they’re still hearing stories of the fruit that came from the 48 events spread around the

county. In Saraland, pastor Ernesto Hidalgo and the Hispanic mission of Shiloh Baptist invited the Hispanic community to a dental and health clinic and also provided games, food and clear gospel presentations.

Lyle Dease, associational missionary for Pickens Baptist Association, brought a team down that day to support Shiloh Baptist.

He and his wife, Claren, helped with translation at the clinic, while other volunteers — including a clowning team — plugged in through other ways.

“It was the first time Shiloh’s Hispanic work had ever done an

To access the online resources for Making a Difference Mobile, visit alsbom.org/makingadifference.

outside evangelistic event, and they weren’t sure how things would go or what the numbers would be,” Dease said. “But there was a pretty steady flow from 9 to 1.”

Finding Jesus

Of the 85 people who came, four professed new faith in Jesus.

“We saw God work, and I think the church made some good contacts,” Dease said. “It was good to see what God is doing and how He’s working there.”

At First Baptist Church Tillman’s Corner, they also saw God at work, according to pastor Derek Allen.

Volunteers from the church participated in 22 projects in mid-March, had more than 100 gospel conversations and passed out more than 1,000 invitations to church.

Lance — who along with Rick Barnhart, director of the SBOM office of associational missions and church planting, helped design the event in Mobile — said this effort “is a model we plan to use across the state in years to come.”

“Making a Difference Mobile

was a uniquely cooperative effort in which churches of the Mobile Association reached out into their communities in ways which touched the lives of all ages of people,” Lance said.

“Thomas Wright offered excellent organizational and inspirational leadership for the effort, and churches dedicated four weekends of ministry outreach to the larger Mobile area communities.”

It’s something he’s excited to see repeated — Making a Difference Gadsden/Etowah is already set for 2025.

“We have gleaned many lessons from the Mobile experience which will help us in our future endeavors,” Lance noted.

Barnhart said the Making a Difference effort is both a great outreach opportunity and “an opportunity to train people to do missions at home.”

“It’s a good short-term missions opportunity and

also an opportunity for pastors to take their church members ... to see opportunities that maybe they hadn’t thought of being able to do in their local area.”



Photo by Thomas Wright

A young boy gets his face painted during a community Easter egg hunt at Woodridge Baptist Church in Mobile on March 24. The event included inflatables, games, a hot dog dinner, train ride, petting zoo, Bible distribution, children’s gospel presentation, egg hunt with candy giveaway and door prizes.



Photo by Doug Rogers

David Hovey, interim children’s ministry director at Shiloh Baptist Church in Saraland, uses a Salvation Ball to share the plan of salvation with children attending the church’s sports clinic on March 9.



Photo by Amelia Medley

Jillian Lane — pianist at West Mobile Baptist Church and a 3rd degree black belt — leads a women’s self-defense class at the church March 14. The class was designed to share a useful skill while introducing women in the community to the gospel and the church.

Famous Christians from previous centuries

Heroes of the Faith

Peter Cartwright was a Methodist missionary called 'God's plowman'

Peter Cartwright (1785–1872), a Methodist missionary, was possibly the most famous circuit rider in the United States.

Born on Sept. 1, 1785, in Amherst County, Virginia, he was the son of Peter Cartwright Sr. and Christiana Garvin Cartwright. Soon after his birth, his family moved to Kentucky.

At the age of 15, Cartwright was converted at a camp meeting, which was part of the Revival of 1800, also known as the Red River Revival. In his "Autobiography of Peter Cartwright: The Backwoods Preacher," he described his conversion: "To this meeting I repaired, a guilty wretched sinner. ... I went, with weeping multitudes, and bowed before the stand, and earnestly prayed for mercy. ... a voice said to me, 'Thy sins are all forgiven thee.' Divine light flashed all round me; unspeakable joy sprung up in my soul. I rose to my feet, opened my eyes, and it really seemed as if I was in heaven; the trees, the leaves on them, and everything seemed, and I really thought were, praising God."

Cartwright joined the Methodist Episcopal Church and became a circuit preacher in 1802. Two years

later he was ordained by Francis Asbury and William McKendree, the two Methodist bishops in America. He married Frances Gaines in 1808. They had two sons and seven daughters.

He called himself "God's plowman." He experienced a divine calling to spread the gospel. As a Methodist circuit rider, he sought out people in remote frontier locations. He preached mostly in Kentucky and Illinois, but also in Tennessee, Indiana and Ohio.



CARTWRIGHT

Cartwright required only a few necessities for his vocation. On his horse were his saddlebags containing his belongings and books. His

library was a Bible, a hymnbook and the Methodist Book of Discipline. While preaching and visiting, he wore a black broadcloth suit.

Defeated by Lincoln

In the 19th century, presiding elders were the most important officers in the Methodist Church. Cartwright served as a presiding elder for 50 years. He received 10,000 members into the Methodist Church, personally baptized 12,000 people and preached more than 15,000 sermons during his 60 years as a frontier minister.

Because he opposed slavery, he moved his family from Kentucky to Illinois in 1824. He was elected to the lower house of the Illinois General Assembly in 1828 and 1832. In 1846, Abraham Lincoln defeated him for a seat in the U.S. Congress.

Cartwright's autobiography, published in 1856, made him nationally prominent.

"God's plowman" died near Pleasant Plains, Illinois, on Sept. 25, 1872. He was 87 years old.

Lass WORDS

BY KEN LASS
The Alabama Baptist



DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS

For the Sake of Time

Imagine someone stops you on the street and asks you how far it is to Atlanta. You would probably not answer in terms of distance. ("Oh, it's about 100 miles to the east.") Chances are you would respond in terms of time. ("It's about 2 hours to the east.")

Ever wonder why? It's because, in a very subconscious way, you understand that what the person is really asking is, "How much time out of my life is it going to take to get to Atlanta?"

Earthly obsession

We humans are obsessed with time, and we will do almost anything to preserve it. We drive our cars too fast, cook our food in microwave ovens, send text messages instead of writing letters, set up direct deposit to pay our bills and multitask our home and work chores, all for the sake of saving time.

It might be helpful to ask ourselves what we are saving it for.

Is it not a bit ironic that we are often stressed out from being in such a hurry to save time so we can relax?

I guess we figure we can use all this extra time to decompress and enjoy life, but often we are such a wreck by the time we get there that we can't appreciate it.

We are conditioned to focus on the fact that our time on this

earth is limited, and we are determined to spend as much of it as possible having fun, even if it kills us.

No reason to rush

When Jesus walked the earth He tried mightily to convince His disciples — and anyone else who would listen — that time is irrelevant to the believer.

For those who profess Jesus as Lord, He will prepare a place in paradise where we will live with Him and His Father forever. Our bodies will be new and perfect. We will love and be loved. There will be no stress and no reason to be in a hurry.

Not everyone understood then, just as now. We are created to be eternal. We will live forever, one way or another.

So take a deep breath, slow down and spend some of that time listening to God's will. You're not on the clock and, as a believer in Christ, will one day experience a place where there is no pain or sorrow.

And the best part? You won't need your watch.

MEET THE AUTHOR

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

By Joanne Sloan

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

IMPACTING THE LIVES OF CHILDREN

Long Ranch 4 Boys provides solid family structure that loves, encourages and equips

By Michael Smith
The Alabama Baptist

Ever since God gave Paul Long the vision for Long Ranch 4 Boys at a Chattanooga, Tennessee, movie theater in 2012, Long says God has done “exceedingly and abundantly above all” he asked or thought about.

Long Ranch 4 Boys, located in Fyffe, is an overflow of the passion Paul, his wife, Kristy, and their family have for ministering to boys ages 5–18 in difficult situations.

Their vision and prayer for Long Ranch is to provide children with a solid family structure that will love, encourage and equip them to be godly adults in their communities and homes.

Long has seen the impact of the ministry on the boys’ lives.

“As long as they’re willing to buy into what we’re doing, God can do amazing things in their lives,” he said. “Our heart is to see lives changed.”

Every child who has come to the ranch, except for one who was already saved, Long noted, has come to know Christ as their Savior while at the ranch.

Long started the ministry after he sensed God speaking to him — not in an audible way but in his heart and mind — about starting a home for boys.

At first Long, pastor of Antioch Baptist Church in Fyffe, thought the idea was crazy, but God kept speaking to him until he surrendered to the call.



Photo courtesy of Paul Long

Long Ranch 4 Boys is an overflow of the passion the Long family has for ministering to boys ages 5–18 in difficult situations. Pictured are (l to r) Lilly and Japeth Long, Kristy and Paul Long, and Crimson and Gracie Long.

“Everything we’ve done here, the Lord has provided it, and we just continue to trust Him,” Long said.

Long credits the ranch’s houseparents for being at the forefront of the ministry.

“They are the ones right there every day, dealing with all the different

things that are going on,” he said.

“The houseparents are managing and dealing with all that stuff and then they have their own family. Our houseparents have three of their own girls who live in the house with them.”

Long said it has always been their

heart’s desire to provide a place for girls too. The family has been praying for many years and waiting for the Lord to provide an opportunity.

Long was recently contacted about a piece of property someone left to be used to help children. Long hopes to take possession of this property soon and begin expanding God’s plans for the ranch.

‘Along for this ride’

“We have encountered many obstacles along the way, and God has cleared each one, starting with a need for \$23,000 to pay liens owed on the property,” he said.

“The Lord not only sent the money from three states away, but He also canceled the liens on the property. He did exceedingly abundantly above all I asked or thought about.

“My heart and vision for this 50-acre property is not only for children but to provide a place for hurting families and marriages to be healed and restored,” Long noted.

“I have plans, visions and goals, but I have no clue where God is taking this situation,” he said.

“I am along for this ride of what God is doing.”

Men’s choral groups performing concert for Discovery Clubs

The Warblers Club and the Evelyn S. Hardy Men of Distinction, from Sixth Avenue Baptist Church, will perform together in April to support Discovery Clubs.

Discovery Clubs is an after-school Bible club that meets in public elementary schools in the Birmingham Metro area.

“We are especially grateful for the impact this concert will have

on the children in public schools across the Birmingham Metro area through Discovery Clubs,” said Chris Crain, executive director of Birmingham Metro Baptist Association, which coordinates Discovery Clubs.

Event details

The event will be at First Baptist Church Trussville, located at 128

North Chalkville Road in Trussville, on April 21, at 4 p.m.

Admission is free. A love offering will be taken at the event for those who would like to donate and support the ministry of Discovery Clubs.

The choral groups seek to help bring communities together through the joy of gospel music, Crain noted. (BMBA)

For more information, visit longranch4boys.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS

sponsored by the State Board of Missions

Two upcoming ESL ministry workshops

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

A great way to make connections with them, build relationships and help meet their needs is to get involved in English as a Second Language ministry, she said.

“For me personally and my experience, ESL ministries are one of the best ways to reach internationals with the gospel, not only in the U.S. and Alabama but around the world,” said Kennedy, who leads in the area of community ministries at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. “There’s a huge opportunity here.”

A first step toward getting involved is to attend an ESL workshop put on by Kennedy’s team. Two workshops are scheduled for April:

- ▶ First Baptist Church Montgomery in the Community Ministries Caring Center, from 1 p.m. April 19 to 4 p.m. April 20.
- ▶ Madison Baptist

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



Association in Huntsville, from 1 p.m. April 19 to 4 p.m. April 20.

At the workshop, you’ll learn the skills to run an ESL ministry — starting and organizing, recruiting students and teachers, how to teach, how to prepare a lesson plan, how to share your faith with your students and more.

The cost is \$25 and includes materials, dinner Friday and lunch Saturday.

“Through ESL, you’re able to make that connection with internationals and help meet their needs,” Kennedy said. “It’s an amazing ministry to get to be a part of. You get to see lives change because of the gospel.”

Church Weekday Education Conference

If you’re a church preschool teacher or director, the Church Weekday Education Conference, set for May 3–4 at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega, is for you.

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

The deadline for payment is April 15. Register at alsbom.org/cwe.

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

Place a classified ad below for \$1 per word.

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

CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR

Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Alexandria, Alabama, is seeking a full-time senior pastor. Interested candidates should send resumes and correspondence to: Pastorsearch@mzbcblife.net

PASTOR

FBC Shawmut, Valley, Alabama, seeking traditional pastor. Sunday and Wednesday services. Centrally located between Auburn, Alabama, LaGrange and Columbus, Georgia. Submit resume to: sfbc.psc@yahoo.com.

PASTOR

Silver Run Baptist Church in Seale, Alabama, located in rural Russell County, is seeking a pastor that the Lord would have to serve here. Resumes may be sent to: P.O. Box 8, Seale, AL 36875, ATTN: Kenny Harris.

PASTOR

Mt. Zion Baptist Church in northwest Chambers County, Alabama is seeking a bivocational or full-time pastor to guide a rural community with an eager variety of age groups. Email resumes to: mtzionpsc24@gmail.com or contact Reid House with questions at reid36862@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

New Life Baptist Church located in Bay Minette, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor who will unashamedly preach the Word of God. Resumes will be received until April 30. Please email resume/profile to: newlifebaptistch@att.net or mail to: Pastor Search Committee, 15011 Glasgow Lane, Bay Minette, AL 36507.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

New Market Southern Baptist Church located in northeast Madison County, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor. A man called by God, who will be a caring biblical shepherd for our church family. A man who holds to the full inspiration and authority of the Holy Scripture. Submit resume to: scnmbc@yahoo.com or New Market Baptist Church, P.O. Box 128, New Market, AL 35761.

BIVOCATIONAL WORSHIP LEADER/CHOIR DIRECTOR

East Gadsden Baptist Church is seeking a bivocational worship leader/choir director. If inter-

ested, please email at eastgadsdenbaptist@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER

New Center Baptist Church, Hartselle, Alabama, seeking music minister for blended services, directing choir and coordinating volunteer musicians. Email resume to: raykballew@gmail.com or contact 256-221-6880 and newcenterbaptist.org for more information.

PART-TIME MUSIC MINISTER

Vincent First Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking a part-time music minister. We have a choir of all ages and great attitudes. We need someone serious about the Lord and His Kingdom, not job hunting. Please call Pastor Robbie Weems 205-617-1277 or email resume to: weems1969@aol.com.

PART-TIME MUSIC MINISTER

Cedar Grove Baptist Church in Leeds, Alabama, seeks a part-time music minister to lead a thoroughly blended worship service and grow our music ministry at Cedar Grove. This person is directly accountable to the senior pastor and should possess an adaptable skill set, leadership capabilities and the ability to actively serve in our local community. Please visit cedargroveleeds.org/jobs to read our full job description and submit your resume.

STUDENT PASTOR

Maplesville Baptist Church seeks student pastor. Email Pastorb@maplesvillebc.org for job description, salary and application details.

CHILDREN’S MINISTRY DIRECTOR

FBC Headland in Headland, Alabama, is seeking to fill the children’s ministry director position. The children’s ministry director is responsible for planning, implementing and evaluating for the church a comprehensive ministry for children ages birth through fifth grade (preschoolers and children). The job description is posted on the church website www.fbheadland.com under the menu button under the “Job Openings” tab. Please send resumes to: info@fbheadland.com.

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

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No job too big or too small. Call for free on-site consultation. Toll-free 1-888-699-9679 or Alabama local 205-699-9679. Ask for the owner, Terry Barnes. Visit gallery at leedsstainedglass.com.

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Lift chairs, power wheelchairs, car lifts, scooters and walk-in tubs. We service Alabama. 1-800-682-0658

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AFFORDABLE BEACHSIDE VACATION CONDOS

Orange Beach, Alabama. Rent direct from Christian family owners. Efficiencies, 1 bedroom, 2 bedrooms and 3 bedrooms are available. Lowest prices on the beach for over 30 years. Call Don: 251-752-2366 or www.gulfshorescondos.com.

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.

MINISTRIES

HOSTED CHURCH

Hosted Church is a premium one-stop shop for your church or nonprofit to quickly get your website up and running without sacrificing quality and functionality. Hosted Church is an extension of The Alabama Baptist and The Baptist Paper and is dedicated to helping small to medium churches. For pricing or to contact us, visit hostedchurch.com.

UNFORSAKEN MINISTRIES

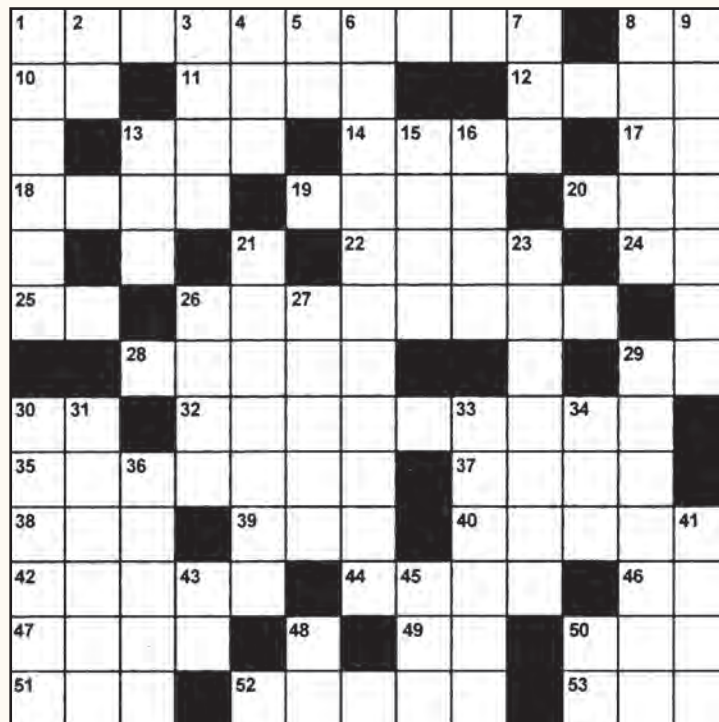
Unforsaken Ministries walks alongside those in active addiction and their loved ones. Our mission is to offer hope. This is accomplished by guiding those in addiction and their loved ones through the recovery process. For more information, call 205-246-2030 or email glenn@unforsakenministry.org.

CHRISTIAN Crossword



ACROSS

- 1. Are they ___?
(2 Cor. 11:22)
- 8. Pronoun for male.
- 10. There hath ___
temptation taken
you. (1 Cor. 10:13)
- 11. Move laboriously.
- 12. A flattering mouth
worketh ___.
(Prov. 26:28)
- 13. Precious stone.
- 14. Athaliah the daughter
of ___.
(2 Chron. 22:2)
- 17. Second note of
musical scale.
- 18. Good works for
necessary ___.
(Titus 3:14)



By Connie Holman Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

- 19. Death shall ___ from
them. (Rev. 9:6)
- 20. Garment edge.
- 22. Opposite of came.
- 24. Yes in Spanish.
- 25. Selenium. (abbr.)
- 26. His only ___ son.
(John 3:16)
- 28. Work.
- 29. ___ the hart panteth.
(Ps. 42:1, KJV)
- 30. Father.
- 32. Times when sun
is farthest north or
south in the ecliptic.
- 35. Do not set up any
wooden ___ pole.
(Deut. 16:21)
- 37. You.
- 38. ___ de Janeiro.
- 39. A tropical bird.
- 40. Three measures
of barley for a ___.
(Rev. 6:6)
- 42. I am ashamed and
___. (Ezra 9:6)
- 44. Yellowish green fruit.
- 46. ___ ye even so to

- 16. Veil of the temple was
___. (Mark 15:38)
- 47. Too.
- 49. ___ Him were all things
created. (Col. 1:16)
- 50. Belonging to a
female.
- 51. Type of grain.
- 52. Pierces.
- 53. For we ___ His
workmanship.
(Eph. 2:10)
- 21. Israel's female judge.
- 23. Apostle, and a ___ of
the Gentiles.
(2 Tim. 1:11)
- 26. ___ things of the
world. (1 Cor. 1:28)
- 27. ___ in Bashan.
(Deut. 4:43)
- 29. They were sawn ___.
(Heb. 11:37)
- 30. At ___ westward.
(1 Chron. 26:18)
- 31. Like ___ dove.
(Hos. 7:11; 2 words)
- 33. Worth doing.
(2 words)
- 34. Very long time.
- 36. Built his ___ upon a
rock. (Matt. 7:24)
- 41. Time long past.
- 43. ___ shall we ever
be with the Lord.
(1 Thess. 4:17)
- 45. Decline.
- 48. Location.
- 50. Expression of
triumph.

DOWN

- 1. Brings upon himself.
- 2. Therefore.
- 3. Silver, ivory and ___.
(1 Kings 10:22)
- 4. Type of shade tree.
- 5. And, ___, I am with
you. (Matt. 28:20)
- 6. Honoring false gods.
- 7. ___ Lanka.
- 8. All the ___ thereof shall
be burned. (Mic. 1:7)
- 9. Make thine ___ thy
footstool. (Heb. 1:13)
- 13. Acquire.
- 15. A help ___ for him.
(Gen. 2:18)

All Bible verses are KJV unless otherwise specified.

Mom & Me Spring Fling at WorldSong

If you're a mom with a daughter who's in kindergarten through sixth grade, you need to be at Mom & Me Spring Fling! Spring Fling — set for April 19–20 at WorldSong Missions Place — is an exciting weekend for mothers and daughters to make memories together and learn more about what it means to live a missional lifestyle.

The registration deadline is April 11, so sign up soon!

At Spring Fling, you'll enjoy traditional camp activities, Bible study and crafts, along with a special time of worship and community around a campfire. You'll also hear from our missionary speakers and learn ways you can live on mission daily.

"We'll focus on the gospel

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



and the Great Commission — what it means to follow Jesus and why we need to tell others," said Trish Jackson, NextGen Consultant for Alabama WMU.

For more information or to register, visit worldsongretreat.org/springfling.

Intentional Leader Series: Pathfinder Conference

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

The conference will be held April 9 at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions facility in Prattville. Dan



GARLAND

Garland will serve as your guide in the intricate process of uncovering and cultivating a strategic plan

tailored to your church's unique needs.

He will also offer practical and actionable insights on effectively implementing this plan within your local congregation.

The series provides an ongoing process to be challenged as a leader. The \$10 cost for the Pathfinder Conference includes lunch. To register, visit alsbom.org/ils.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Sunday School Lessons

By Ben Stubblefield, Ph.D.

Visiting assistant professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



For April 7

BLESSED Genesis 30:25–34, 41–43

Past (25–30)

Our focal passage this week picks up following the infamous “birth wars” in Jacob’s family — a childbearing race among Bilhah, Zilpah, Rachel and Leah. Jacob the trickster, having now been tricked by Laban, has completed his work arrangements as payment for Laban’s daughters. And he is all too eager to leave Laban, build wealth for his own household and see God’s promises fulfilled through his lineage.

While there are lots of points to make about these few verses, what’s astonishing about Jacob here is that he is willing to take a huge loss to leave Laban’s household. Note Verse 26. He just wants his wives and children, though the law would later stipulate that he could be entitled to so much more (Deut. 15:13–14).

How could Jacob, the conniving, greedy younger brother, be willing to take such a loss? I think it is because he knew that God was with him and would take care of his needs no matter where he went.

Jacob had seen God’s provision for him, he had witnessed God’s hand of protection upon him and he understood the sacred covenant God had made with his forefathers.

Just like we can have an inner confidence in God’s ongoing provision for us because of what He’s already done for us, Jacob knew his future was sure because of what God had accomplished for him in the past.

Present (31–34)

While Jacob certainly isn’t free from his prior conspiratorial habits, in this instance he is not trying to steal anything from Laban.

While I would hardly call his effort to tilt the herd in his favor a justified effort in fair trade and practice, it is clear that he has shifted tactics. The old Jacob — the wanderer — might have just absconded with livestock that he felt was owed to him. But here, he decides to remain, to work and to trust the Lord (and some new methods in husbandry) to reward him for his labor. (See also Gen. 31:10–13.)

Again, this author doesn’t find

Jacob’s motives entirely ethically justifiable. But Jacob’s trust in the Lord to right the wrongs of Laban’s abuse of his labor is entirely right.

In the same way, the Lord’s people must always entrust ourselves to the Lord by doing right and remembering that our God is just, and He will one

day therefore make all things right either in this life or the next.

Future (41–43)

I’m not a reputable expert in veterinary sciences, but it sounds to me like Jacob is following some home remedy-styled advice to get his goats to be better than Laban’s goats.

Y’all know that kind of folk wisdom — how castor oil will cure a cold, kill off warts and make you smart. Even if castor oil does work miracles, I still don’t think sticks make goats better.

I think what’s happening is God is choosing to honor Jacob as the son of the covenant. He’s training Jacob. He used to be the deceiver; he used to not trust the Lord; he used to get his way. But having now endured a season of suffering at the hands of another deceiver (Laban), God is ready to bless and prosper his future.

As Kent Hughes says, God is “greening” Jacob, as He does all His people. He puts us, like Jacob, in a trial or challenge to prepare us for a future of reward.

**“So my honesty
will answer for
me later, when
you come to look
into my wages
with you.”**

Genesis 30:33

For April 14

WRESTLED Genesis 32:22–32

Alone (22–24)

My guess is that very few readers of this paper have a personal, mortal enemy. By that I mean someone who you’re convinced would kill you if they got the chance. But imagine you did. And they knew where you would be in 24 hours. You can’t avoid them and it’s too late to change course.

A life or death conflict is inevitable with someone who hates you with all the fibers of their being. Well, that’s precisely what Jacob is going through in Genesis 32.

Esau knows Jacob is coming home and Esau had previously promised to kill Jacob (Gen. 27:41). Quite naturally, then, Jacob is “greatly afraid” (Gen. 32:7).

He plans some gifts that he hopes will take the edge off Esau’s anger, and in the evening he brings his family and the remainder of his possessions across the Jabbok river.

While alone, he wrestles with “a man,” whom he later understands to be a divine agent, if not an encounter with the living God Himself (32:24, 30), in order to prevail upon him for a blessing (32:26).

What a scene! A scared patriarch, after fording a river at night, is set upon by a stranger. They grapple.

To Jacob, this is a struggle to the death. But as the dawn breaks, he realizes the identity of his opponent, and this match becomes more than just a physical struggle. It is a metaphor for his entire life.

He has struggled with his brother in the womb (25:22), his father (ch. 27), his father-in-law (chapters 29–31), and now with God.

And while he may have tricked his way to prevail upon them, he now realizes he cannot prevail any more upon God.

He knows he cannot win. Yet alone, he knows he cannot let go of God. It’s a familiar place for all believers.

We believe we are alone, without options, and God comes to visit us when we need Him, and when He’s wanted.

New Name (25–29)

For all Jacob’s problems, he’s clearly becoming a changed man.

“I am unworthy of all the loving-kindness and of all the faithfulness which You have shown your servant” (32:10). That’s the confession of a humbled man.

And, wrestling with the Lord through the night, he confesses his name is Jacob (27). “Jacob” means trickster, deceiver. It’s as though he acknowledges the past trajectory of his life — a confession of his guilt, fraud, shame, weakness.

But the divine being isn’t content to leave Jacob in his brokenness, and He changes his name. Jacob will no longer be the deceiver, but one who would strive with God.

It’s hard for us to relate to the significance of naming in the ancient world. We can change our names with a visit to the social security office, and I doubt any of us think a name change will permanently alter our future.

But here, Jacob receives a moniker that is a promise and a blessing. God will fight for him, as one who strives with God.

All believers, similarly, when we encounter the Lord, receive a new identity. Our experience of God doesn’t ever leave any of us unchanged. Rather, we get reborn and renewed, as Jacob was at Jabbok, into the family of God.

New Walk (30–32)

Jacob would be forever reminded of this moment of grace, because he would walk it every step. Every moment of progress would be a moment of weakness. Every morning, that hip would hurt, and he’d recall his experience at Peniel.

He’s not going to claim any more of God’s promise by stealth, strength or power.

Each day will be a day of God’s power in his weakness, God’s promise through his pain.

God’s blessings don’t always come to us by pleasant circumstances, but isn’t it encouraging that, like Jacob, we can rest assured that for His people, they always come. He is faithful.

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Sunday School Lessons

By James R. Strange, Ph.D.

Professor of Biblical and Religious Studies, Samford University



For April 7

THE MISSION OF JESUS SHARED Luke 24:44–53

After Jesus had risen from the dead, He appeared to the disciples and explained how the Scriptures had always testified about Him.

Then Jesus told them of their responsibility to share in His mission by spreading the good news of repentance and forgiveness of sins. The first disciples gladly accepted this responsibility and with great joy they worshipped the risen Christ who ascended into heaven.

The whole of Scripture points to the truth of Jesus. (44–53)

The first followers of Christ followed the Old Testament, which was comprised of the Law, the Prophets and the Writings. They are the same books of the Old Testament we enjoy today, although some of the books were in a different order.

Many of the Jews did not understand their Scripture through a Christological lens. They did not understand that select passages pointed to the future Messiah.

Passages such as Psalm 16:8–11, Psalm 49:13–15, Psalm 71:20, Isaiah 26:19–20, Isaiah 53:10–11 and many more not only point to Christ, but they also point to His resurrection.

In the same way, we must know the Old Testament should be read in light of our New Testament. As Christians we believe that both the Old Testament and the New Testament are the Word of God.

When we understand our Bible in this way, we understand that the resurrection was always in God's plan.

The cross and empty tomb are central to the gospel of Jesus. (46–47)

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most important event in the Christian faith. Without the resurrection, Paul reminds us we

are to be pitied and hopeless (1 Cor. 15:19). Jesus suffered at the hands of the Roman government and was crucified.

The crucifixion was used by God as the divine purpose for the atonement for the sins of all mankind. By the plan and power of God, Jesus was raised from the dead.

The cross and the empty tomb are central to the gospel of Jesus Christ. While we preach the cross, we must also proclaim the resurrection.

This message signals God's victory over death and the grave. Moreover, the cross and the empty tomb are a message for Christians who suffer in this life.

The power of God that raised Jesus Christ is also available to us in every circumstance, and ultimately that same power will raise up our mortal bodies.

We have been equipped to share the message about Jesus. (48–53)

Commissioned by the resurrected Christ, the disciples were to go into all the nations to preach repentance and forgiveness of sin.

Christ explains how they will be equipped through the power of the Holy Spirit to share the good news. This profound promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit brought immediate comfort to the disciples.

May the commissioning of the disciples serve as a welcomed reminder to every Christian about our responsibility to share the good news. May we do so in the power that raised Jesus from the dead. He is risen. Run and share the good news!

The April 7 Bible Studies for Life lesson was written by Tyshawn Gardner, Ph.D., assistant professor of Biblical and Religious Studies at Samford University.



For April 14

BUILT ON CHRIST 1 Peter 2:1–12

Today begins a six-week series called "Being an Authentic Church." What we learn applies to your congregation, to Alabama Baptists, to Southern Baptists and even to the global Church.

Peter wrote to congregations rather than to individuals. These Gentile followers of Jesus were suffering unnamed persecutions (1:6–7) in regions of the Roman Empire that are now modern Turkey (1:1). To encourage them, Peter addresses them as if they are God's chosen people, Israel, who endured trials in foreign lands (1:1, 17; 2:4, 11). As Israel was released from exile in Egypt and Babylonia, so these Christians were ransomed from their former religion (1:18–19).

The Church is comprised of those who trust Christ and live in obedience to Him. (1–5)

Peter first mentions obedience in 1:2. The "therefore" in 2:1 refers to the passage starting in 1:13 — which begins with its own "therefore" — where Peter starts using imperatives. Eugene Boring noted that the Church must hope for Christ's grace (1:13), be holy (1:15), live in reverent fear of God (1:17), love one another (1:22) and long for pure nourishment (2:1).

To follow these instructions, the Church must become like obedient children (1:14), like infants who have no malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy or slander and who desire "pure milk" (2:2).

Peter knows that these dispositions — mutual love, obedience and longing for pure milk — require a unified act of will, for the Church must decide to obey God.

In 2:4, Peter shifts metaphors to a building made of stones that people have rejected but that God has selected. These stones are "precious," not because they are diamonds or

rubies, but because God has chosen them as building stones for His "spiritual house."

This image allows Peter to distinguish the Church from the image of pagan priests offering wine, incense and animal sacrifices in Roman temples across the empire. By contrast, the sacrifices of the Church are immaterial things such as prayer, Scripture reading and singing. This

is probably why Peter speaks of both the Church and its offerings as "spiritual."

"Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation."

1 Peter 2:2

The Church is built on the foundation of Jesus Christ. (6–8)

Peter expands his images by intertwining Exodus 19:6, Isaiah 28:16, Psalm 118:22 and Isaiah 8:14, which scholars call a Scrip-

ture chain. Peter's point is that the very stone — Christ — who underpins the Church is the stone who causes those who do not trust Him to stumble.

Because they do not trust, they are destined to disobey God. But this need not be permanent disobedience, for they may yet "observe [the Church's] good works and glorify God on the day He visits" (v. 12).

The Church is to proclaim and glorify Christ. (9–12)

Peter reminds his readers of their transformed status. The Romans to whom Peter writes are now like Israel; they are God's own people.

And like Israel, they no longer bear their former identification as Gentiles. Furthermore, they are no longer at home in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia but are "strangers and exiles," and like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, they must conduct themselves honorably in a foreign land.

As God promised that the nations (Gentiles) would be blessed by Abraham's descendants (Gen. 22:18), so Gentiles will glorify God when they see the honorable deeds of the Church.

WORD search

- | | | |
|----------|--------------|------------|
| ANGEL | FORD | MEETING |
| BLESSING | GIFT | PEACE |
| BROTHER | GRACE | PENIEL |
| CAMPED | HANDMAIDENS | PRAYER |
| CHILDREN | HERD | PRESENTS |
| DIVIDE | ISRAEL | RECONCILED |
| ESAU | JABBOK | RIVER |
| FAMILY | JACOB | STAFF |
| FEAR | JOURNEYS | TRIBES |
| FEARFUL | LIMP | WIVES |
| FLOCKS | MAIDSERVANTS | WRESTLED |

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

Jacob then named the place Peniel, "For I have seen God face to face," he said, "yet my life has been spared."

GENESIS 32:30

You Gotta' Hear This!



Finding humor in the everyday moments

Little eyes are watching

At times, I have the fleeting thought that grandmothers like me have already outlived their usefulness for the family, but God quickly reminds me that as long as He keeps giving us breath for the day, He still has a purpose for us.

This was dramatically driven home recently through a conversation my niece had with her grandchildren. She is fortunate to get to live next to them and is an integral part of their lives. She helps transport them to school and their various activities, and they often spend the night with her.

Once when she told them she was taking a trip, their downturned mouths and teary eyes revealed their sadness. The 8-year-old said with a trembling voice, "But Nana, what will we do? You are our Holy Spirit." That was the best way she knew to express her feelings toward her grandmother.

All grandparents have a greater influence on their grandchildren than they realize. Often, grandchildren see beauty and goodness that others don't.

Grandchildren watch what we do, hear what we speak and observe how we deal with the good as well as the bad in life.

Mine know that I'm their prayer warrior. From time to time, one of mine will ask me to pray for a special situation or need in his/her life, and I do. I also pray daily for their spiritual walk. I feel free to talk to them about it too. I remind them to put whatever they do through this filter — "Will God

be glorified through this action?" I'm not sure how much they take my advice to heart, but I can rest assured they know their spiritual life is just as important to me, and more so, than earthly success.

Importance of a name

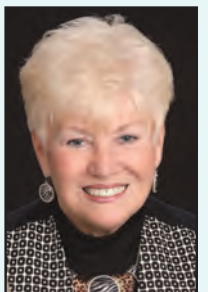
Names are important, especially names for God. Each name used for God is holy. It is important we reverence each one. Be careful how you use His name, for little ears hear. Some terms do not reflect His holiness; actually, they are forms of cursing.

You may not be someone's "Holy Spirit," but you may reflect the image of our Father to those grandchildren more than you realize. If you carry the name Christian, be careful not to discredit it by the way you live.

Ezekiel 36:26-27: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws."

MEET THE AUTHOR

Barbara Eubanks of Albertville is an author, conference speaker, Christian humorist and retired English teacher. She is the widow of Baptist pastor Steve Eubanks.



MEDIA REVIEWS

By Blair Moore
The Alabama Baptist

Students shine at annual 'Unless U Got Talent' show

Unless U students lit up the stage of the Lyric Theatre on Feb. 24 by sharing their smiles and skills with a sold-out crowd of more than 700. This year's "Unless U Got Talent" show kicked off with a gospel choir number from last year's winners. Joined by the entire Unless U student body, they jubilantly sang "Jesus Loves Me" and "God Has Smiled on Me."

Unless U is an organization based out of Vestavia Hills in the Birmingham area that provides a vibrant, college-like experience for adults with developmental disabilities.

At Unless U and its sister group, Post Place, students receive Christ-centered continuing education and life-giving community.

These schools are noted by many as a godsend to parents who want to enrich the lives of their adult children after high school.

There were 10 acts at this year's two-hour show, including dancing, painting and even dog tricks. Each student works with a partner to prepare their performance. One student, Betts, and M.C., a volunteer, dazzled the crowd when Vivienne the Pug rode out in a red convertible.

Vivienne jumped through hoops, did figure eights, played the piano



Photo courtesy of Kelsea Schafer

Winners of this year's "Unless U Got Talent" show celebrate on the stage of the Lyric Theatre on Feb. 24. Unless U is an organization that provides a vibrant, college-like experience for adults with developmental disabilities.

— and took a well-deserved bow.

Another highlight of the evening was when a student named Mark read a passage from James 1 on overcoming adversity and did a live woodworking demonstration. He partnered with Manufactured Good, a Birmingham nonprofit that offers apprenticeships teaching trades, and engraved a wooden cutting board with the Scripture passage he proudly read.

The winner of this year's talent show was Tommy, who performed a hip-hop dancing routine. Partnering with Birmingham nonprofit Knowledge, Rhythm and Understanding, Tommy scratched out beats and did break dancing to "Teach Me How to Dougie" by Cali Swag District.

Next year's "Unless U Got Talent" will be a 10-year anniversary celebration, and all previous winners will be invited back to the stage.

Lindy Cleveland, executive direc-

tor of Unless U, said the inspiration to start the organization all came from her brother, Jordan. Seeing Jordan's sadness the day she moved on campus at Samford University touched her deeply.

Why couldn't her life-long partner in crime and best friend have the same kind of exciting experiences she was going to have in college? She realized that if she wanted to help Jordan and others like him, she had to take action.

What started with four people in a living room has grown into a program of more than 60 in its own building. Many Birmingham churches actively support Unless U year-round.

Church support

"We provide gym space and equipment every day of the week, Monday through Friday," said Malcolm Prewitt, director of Lighthouse

Recreation Ministry at Vestavia Hills Methodist Church. "They also have access to a classroom on the second floor for exercise, stretching and different things like that. They're welcome. Actually, we miss them when they're not here."

Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Vestavia Hills also has strong ties to Unless U. Cleveland grew up attending there and volunteered in the special needs ministry.

'Natural outflow'

"I love that Unless U gives those with developmental disabilities a place to learn — and they learn a lot," said Amy Kirby, special needs ministry director at Shades Mountain Baptist. "It gives adults a place to belong and a community of friends in a Christian setting where they can also grow in their faith."

"Our church values individuals with special needs, so supporting Unless U as a local missions partner with both financial and people resources is a natural outflow of what we believe."

There are plenty of intramural sports at Unless U and fall basketball is a favorite. More than 30 players plus cheerleaders, volunteers and fans fill the gym. At each game, a student named Calvin plays the national anthem. There's even a mascot. And everybody wins — literally.

"They're split into two teams, the Unicorns versus the Unicorns," said Amelia Breeze, a volunteer from Shades Crest Baptist Church in Hoover. "So the Unicorns always win."

Breeze said Unless U basketball games are unlike any other sporting event. "The players care for each other. They give each other high-fives and hugs. They're competitive, but it's just such a pure joy. It's the most delightful part of my week."

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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