

The Alabama Baptist

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Photos by Jennifer Davis Rash/The Alabama Baptist

‘Very blessed’

Shocco Springs to honor Buster Taylor with Taylor Lodge

In honor of Buster Taylor and his family’s nearly 40 years of commitment and service, Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center is naming its newest lodging acquisition “Taylor Lodge.” An open house will be held Sept. 27.

Noxie J. “Buster” Taylor accepted a maintenance position at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in October of 1979. Little did he know that this small leap of faith would lead to 38 years of God-honoring achievement.

In 1981, Buster was named assistant director under then-Shocco executive director George Ricker. When Ricker retired in the summer of 1989, Buster served as interim director until October when he was chosen to be Ricker’s replacement as executive director.

Until Buster’s directorship, Shocco was a seasonal ministry, shutting down and winterizing every November and then reopening in the spring. However, Buster had a vision of transforming Shocco into a year-round ministry with “a head on every pillow, every night.”

By 2016, attendance was

42,850 with 1,345 reported decisions for Christ.

Buster taught the staff to look at their job as a ministry: whether cleaning rooms, serving food, life-guarding or performing other tasks, all should be done for the glory of God. He insisted everything done at Shocco should be done with excellence so there would be no distractions from guests hearing from God during their stays.

Servant mentality

“We are here for the convenience of the guests, not the guests here for our convenience,” was his mantra.

Buster and Mary Taylor made the decision early on that they would serve in ministry together as a team. The Taylor children, Joy and David, grew up at Shocco, regularly



Shocco photo

BUSTER & MARY TAYLOR

exposed to dedicated missionaries and people who loved serving God.

Mary left her nursing career and joined the Shocco team, serving in the gift shop and later working at the front desk and in reservations.

Once Buster became executive director, Mary took on additional responsibilities. She began hosting campus volunteers in the Taylor home one night during every volun-

teer session and planned excursions for the Shocco board member spouses during quarterly board meetings.

The Taylors also planned regular events for employees living on campus to promote bonding within the Shocco family and implemented missions trips for staff members.

Enduring memories

When asked about their most enduring memories of Shocco life, both Buster and Mary responded, “It’s the people! The Shocco staff, resident summer staff students and the guests were so special to us.

“We feel very blessed and humbled to be called by God to Shocco, and we are grateful for the years we spent there, raising our children and learning to minister and serve at Shocco Springs.

“What an honor it has been to be even a small part of the tens of thousands of lives who were touched by God during the 38 years of our Shocco journey.”

EDITOR’S NOTE — This is an excerpt of a story written and originally published by Shocco Springs.

Birmingham teen part of silver-winning Paralympic wheelchair rugby team

Team USA won silver in Paralympic wheelchair rugby after losing to Japan in the Sept. 2 gold medal game.

Zion Redington, a teen who attends The Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham, was part of Team USA and one of the youngest players ever to make the nation’s Paralympic wheelchair rugby team.

The team started its run to silver with a win against Canada on Aug. 29, followed by a 45–42 loss to Japan on Aug. 30. Team USA won its next two games against Germany and Great Britain before facing Japan again in the gold medal game.

To read more of Redington’s story — his adoption journey and his wheelchair rugby rise — visit tabonline.org/Zion-Redington. (Grace Thornton)



Photo courtesy of Heather Redington-Whitlock

Zion Redington is pictured with his parents, Heather Redington-Whitlock and Mark Whitlock, after winning a silver medal at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games.

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 15.



Rashional Thoughts

By Jennifer Davis Rash
President and Editor-in-Chief

✉ jrash@thealabamabaptist.org

🐦 @RashionalThts

Ukrainian believers' persistence inspiring, puts life in perspective

As Slavik Pyzh, president of Ukrainian Baptist Theological Seminary, sat across from me in TAB Media Group's podcast studio, I could sense the heaviness of the weight he carries.

The needs are great, the situation seems hopeless and the pleas for help are endless, but he pushes forward.

God has given him a mission, and Pyzh wants to share it with all who will listen.

"We are praying for peace with transformation ... not just peace," he said, noting that peace without transformation is merely "war on pause."

Pyzh expanded on the idea the next day as he shared with trustees of the SBC's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville.

"War is an opportunity to transform a nation," he said. "We are praying God will give us peace, give us victory, but more than anything else [a transformed nation]. ... I need to ask you to adjust your prayers [for that as well]."

"When the war came, we were all searching. Why and what is the purpose? ... God helped me put things together," Pyzh shared.

The Lord is working among His people in Ukraine, he said.

The number of Protestants have grown from roughly 2% to 4%, and the seminary is expecting 700 new students, which will take the student body count to 1,500, he added.

The church plants and ministry outreach efforts stemming from the WeCare (humanitarian aid and spiritual



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/The Alabama Baptist

Slavik Pyzh, president of Ukrainian Baptist Theological Seminary, shares an update on ministry needs in the war-torn country as he addresses trustees of the SBC's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission during their annual meeting Sept. 10 in Nashville.

health) Centers across Ukraine also continue to grow.

But still, the road ahead is long and difficult. A great deal of hopelessness and fear exists throughout the nation, and the number of people claiming to be atheists has doubled from 7% to 14%, he said.

Most of those in the atheism category are 18- to 25-year-olds because they can't wrap their heads around the war and all it has taken from them, Pyzh said.

"This is not just a conflict, this is not just a war, this is a very critical determining time in our history and I think this will impact our future," he explained.

"I don't want to lose any opportunity. My plea is to help us. ... I understand, people don't want to think about war ... in Ukraine, it's difficult to forget about it, but [in the U.S.], it's difficult to remember."

To hear the full interview, go to youtube.com/tabmediagroup.



Photo by Brandon Porter/Baptist Press

"Peace without transformation is merely war on pause," explains Slavik Pyzh as he describes the war as an opportunity to transform the nation of Ukraine.

Your Voice



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

Church life sometimes means serving in ‘hard places’

By Rob Paul
robpaul.net

In a recent conversation with another minister, I shared a story about church conflict. It was a true story. And I was the object of the conflict. Of course, I may have also been the cause of the conflict. At least to some degree.

His response got me thinking: “You have served in some hard places.”

Actually, I have. In fact, serving in hard places is part of what ministry is all about. Like Jeremiah, we are called to shepherd a people who have eyes that do not see and ears that do not hear (Jer. 5:21).

In addition to serving in hard places, I have also had the privilege of consulting with some churches in hard places. Here are a few insights from my journey.

Conflict is not uncommon in most churches. But there is a difference in a church that experiences conflict and one that is conflicted. Conflicted churches have a long-standing history of conflict.

History repeats

Years ago, I was being considered by a church that fell into this category. I remember the advice of a state denominational leader. He said, “You just need to know their history going in. They have never fired a pastor, but I can tell you the past three pastors were not unhappy to get out of there.”

Conflicted churches don’t just make it hard on the pastor who serves them. They make it hard for people to respond to the gospel. They make it hard for those who do respond to the gospel to stay in-

involved in the church. Years ago, a fellow pastor made this statement, “If it were not for my church’s reputation, we could reach our community.” Conflicted churches are hard places to serve.

Churches often get confused over a variety of issues.

They get confused about their mission. This is especially true for churches that thrived during the days of cultural Christianity.

They built their ministries on having the best programs. The best facilities. The best music. They were a one-stop destination to keep families engaged.

And then cultural Christianity began to fade. Families no longer needed the church to keep them occupied and entertained.

And instead of embracing the mission of making disciples who make disciples, these churches tried to go “back to the future,” thinking if we can just do what we used to do, everything will be like it used to be. They are confused churches. And they are hard places to serve.

Conflicting positions

Other churches are confused about their theological identity. A significant number of church members hold to differing and antithetical theological positions. And the pastor is supposed to shepherd them all.

The key to serving a confused church is to lovingly shine the light of truth to overcome the confusion.

I know it seems counterintuitive, but churches really can become too comfortable.

Too comfortable

That was the case with one church — a county-seat town First Baptist Church that ran close to 500 at its peak. That was more than 50 years ago. Since that time, the church experienced a slow but steady decline of more than 50%. No one really noticed. That’s because a 50% decline over 50 years is only about 5 people per year. It’s death by attrition.

But the real reason this church remained comfortable was that while the attendance declined to about 230 people, the financial resources increased.

In their minds, the church had been growing because they had a \$1 million annual budget and money in the bank, but in less than a year, they lost \$150,000 in income due to deaths and people moving away.

About this same time, the church began experiencing numerical and missional growth for the first time in decades, but because of the income decline, they abandoned the vision, retreating to a place of comfort.

If you find yourself serving in a hard place, remember there is hope. Jesus has a plan for every church, even those that are conflicted, confused or comfortable.

EDITOR’S NOTE — Rob Paul is a church revitalization strategist and is currently serving as the lead pastor of Huffman Baptist Church in Birmingham.



PAUL

Letters to the Editor

On occasion I am asked to bring the devotional to my senior adult Sunday School department. This is where The Alabama Baptist comes in.

With thanks to Ken Lass for his columns of “Lost and Never Found” in the Feb. 8 edition and “Lost People On The Wall” in the Aug. 22 edition, I had my devotion for those two weeks.

Ken’s warm and insightful words of Christian humanity

always bring a smile to those in my department. I can see it in their faces.

I have enjoyed receiving my Alabama Baptist for many years.

Knowing that Ken Lass will once again share his thoughts with your readers in each issue makes me welcome my TAB even more.

Gerald Hicks

Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church
Hueytown

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

Someone You Should Know

CAROLYN MATTHEWS

By Leigh Pritchett

The Alabama Baptist

Carolyn Matthews, “the bread lady,” is known for giving away hundreds of home-baked loaves each year. She could also be called “the caring lady” and “the whatever-is-needed lady.” Caring for her parents, coaching in the infancy of high school girls sports in Calhoun County, learning a digital system for displaying hymn stanzas, serving as VBS director on short notice — when a need has arisen, the Jacksonville woman has made herself available. At 81, she teaches a ladies Sunday School class and volunteers at Jacksonville Christian Outreach Center. A retired teacher and college instructor, Matthews holds a bachelor’s and master’s degree from Jacksonville State University.

Q: Describe where you focus your greatest ministry efforts.

A: Teaching the older ladies class; assisting members with needs that arise, such as picking up medicine or groceries or staying with them in an emergency; serving on the special events committee and bereavement committee.

Q: Who was or is one of the most influential people in your faith life?

A: Durro Wood, my pastor growing up who also was our neighbor. He worked with the youth and children. He taught me to love the Bible and how to study it and memorize passages that would help me all through my life. I cherish my Bible.

Truman Norred, a pastor of many years, encouraged involvement in study courses, and our current pastor, Brother David Haynes, also encourages us to memorize Scripture. If our Bible was taken from us, how much could we remember what God says through His Word?

Q: What has God been teaching you lately?

A: People often ask why I am still so active at the age of 81. My answer is that God is showing me He still has work for me to do. God is

Shane Pruitt reminded us that when we take our faith seriously, everything changes — our lives, our churches, our communities. Hope, love and peace all have a name, and that name is Jesus. Let’s step into our calling and make an impact now!

University of Mobile
@univofmobile on X

“In a culture where secular influences are shaping values and beliefs from an increasingly young age, the Church has a unique and critical responsibility to lay a solid spiritual foundation for Generation Alpha. Investing in their spiritual growth equips them with a moral compass and fosters a deep, lifelong relationship with God. By engaging with them early, the Church can plant seeds of faith that will guide them throughout their lives, influencing their futures and the future of the Church and society as a whole,” said **Rob Jackson**, director of evangelism and church revitalization, Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

We read in 1 Samuel 3:1b, “And the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no widespread revelation.” In such times remember that when the word of the Lord is rare, viewpoints are misaligned, voices are mistuned, values are misplaced, ventures are misguided and vulnerabilities are miscalculated. Without hearing the word of the Lord there is a tendency to act recklessly, but following the discipline of the law brings blessing instead of cursing. Judges 21:25 reads, “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”

Franklin L. Kirksey
Robertsdale, Alabama

“I was born again in a Southern Baptist church, went to a Southern Baptist college, went to a Southern Baptist seminary, and yet I was out and preaching for about five years before I understood how to be filled with the Spirit — that God does not want me to do anything for Him; rather, He wants to do something in and through me.” said pastor and author **Adrian Rogers**.

“Choose wisely who will be your closest friends. Unfortunately, most students develop their closest friendships with those who happen to be the most convenient. First Corinthians 15:33 gives sobering advice: ‘Do not be deceived: “Bad company ruins good morals.”’ It may be easy to justify doing life with less than godly people if you have similar interests or if you connect with them on a relational level. Don’t be deceived; if Christ is not the top priority in their lives, they will not push you toward Christ-likeness,” said **Paul Worcester**, national collegiate director at the North American Mission Board, on how college students can not only survive college but also thrive spiritually.

There is an incredible irony in the lives of many pastors. Pastors give their lives for the sake of caring for the souls of the people in the congregation ... at the expense of their own soul. Pastors, make sure you are caring for your own soul so you can care for others.

Brian Croft
@PastorCroft on X

Depending on which study you read, the average person in a lifetime spends five years waiting in lines, and it can truly feel unproductive and frustrating.

Waiting is sometimes torture in our spiritual lives, also.

The psalmist addressed the issue of waiting in multiple passages. For example, “Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him” (Ps. 37:7a); “Those who wait on the Lord shall inherit the earth” (Ps. 37:9b); “Wait on the Lord and keep His way, and He shall exalt you” (Ps. 37:34a).

Several Hebrew words are translated wait, but often the word means confident expectation. Many passages have the Lord as the object of our waiting, emphasizing we are waiting on the Lord.

And that involves seeking the Lord, resting in God and relying on His timing.

We do not sit still while we wait but continue to serve faithfully, while refusing to run ahead of God. Waiting requires trust.

David L. Chancey
Fayetteville, Georgia

MINISTRY:
Teacher and helper

CHURCH NAME:
West Side Baptist Church, Jacksonville, in Calhoun Baptist Association



LIFE VERSE: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” (Ps. 51:10)

still teaching me to have the courage to do and try new things. Sometimes, I feel it is out of my comfort zone, but God has taught me to trust Him, and He will give me what I need to do the task.

Q: If there were one thing you could tell your younger self about faith, what would it be?

A: To have faith. Do we believe God hears our prayers, answers them and really cares about us? That is faith — believing. We have it or we don’t.

Faith is believing He will supply our needs, forgive our sins, heal our hearts and love us. I have lost two husbands (both wonderful Christian men), and God has been my source of strength through those trying times. Faith is a daily walk — not just when we face a crisis — but we trust Him in all things.

Q: Have you ever read a book or heard a song that changed the way you think about God and faith?

A: “Change My Heart, O God.” This is a simple, little chorus, but it means so much to me. God is our Potter and we are His clay. He will mold and make us more like Him if we let Him.

Sometimes, we want to tell Him how we want to be molded, but it should be like the song says: “May I be like You.”

3 stories you should know

Shock and sadness: China ends international adoption program

The Chinese government has officially ended its international adoption program, ending the hopes of hundreds of waiting U.S. families.

Karla Thrasher, senior director of international adoptions at Lifeline Children's Services, called the announcement shocking to the agency and the 48 families it serves who were matched with Chinese orphans before the pandemic restricted travel to China.

"This came very suddenly," Thrasher said. "We actually had thought things were moving in a more positive direction over the past couple of weeks."

Thrasher encouraged Southern Baptists to pray for the children left behind, who face a bleak fu-



Lifeline Children's Services photo

The Andersons were among the last families to adopt a girl from China before the country announced the end of its program.

ture once they age out of government care; for grieving families still hoping to adopt children; and for adoption agencies working to place children with families across the nation. (BP)

ABDR wraps up work in South Carolina

After completing 18 mud-out jobs in flooded parts of Walterboro, South Carolina, Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief teams have packed up and returned home.

John Hayes, ABDR leader on site, said they got a lot of work done, made good contacts in the community and saw several people make professions of faith in Christ.

Ken McCaskill, area director of missions for Colleton Baptist Association, and Nick Fox, pastor of the team's host church, Bedon Baptist, have been following up with contacts made during the effort.

Mud-out work involves ripping out water-damaged floors and walls and treating the house for mold, Hayes explained. South Carolina Baptist Disaster Relief teams are continuing to handle local needs, Hayes said. (Grace Thornton)

State leaders, agencies work to cut recidivism

Almost a third (29%) of Alabama inmates commit new crimes within three years of their release from prison, but several state agencies are making efforts to change those statistics.

The state's Reentry Alabama 2030 initiative aims to half the recidivism rate in six years, said Cam Ward, director of the Alabama Bureau of Pardons and Paroles.

Efforts include issuing Alabamians leaving prison an ID and other documents needed for employment. The Alabama Community College System also is helping provide in-demand job skills to inmates and working to find employment for former inmates.

"We have a model, but it's going to take all of us working together to make it happen," Ward said. (Alabama Daily News)

Persecuted church

Pakistani Christian on death row shines faith, academic excellence

BAHAWALPUR, Pakistan — A Christian in Pakistan sentenced to death for blasphemy continues to look toward the future with hope, Morning Star News reported.

Nouman Masih, 24, is excelling academically in prison and recently passed his high school board examination with a very high score, demonstrating his faith in God for a future of freedom, his attorney Lazar Allah Rakha said.

"I'm very happy that instead of descending into depression after being put on death row, Masih put his faith in the Lord and has kept his hope for freedom alive despite the dismal circumstances," said Rakha, according to Morning Star News.

A judge handed Masih the death sentence in May 2023 after a four-year trial, though prosecu-

tors failed to provide any evidence of the blasphemy charges lodged against him, Rakha said. Masih has been incarcerated since his arrest on July 1, 2019.

"His feat in the examination is a testament to his unwavering faith in Christ and of his determination to start life afresh when the Lord acquits him from the false conviction."

Pakistan ranked seventh on Open Doors' 2024 World Watch List of the most difficult places to be a Christian.

In Nigeria, four Christian farmers attacked; church set ablaze

ABUJA, Nigeria — Four Christian farmers in Nigeria were injured in an armed attack while

working their land, and a Christian church was set afire for the second time in 10 years.

A group consisting mostly of Muslim Fulani herdsmen attacked three Christian farmers Aug. 6 as they did their work, reported media outlets Christian Daily International and Morning Star News. A fourth Christian farmer was wounded while fleeing. On Aug. 10 a mob looted and burned the worship auditorium of Redeemed Christian Church of God in Kontagora town. Samson Ogbemor, associate pastor of the church, said the auditorium was destroyed a decade ago under similar circumstances.

Several organizations report that Nigeria leads the world in the number of Christians kidnapped or killed for their faith. Nigeria also has ranked third in the world for the number of attacks upon buildings of Christian entities such as churches, schools and hospitals.



MASIH

Saving the lives of thousands

Pro-life organization rushes to rescue unborn children of Israeli soldiers

By Lizzy Haseltine
The Alabama Baptist

From the frontlines of war, a number of Israeli soldiers have been calling the pro-life organization EFRAT with an urgent request — to save their unborn children's lives back home.

Along with EFRAT's nearly 100 volunteers, Ruth Tidhar — a social worker who is the director of EFRAT's direct support department — has been serving as a last-minute messenger of life by contacting these men's pregnant wives and urging them not to have an abortion. In some cases, they've reached women just in time on the day of their abortion appointment.

Many of the expectant wives think having an abortion would be following their husbands' wishes. Before serving in the Israel Defense Forces, some of their husbands had asked them to terminate their pregnancies and not bring a child into a world of chaos.

Change of heart

But amid the life and death they have been faced with in war, several soldiers have had a change of heart. They realize their counsel was wrong. Every day they battle to stay alive and help others do the same.

Tidhar recalled the words of one young soldier who had begged EFRAT to help convince his wife to not have an abortion.

"They're trying to kill us," he said. "How can we do such a thing?"

Similarly, another soldier messaged EFRAT explaining that his fiancée was considering an abortion.

"We don't know what to do," he said. "It's just a really scary time for us. I'm fighting in Gaza. She's pregnant with twins."

The soldier didn't want his fiancée



IMB photo

A father and his children walk past a wall surrounding Bethlehem.

to have an abortion, but she was leaning toward ending the pregnancy anyway. His call to EFRAT was one last cry for help.

He'd come to the right place.

By having a hotline open 24/7, EFRAT serves as a listening ear to distressed callers who need help in preventing an abortion and giving life to a child.

"Every phone call to EFRAT could be the life of an entire person," Tidhar said.

"The women who come to us, they're looking for a lifesaver," she continued. "They're looking for somebody to help hold them up and give them assistance so that they can go ahead with the pregnancy and have the baby and avoid having an abortion. Our intent is to give her the strength and the backing she needs."

A commonality

Since 1977, EFRAT has helped more than 88,000 women in Israel, saving tens of thousands of lives. Out of the thousands of women

Tidhar has personally talked to through EFRAT, she's discovered a commonality.

"We know from them that women who undergo abortions, they're terribly sorry about it afterward; they regret it," Tidhar said. Many women who turn to EFRAT for help are trying to avoid a second or third abortion. They know the magnitude of emotional pain that comes from the experience.

That's why EFRAT offers emotional support information for women.

"The information that she's not going to get from anyplace else is how sorry she's going to feel if she undergoes the abortion," Tidhar said. "The woman is deliberating. She's in a terrible situation — the stormiest intersection of her life — and she has to make a decision very quickly. So we get in there."

Many of the nearly 100 volunteers throughout the nation of Israel serve because they too understand the pain of abortion and want to help others who feel they have no other option.

Beyond the emotional support, EFRAT provides physical help for mothers in need. After the baby is born, EFRAT delivers a brand-new crib, stroller, baby bath and baby kit to the family's door. The family will receive two years' worth of diapers, formula, wipes and food if they are needed.

"Fifteen hundred dollars is enough to save the baby, to give a basic package. Where do you get a deal like that? Fifteen hundred dollars and you save the baby," Tidhar said. "The generous donors who give that also receive a certificate with a date of birth and the baby's first name."

Still, EFRAT goes one step further.

Because finances are often the reason for women's abortions, EFRAT has a program to help women get back to work through occupational counseling.

"We cover the woman from all different directions to help her know that this baby won't be a tragedy but will rather be a stepping stone to bigger and greater things and to happiness and fulfillment," Tidhar said.

Proved her right

It's not lost on Tidhar that many of the lives saved through EFRAT could now be Israeli soldiers.

A phone call proved her right.

One evening a volunteer called Tidhar to tell her that a boy she helped save 20 years ago is now a part of an elite canine unit of the Israel Defense Forces. He's helping trained dogs sniff out explosives so soldiers can safely access areas and keep Israelis safe from Hamas.

"That's one (life) that we know about," Tidhar said. "But how many thousands do we not know about?"

As the war goes on, Tidhar continues to help save the next generation of Israelis.

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

GERALD MAX SIMS

Gerald Max Sims, who served as a bivocational music minister for his entire adult life, died Aug. 8. He was 86.

A native of Hamilton, Sims was a real estate broker and agent for MetLife.

All during his career, he led music at various churches — most recently Central Baptist Church, Florence, where he served as minister of worship.

Sims is preceded in death by his wife, Anna Louise, who died in 2018. He is survived by his sons, Marty and Jonathan; seven grandchildren; and seven great-grandchildren.



SIMS

JOHNNY WALKER

Johnny Walker, who served as pastor of York Baptist Church in the 1970s, died Aug. 28. He was 77.

Walker came to York Baptist in 1972 from Waynesboro, Mississippi, and served there for more than a decade before following a call to a church in Lucedale, Mississippi.

Jackie Masters, secretary at York Baptist, said Walker was the first pastor she worked with and that he was “well loved.”



WALKER

“He was good to our church, and he was good to our community. The whole town loved him,” she said. “You ask anyone if they knew Johnny Walker, and their eyes light up.”

Later in life, Walker moved to Winona, Mississippi, where he served as pastor of First Baptist Church until his battle with Parkinson’s disease forced him to retire. He was named pastor emeritus of the church. He also played an instrumental role in the construction of Christ’s Cross at the Crossroads, a massive cross at the intersection of Interstate 55 and Highway 82.

Walker is survived by his wife, Dolores; daughter, Candace; sons, Lawrence and Clint; nine grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

AUTAUGA ASSOCIATION

► **Jamie Baker** is the new worship pastor at **First Baptist Church Prattville**. He previously served as worship pastor of Hillcrest Baptist Church, Enterprise;

El Bethel Baptist Church, Chancellor; and several other churches. He also taught choral music in several schools through the years.

Baker holds a bachelor of music degree and a master of education degree from Auburn University. He and his wife, Cynthia, have four children and one foster daughter.



Photo courtesy of Joy Quinn

CALHOUN ASSOCIATION

► **Jeff Knight** is the new pastor of **Mount Zion Baptist Church, Alexandria**. He previously served as lead mission strategist for Tuscaloosa County Baptist Association and on church staffs (primarily as pastor) in Alabama, Georgia and Florida for 30 years prior to that.



Facebook photo

Knight has a master of divinity from New Orleans Seminary. He and his wife, Debbie, have three children.

CAREY ASSOCIATION

► **Lonnie Atwood** is the new pastor of **Lineville Baptist Church**. He previously served as pastor of Cazenovia Park Baptist Church, Buffalo, New York. Atwood holds a master of divinity degree from Southern Seminary. He and his wife, Catherine, have seven children.



ATWOOD

CHILTON ASSOCIATION

► **West End Baptist Church, Clanton**, will celebrate its 75th anniversary Sept. 29. Sunday School will begin at 9:15 a.m., followed by worship at 10:30. Daniel Wilson, a former pastor who now serves as pastor of FBC Jemison, will bring the message. Lunch will be served following the service. James Watkins is pastor.



CROWDEN

COLBERT-LAUDERDALE ASSOCIATION

► **Jerry Crowden** is the new pastor of **Mountain Springs Baptist Church, Tuscumbia**. He most recently served as pastor of Zion Hill Baptist Church, Leighton. Crowden also served in jail ministry with Tuscumbia City and Colbert County jail

systems. He and his wife, Darlene, have one daughter and three grandchildren.

COVINGTON ASSOCIATION

► **Otis Corbitt** has announced his plans to retire as director of missions for **Covington Baptist Association** in the next few months. More information about his years of ministry service will be published at that time.

DALE ASSOCIATION

► **Southside Baptist Church, Ozark**, celebrated its 75th anniversary Aug. 11. Guest speakers included Brian Fair, deacon chair; T.J. Allen, a former youth minister; and Raymond Moncrief, a former pastor, who shared a children’s sermon.



Photo by Ellen Dewberry

Voncile Andrews recounted the church’s history. Special music was provided by Jessie White, Johnny Adderson and Kali Smith. Pastor Tim Bates (left) accepted the recognition plaque presented by

Jane Hughes (right), a commissioner of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission.

GENEVA ASSOCIATION

► **Scott Wilkins** is the new pastor of **First Baptist Church Samson**. He holds a bachelor of science degree in psychology and Christian studies from Campbellsville University, Kentucky, and two degrees from Southwestern Seminary — a master of divinity degree in theology and pastoral care and a doctor of ministry degree in evangelism and church growth. He and his wife, Patricia Ann, have three children and five grandchildren.



WILKINS

LAMAR ASSOCIATION

► **Robbie Bradford** is the new pastor of **Fellowship Baptist Church, Vernon**, where he has served as interim pastor since March and youth pastor since 2018. He previously served as youth pastor at New Life Church, Clanton, and Andalusia Full Gospel Tabernacle. Bradford is the head football coach at Lamar County High School. He holds a bachelor’s degree in social science education from Troy State University (now Troy University) and a master’s degree in physical education from the University of West Alabama. He and his wife, Falla, have two children and one grandchild.



Photo courtesy of Robbie Bradford

NEWS

MADISON ASSOCIATION

▶ **Chris Harrold** is the new associate and youth pastor at **Sherwood Baptist Church, Huntsville**. He previously served in California as youth pastor at Tiburon Baptist Church and as a lay youth minister at Hillside Church of Marin, Corte Madera, and Vista Del Mar Church (now New Life Christian Fellowship), Pacifica. He spent one summer working at Centrifuge youth camp, Jenness Park, where he met his wife, Nikki. They now have two sons. Harrold holds a bachelor's degree in creative writing from San Francisco State University and a master of divinity degree in youth ministry from Golden Gate Seminary (now Gateway). Robby Boyd is pastor.

▶ **Jeff Reeves** is the new pastor of **New Market Baptist Church**. He previously served at First Baptist Church Selma; University Baptist Church, Huntsville; Fairhaven Baptist Church, Demopolis; and Lagoon Baptist Church, Gulf Shores. Reeves holds a bachelor's degree in Christian education and music from Leavell College, New Orleans, and a master of arts degree in pastoral ministry from New Orleans Seminary. He and his wife, Karen, have two children and one grandchild.

▶ **Pleasant Springs Baptist Church, Huntsville**, will celebrate homecoming Sept. 22 beginning at 11 a.m. A special lunch will be provided by the church following the morning service. The group "Compassion" will be in concert after lunch. Pat Helton is pastor.



KELLY

MOBILE ASSOCIATION

▶ **John Kelly** is the new youth pastor for **Shiloh Baptist Church, Saraland**. He has served as a student ministry leader and provided pulpit supply in various churches. Kelly is a junior at the University of South Alabama, working toward a business degree. He plans to pursue a master's degree at New Orleans Seminary. David Roach is pastor.

MONTGOMERY ASSOCIATION

▶ **Johnny Rush** is returning as pastor of **First Southern Baptist Church, Hope Hull**. He previously served from 2003 to 2013. Rush holds a bachelor's degree in business



RUSH

from Auburn University and is a licensed engineer. He works as a program director for the Alabama Department of Corrections and is a volunteer chaplain. He was ordained at Dalraida Baptist Church, Montgomery. Rush and his recently deceased wife, Gerene, have one daughter, three grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

SAND MOUNTAIN ASSOCIATION

▶ **New Home Baptist Church, Pisgah**, will host 2024 Fall Camp Meeting at New Home Bible Camp, Henagar, Sept. 29–Oct. 2. Guest speaker John Wells will preach during the Sunday morning service, 10:30 a.m., at the main church campus. Evangelist Heath Williams will preach during the Sunday evening service, 6 p.m. at the Bible camp. Williams is the guest preacher for Monday–Wednesday services, which begin at 6:30 p.m. Each night will feature special music, including the Morrison Sisters on Tuesday night. David Smith is pastor.



WILLIAMS

ST. CLAIR ASSOCIATION

▶ **New Hope Baptist Church, Pell City**, will celebrate its bicentennial in October, starting with a special service Oct. 13 featuring Three on a String at 6 p.m. and concluding Oct. 20, 10 a.m., with interim pastor Bob Weber preaching. Lunch will be served following the Oct. 20 service.

TUSKEGEE LEE ASSOCIATION

▶ **Spencer Helm**, who has been serving as student minister for **First Baptist Church Opelika**, is headed to Atlanta to serve as student pastor of Christ Covenant Church. Jeff Meyers is pastor of FBC Opelika.

Father and son serve as co-workers in ministry

When Alan Long (right) left an established career in medicine to follow God's call to the ministry, he followed the leading of his heavenly Father and an example set for him by his earthly father, James Long (left), minister of homebound care at First Baptist Church Trussville and author of "Essential Discipleship Preparation."

In 1979, James, then an executive in the textile industry, sensed a call to full-time Christian ministry. Looking back, he sees "that when I really got serious about my own personal discipleship, it impacted our entire family."

Alan was a medical doctor when he began to sense God's call to full-time Christian service. Much like his father over 40 years before, he sought God's direction, praying and preparing. When the opportunity came for Alan to serve as teaching pastor at FBCT, father and son became co-workers in ministry.

"It is a great example of the truth that 'God is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine,'" James said. "To work in and through the same church family as Alan is all a matter of God's grace."

Alan added, "It's a joy and an honor to work in the same church as my dad. ... It reiterates to each of us how gracious God is to allow us to serve Him together ... in this season of our lives." (June Mathews)

EDITOR'S NOTE — To read this story in its entirety, visit tabonline.org/Long.



Photo courtesy of Alec Dixon

Sister Springs' history now officially marked

Members of Sister Springs Baptist Church in Tyler are celebrating the placement of a historical marker on its property.

About a month before the church marked its 200th anniversary on Sept. 17, 2023, members submitted an application to the Alabama Historical Commission for the marker. It arrived Aug. 3 and now sits in its permanent spot at the church.

Named for a nearby pair of crystal clear springs, the organization of Sister Springs Baptist Church was recorded in the church minutes on Jan. 16, 1823. On Dec. 13, 1834, Sister Springs

Meeting House — as it was known at the time — purchased land for its present location. The church later changed its name to Sister

Springs Baptist Church. On Oct. 30, 1883, Selma Baptist Association was formed, and Sister Springs became a charter member.

In 1968, a pastorium was built, and the church called its first full-time pastor. In 1977, a new building including the current sanctuary was completed.

Pictured with the marker are Robert Bayne (right) and Barbara Rosser. (The Alabama Baptist)



Photo courtesy of Barbara Rosser

'STRONG FOUNDATIONS IN SCRIPTURE'

Hymns that have 'stood the test of time' can strengthen our faith

By Carolyn Tomlin
The Alabama Baptist

As a child, I often heard my mother sing those beautiful old hymns as she worked. Anyone would agree that Mother certainly didn't have a trained voice for singing. She never was asked to sing in the church choir. But she made a joyful noise unto the Lord (Ps. 98:4), and she sang because she was happy. When pre-

paring a family meal, she often sang "Amazing Grace" and was thankful for the food she prepared. When working in the flower or vegetable garden, she might hum "In the Garden."

Part of our heritage

I grew up hearing these hymns not only in my church but also in my home. They are part of our heritage. The words strengthen our faith. The music brings comfort and fellowship with God.

Depending on the age of the congregation, some Baptist churches use a blended style of worship that appeals to the younger generation. We must remember that the message is the most important — how the words bring us closer to God — not the presentation or entertainment that accompanies a hymn.

These hymns not only make our faith stronger, but the stories that go with them touch our lives. For example, "Amazing Grace,"

written by John Newton (1725–1807), has an interesting story. Newton had been a slave trafficker before he felt called to the ministry, and he kept a diary of his spiritual change. Another example is "It Is Well with My Soul" by Horatio G. Spafford (1828–1888). Spafford wrote the words to this beautiful hymn after his children went down with a ship disaster at sea.

Checking the Baptist Hymnal, many of these familiar hymns were written 200 or more years ago; they have stood the test of time. We continue to sing them today.

Many congregations report that music in our churches is as important as the sermon. Music sets the tone for the service to follow. Our hymns have the

"When we leave worship, we carry these hymns in our hearts. We are transformed by singing and hearing the solid theology that has endured for generations."

Tanner Vines
pastor of worship
and social media,
Gardendale FBC

best message for believers. "When we leave worship, we carry these hymns in our hearts. We are transformed by singing and hearing the solid theology that has endured for generations," said Tanner Vines, pastor of worship and social media at Gardendale First Baptist Church. FBC Gardendale offers two services. In the contemporary service, Vines often uses the words of the hymns and



GARDEDALE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Photo courtesy of Tanner Vines

creates music to accompany the words. Everything doesn't have to be upbeat; it can also be soft and gentle.

"In our church, hymns play such a crucial role in unifying the different ages and stages of life represented," Vines said. "They foster fond memories for our older adults and teach strong Biblical truths for our younger generation. Whether dealing with mountaintop or valley moments, hymns speak and

nourish our souls through their strong foundations in Scripture."

Ken Patterson is the minister of music at First Baptist Church Guntersville. He emphasizes singing outside of church.

Spiritual growth

"Singing the hymns throughout the week solidifies our life in Christ. If we continue to do this, we experience spiritual growth

that will endure. We hold the words in our hearts."

It would be impossible to count the ways our faith is made stronger through singing and knowing these hymns. Each individual church has its favorites that are sung during the worship service. They bring back memories of days gone by and loved ones who have gone on to heaven. See the sidebar on this page for some suggestions.

10 WAYS HYMNS STRENGTHEN OUR FAITH

Eternal life

Amazing Grace! How Sweet the Sound — Eph. 1:7
How Great Thou Art — Deut. 33:26
My Faith Looks Up to Thee — Isa. 45:22

Fellowship with God

Abide with Me — Luke 24:29
Close to Thee — James 4:8
I Am Thine, O Lord — Heb. 10:22

Evangelism

Go, Tell It on the Mountain — Luke 2:17
Living for Jesus — Col. 1:10
Lord, Send a Revival — Ps. 80:18

Comfort

Because He Lives — John 14:19
Count Your Blessings — Ps. 107:31
God Will Take Care of You — 1 Pet. 5:7

Service

Serve the Lord with Gladness — Ps. 100:2
We'll Work Till Jesus Comes — Gal. 6:9
I Gave My Life for Thee — John 10:11

God's love for us

Share His Love — Acts 5:42
To God Be the Glory — Gal. 1:4–5
God Is So Good — 1 Chron. 16:34

Guidance and care

All the Way My Savior Leads Me — Deut. 32:12
Because He Lives — John 14:19
Day by Day — Ps. 68:19

Grace

Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me — Ps. 94:22
Grace, Greater Than Our Sin — Rom. 5:20
"Whosoever" Meaneth Me — Rom. 10:13

Praise and adoration

A Mighty Fortress is Our God — Ps. 46:1
Come, Thou Almighty King — Ps. 24:10
Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing — Rev. 22:1

Heaven

Heaven Came Down — Acts 9:31
Ring the Bells of Heaven — Luke 15:10
Old Rugged Cross — John 19:17

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Andrew Britt, Committee Chairman
Fairview Baptist Church
Selma, Alabama

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ABCH helps families, churches care for foster children

By Tracy Riggs Frontz
The Alabama Baptist

Generational patterns of abuse or neglect are hard to break, but faith-based foster care organizations like the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries shine in the darkness of these devastating cycles.

"There are 6,000 (foster) kids across the state. Odds are that you know some of these kids. These are kids in your neighborhoods, in your schools, that you're seeing at the grocery store," said Jeff Hurn, ABCH engagement specialist.

"The difference we want to make is, we are a faith-filled Christian organization. Our foster parents are Bible-believing Christians. We want to place kids in a situation where they can hear about Jesus and experience the love of Christ," Hurn said.



Photo by freepik

Though fostering children is difficult in the best of circumstances, ABCH works hard to support the foster families throughout the entire process.

Training

The first step is training. Every foster family throughout the state must go through a 10-week training process called TIPS (Trauma Informed Partnering for Safety

and Permanence). Home studies, interviews and background checks follow.

ABCH adds an additional step, requiring their families to be active in a local church and submitting a reference from their pastors.

Foster families are encouraged by their home churches and other churches too. Sunday School classes, small groups and women's ministries provide tangible

support and prayer to meet needs of the families.

"If our foster homes are exceeding the success rate of other agencies' foster homes, we cannot look away from the fact that it's the faith-based orientation and the involvement of the local church that makes the difference between why we're getting different outcomes than others are getting," said Rod Marshall, president and CEO of ABCH.

Christmas, Easter and birthdays are special times for ABCH families. In August, children start school with a new backpack, clothes, shoes and teacher-requested supplies. They have done their summer reading and are prepared

to begin school without the stigma that can come with being a foster child.

Children aging out of foster care can get help transitioning to jobs, the military or college without debt.

However, it's going to take a concerted effort for continued success, Hurn said. The need for more foster parents and funding are the only obstacles preventing ABCH from caring for more children.

"It goes without saying that the Church could absolutely end the foster care crisis in the state. There are about 2,800 Southern Baptist churches and 6,000 kids.

"I mean the math is easy, right?"

To find out more ways to get involved, visit alabamachild.org. For powerful videos and other information to share with your church, visit alabamachild.org/videos and alabamachild.org/churches.

We are here.

For kids like Gwen.

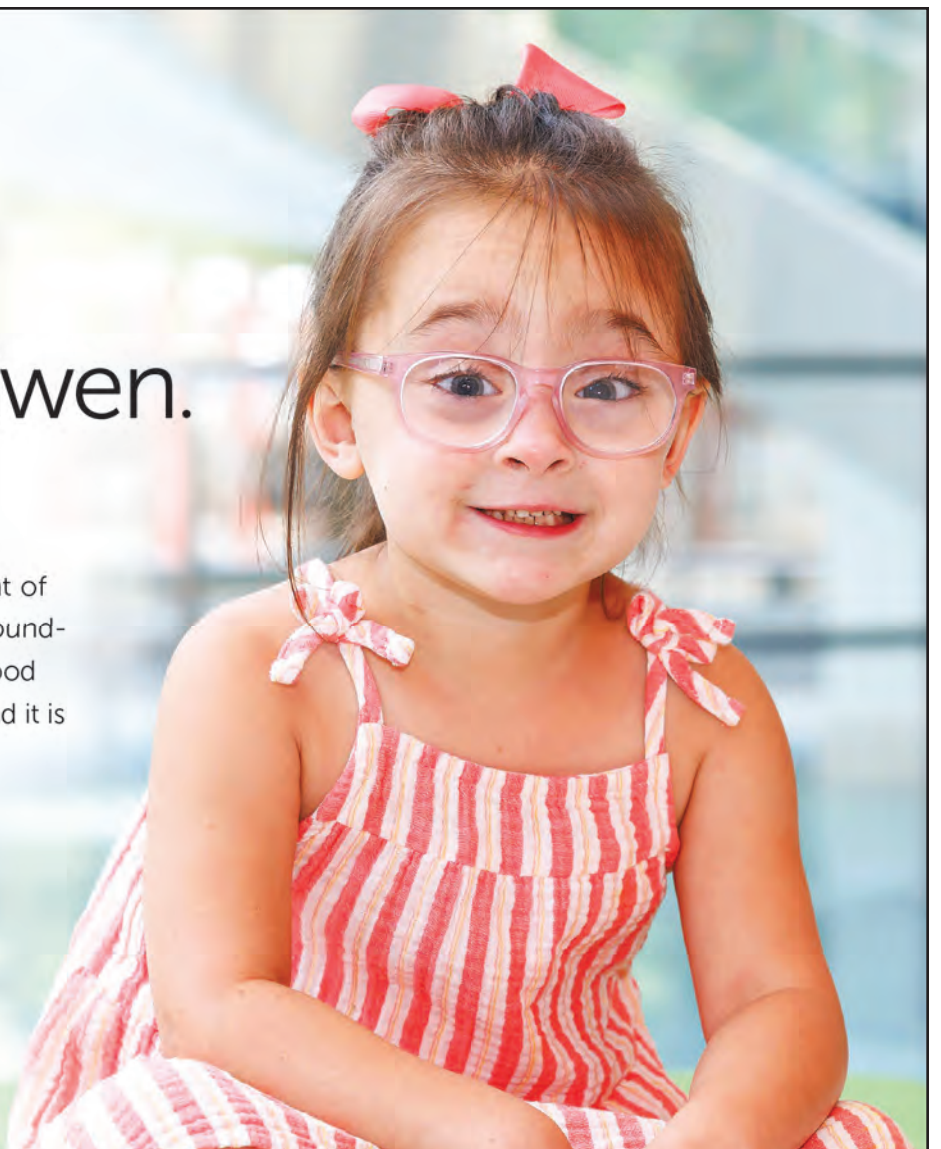
Because Gwen came to Children's for the diagnosis and treatment of her blood disorder, she received the best care available thanks to groundbreaking research made possible by clinical trials for cancers and blood disorders. The research happening today will lead to future cures, and it is happening here at Children's of Alabama.



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UPCOMING EVENTS

sponsored by the State Board of Missions

Cooperative Program Month

We can do more together than we can alone.

That's why October is designated as Cooperative Program Month, the month that Southern Baptists consider the power of giving and working together to accomplish the Great Commission.

During October, encourage your church to:

▶ Pray for the ministries that the CP supports.

▶ Pray that gifts through the CP would continue to increase.

▶ Have a Sunday School lesson or sermon series focus on stewardship and the

CP and how it impacts the lives of people in your community, your country and around the world.

▶ Show a video clip in your service that highlights the CP.

▶ Have a state missionary come to your church to speak about the CP.

▶ Invite members to like or follow @alabamacp on Facebook and X.

For free CP resources such as bulletin inserts, video clips and posters or to invite a state missionary to speak at your church, contact Lori Lockett at llockett@alsbom.org or 334-613-2304 or visit AlabamaCP.org.

Missions festivals

Whether you're a kid or an adult, this fall there's a missions festival for you.

Fall Missions Festival for Children exposes your first through sixth graders to missions through food, customs, crafts and other fun activities led by young adults who have a heart for children and missions.

It's offered two weekends at WorldSong Missions

Place — Oct. 11–12 and Oct. 18–19 — and there's an overnight and one-day option for children and their leaders.

There's also a one-day festival for adults on Oct. 22 where you can spend time interacting with missionaries and learning how God is working in their country.

To register, visit alabamawmu.org/fmfchildren or alabamawmu.org/fmfadults.

One-day event for Alabama Baptist senior adults

Abundant Living, a free event for senior adults, will be held Oct. 24 at Meadow Brook Baptist Church in Birmingham.

Frank Jones will provide pre-service music and lead congregational singing. Speakers will be Daniel Wilson and Danny Wood

with music provided by New Ground.

The event will be held from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. with a break for lunch on your own from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The event is free. Registration is encouraged. Register at alsbom.org/abundantliving.

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

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

Bell Lane Baptist, Clanton, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking our next full-time pastor. The successful candidate will assume a range of responsibilities. You can view the full job description by following the link below: belllanebaptist.org/about.

PASTOR

Indian Grave Baptist Church is seeking a full-time/bivocational pastor. Please send a resumé to: IGPastorSearch@gmail.com or mail to: 2398 County Rd. 19 N, Prattville, AL 36067.

PASTOR

Stowers Hill Baptist Church, Attalla, Alabama, is seeking a pastor. Please send resumé to: stowershillbaptist@gmail.com.

PASTOR

Tates Chapel Baptist Church is seeking a full-time pastor. Send resumé to: Tates Chapel Baptist Church, P.O. Box 38, Centre, AL 35960. Email: tateschapeloffice@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Fairview Baptist in Samson, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor. Please email resúmes to: fairviewbaptist.samson.al@outlook.com or via USPS to: 3159 N State Highway 87, Samson, AL 36477.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

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

PART-TIME ASSOCIATE PASTOR

Buhl Baptist is prayerfully seeking a part-time associate pastor. Please contact us for more information by emailing dmhicks630@gmail.com or BuhlBaptistChurch@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER

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

PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC

South Luverne Baptist Church, Luverne, AL 36049. southluvernebc.com. Provides overall direction and vision of the worship and music

program and provides spiritual leadership to the music staff and volunteers. Submit resumé to: jnorsworthy1141@gmail.com. Call 334-335-6885 for detailed job description.

BIVOCATIONAL ASSOCIATE PASTOR/YOUTH MINISTER

Moon Lake Baptist Church in Mentone, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational associate pastor/youth minister. Seminary students are welcome to apply. Direct resumé/questions to: beverly.haynes@yahoo.com.

NEXT GENERATION PASTOR

Calvary Baptist Church, Tusculumbia is seeking a full-time next generation pastor to lead our youth and children. Please send a resumé to: youth@calvarybaptisttuscumbia.com.

OTHER POSITIONS

ASSOCIATION MISSIONS STRATEGIST

Tallapoosa Baptist Association is prayerfully beginning the search for our next association missions strategist. We invite those who sense God calling them to serve in this capacity to send your resumé to our search team at pstrchad79@gmail.com. The expected start date for the position is January 2025 or thereafter. Resúmes will be accepted until Oct. 1.

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ADOPTION LEGAL SERVICES

Long-time lawyer and former deputy probate judge Eddie Vines offers legal services to families walking through the adoption process. He is an ordained Baptist minister and does ongoing missions work in

India. Contact Eddie Vines: 205-586-0222 or evinesattorney@yahoo.com. No representation is made that the quality of the legal services to be performed is greater than the quality of legal services performed by other lawyers.

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RESOURCES

"HELP I'M A PASTOR!"

This new book by veteran Baptist pastor and cartoonist Joe McKeever is a resource pastors will want to keep on their shelf. And for those with a friend or family member new to the pastorate, McKeever's insights will be a true gift. Order your copy straight from the author today for \$24.95. Email him at joe@joemckeever.com, Venmo him at @Joe-McKeever-7 or send a check and your mailing address to: 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209.

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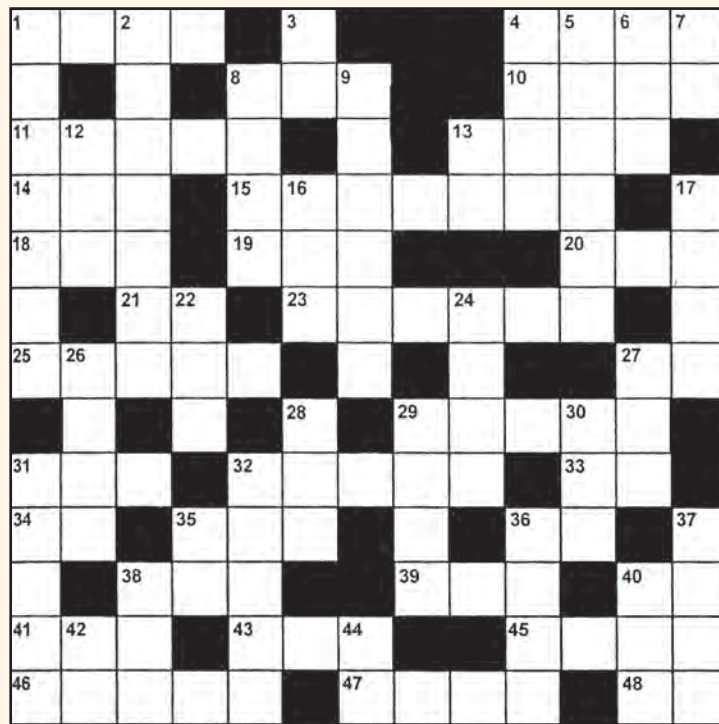
The Ministry Training Institute at Samford University exists to equip Christians to be leaders in their churches and communities through theological education and practical ministry training. Education opportunities exist through the institute's vast extension network and robust online certificate curriculum. Find more information at samford.edu/programs/ministry-training-institute.

CHRISTIAN Crossword



ACROSS

- 1. To carry something.
- 4. And thy land ___ah.
(Isa. 62:4)
- 8. Shish ___ob.
- 10. Seen His star in the ___.
(Matt. 2:2)
- 11. Him only shalt thou ___.
(Matt. 4:10)
- 13. To go on a ___.
- 14. Also.
- 15. Thy Word ... I will ___ it.
(Ps. 119:105-106)
- 18. Anna. (var.)
- 19. Just a little bit.
- 20. (Samuel) ran unto ___.
(1 Sam. 3:5)
- 21. Printer's measure.
- 23. That my joy might ___ in you.
(John 15:11)



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- 25. Gives medicine to.
- 27. In the country of ... ___.
(1 Kings 4:19)
- 29. Praises.
- 31. A little while, and ye shall not ___ me.
(John 16:16)
- 32. To tie a rope off.
- 33. As he ___ pure.
(1 John 3:3)
- 34. Not B.C.
- 35. They ___ the ship aground.
(Acts 27:41)
- 36. To exist.
- 38. Give ___, all ye inhabitants.
(Joel 1:2)
- 39. Parent Teacher Association. (abbr.)
- 40. A two-year college degree.
- 41. Medical specialty. (abbr.)
- 43. To rest.
- 45. Better ... he were ___ into the sea.
(Mark 9:42)
- 46. Or the ___, be not darkened.
(Eccles. 12:2)

- 47. I have fed you with ___.
(1 Cor. 3:2)
- 48. Professional engineer. (abbr.)

DOWN

- 1. To sit or ___.
(Two words)
- 2. For there are set ___ of judgment.
(Ps. 122:5)
- 3. Mommy. (var.)
- 4. Thou shalt not ___ false witness.
(Ex. 20:16)
- 5. What cannibals do.
- 6. Teach ... Judah the ___ of the bow.
(2 Sam. 1:18)
- 7. Light. (abbr.)
- 8. When I ___ silence.
(Ps. 32:3)
- 9. Or touch the ___.
(Ex. 19:12)
- 12. Length of time.
- 13. To perform something.
- 16. Cut off his right ___.
(Luke 22:50)
- 17. Lord of lords, and ___ of kings.
(Rev. 17:14)
- 22. Cast the ___ on the right side of the ship.
(John 21:6)

- 24. When fowls came ___, Abram drove them ___.
(Gen. 15:11)
- 26. Ephlal begat ___.
(1 Chron. 2:37)
- 27. Office of Strategic Services. (abbr.)
- 28. ___ men that were lepers.
(Luke 17:12)
- 29. Thy word is a ___ unto my feet.
(Ps. 119:105)
- 30. That we may ___ with him.
(John 11:16)
- 31. Jesus ___.
- 32. So shall thy ___ be filled.
(Prov. 3:10)
- 35. Egyptian sun god.
- 36. Rolled ___ the stone.
(Matt. 28:2)
- 37. Jesus also ... suffered without the ___.
(Heb. 13:12)
- 38. Estimated time of arrival. (abbr.)
- 40. Snake.
- 42. New Testament. (abbr.)
- 44. Not A.M.

All Bible verses are KJV unless otherwise specified.

International Friends Retreat

Do you know an international student or American student interested in befriending international students?

Encourage them to register for this year's International Friends Retreat, set for Oct. 4-5 at World-Song Missions Place.

The deadline to register is Sept. 27.

The International Friends Retreat — put on by the SBOM Collegiate & Student Ministries Office in partnership with Alabama WMU — is designed to help international college students make American friends and adjust to life in the United States.

This annual weekend away has grown to become an impactful world missions opportunity for college students across Alabama.

American students invite their international friends to

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



enjoy a weekend of canoeing, mountain climbing, zip lining, archery and breakout sessions about life in Alabama.

The retreat provides an avenue for relationship building and sharing the gospel. Over the years, hundreds of international students from dozens of countries have attended.

Register for the retreat at onemissionstudents.org/ifr.

Unwind connects youth leaders each week

If you're a youth leader, there's a Zoom call you should be a part of on Thursday mornings at 9.

This weekly chat, called Unwind, is a "great opportunity to connect with student leaders from all over the state," said Josh Meadows, student ministry strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. Jump on the call Thursday mornings and be a part of talking about what God is doing in youth ministries around the state. We want to hear from you — be ready to answer questions about the ministry God has entrusted you to lead.

To register, visit ymlink.org/unwind.

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EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Sunday School Lessons

By Robert Olsen, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



For September 22

THE GOSPEL Acts 15:7–9, 22–31

Requirements for Gentiles (7–9)

Some Jews had a problem with Gentiles receiving the gospel. According to the Jews, since God had given the Old Testament Law and everyone who loved God needed to keep it, this would include circumcision. As such, the uncircumcised Gentiles needed to be circumcised in addition to accepting the gospel.

Because this was such a big issue, there was a council in Jerusalem where Christians like Peter, Paul and Barnabas told about how the Gentiles had experienced salvation apart from circumcision.

This was confirmed by the fact that they received the Holy Spirit.

It is easy to see why the Jews believed that the Gentiles should be circumcised. After all, it had been a Jewish practice for more than 1,000 years. This should help us to see that today we sometimes have cultural issues that we try to impose on new believers.

This is easiest to see in the history of Christian missions

when at times, missionaries believed that new Christians needed the same style of church architecture and hymns, among other things. We often see the same type of issue today. Unless there is a biblical command, we need to allow for flexibility.

Not Bound (22–26)

Once the council reached a decision, they tasked Paul, Barnabas, Judas and Silas to spread the message that the Gentiles are not bound by the Jewish law. This was a crucial step in the history of the Church. Salvation is found by grace through faith in Christ, not by following external rules.

Many people think they have to do something to be saved, but the Bible is clear that no one can earn their salvation.

The gospel is free for us. Christ died for us, paying the penalty for our sins and raising to life to show that death has no power over us anymore. This is a clear message, but it doesn't sit well with some because it seems too easy. Many denominations and cults add to this so that salvation is no longer just about the gospel.

We have to be careful not to take our personal preferences and force them upon others. This takes the focus off of Christ and the gospel and puts a yoke on us instead.

Believers Rejoice (27–31)

The council detailed four things that Gentiles were to abstain from:

“Peter stood up and said ... ‘God, who knows the heart, bore witness to [the Gentiles], by giving them the Holy Spirit just as He did to us.’”

Acts 15:7–8

food sacrificed to idols, blood, meat of strangled animals and sexual immorality. This may seem that the council was undermining their teaching about the gospel.

We can read from Paul in Romans that meat sacrificed to idols is a matter of personal conviction, so why is this council undermining Paul's teaching?

The best answer is that these were practices associated with pagan temple rites, and it would be beneficial not to do them so that the Gentiles don't fall back into pagan practices and so that pagans don't misunderstand the gospel. (Avoiding sexual immorality is a universal Christian practice. It just needed to be emphasized because pagan culture was rife with immoral sexual practices, similar to our current society.)

There are things Christians will want to avoid in modern settings so that we are above reproach and don't cause another Christian to stumble.

For September 29

KINGDOM WORK Acts 15:39–16:10

Plan Threatened (15:39–41)

After the council in Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas decided to visit the believers from their previous missionary journey. Barnabas wanted to bring along John Mark again, but Paul did not because in their previous journey, John Mark had left them. We do not know what caused Mark to leave but whatever the reason, it did not sit well with Paul, and he was not going to take Mark again.

This disagreement caused Barnabas to take Mark and go to Cyprus — the first stop from the last trip — while Paul took Silas and went to Syria and Cilicia. We do not know the details of the argument, but out of this disagreement two missions teams were created, allowing the gospel to travel twice as effectively. God can use our disagreements to serve His purposes.

It is good for us to see that later in the Bible, Paul had patched up his disagreement with Mark, as Paul mentions Mark positively in 2 Timothy 4:11.

Plan Activated (16:1–5)

While Paul and Silas were visiting the various believers, they met a Christian named Timothy who then accompanied them on their missionary journey. Although Timothy was uncircumcised, he agreed to be circumcised to keep this from being a stumbling block in the future for Jews. This shows that Paul did not want to cause any unnecessary divisions in the churches but wanted to keep the focus on the gospel. We have to make decisions like these often in our current circumstances. For example, some Christians believe you can only listen to certain types of music or read from a specific version of the Bible. Issues like these can become the main at-

traction instead of remaining side issues, but Paul says in Romans 14:19 and following that it is better to give up our own freedoms for the gospel.

Plan Altered (6–7)

As Paul and company traveled, they were prevented by the Holy Spirit from going into Asia. We are not given information as to how they knew this. Did they receive a dream of some sort, or was it a prophecy from a local Christian? They may have been physically prevented by a storm or other event. We are not given this information, but we know they obeyed and understood it to be from the Holy Spirit.

We also need to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit. The best way for us to know the Holy Spirit's leading is through prayer and reading the Bible. We can also receive input from our fellow believers. Instead of seeing roadblocks as obstacles to overcome, we can see that sometimes God is using them to turn us in another direction. If we walk with God we can see our circumstances as situations created by God by which we are to glorify Him instead of complaining about them.

Plan Confirmed (8–10)

While they traveled to Troas, Paul had a vision of a man from Macedonia pleading for help. Paul and his companions thus began to travel to Macedonia for this purpose.

It is not common for us today to receive visions from God. Since we do not often get directions from God in this way, how do we know what God wants us to do? Apart from reading the Bible, God gives us desires and gifts to be used for His glory. If we are actively seeking God and following Him, then we can act on our gifts and desires and see this as a way that God is leading us.

“A vision appeared to Paul ... a man of Macedonia was standing there saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’”

Acts 16:9

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Sunday School Lessons

By Teman Knight, Ph.D.

Adjunct Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary



For September 22

PURPOSE LIVED Galatians 5:16–26

Paul gives the believers advice on how to live out our purpose by living the Spirit-filled life. Paul reminded them in chapter 3 that they had received the Holy Spirit at their conversion. The presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives had been demonstrated by the great things

He had done. Paul now gives them the mandate that they must live “in the Spirit.”

The problem was that the constant bickering among the Judaizers (legalists) and libertines was destroying the church and ruining their witness in the community.

Paul declared they were free from the law but only so they can “serve one another through love” (v. 13). True freedom in Christ avoids the extreme views of both legalism and lawlessness.

Walking by the Spirit keeps us from fulfilling sinful desires. (16–18)

Paul tells them to pay attention and then tells them to walk by the Spirit. The term “walk” is a frequent term in the Old Testament that implies someone is following or living before God. Paul uses the term “walk” to describe the Christian life 32 times in his epistles. Remember that our purpose is to live in relationship with God.

Sin is the great enemy of our relationship with God, separating us from His holiness. The constant battle between the Spirit and the flesh is a struggle that believers must fight. As a new creature in Christ, our desire is to please God. Leading into this passage Paul told them, “Don’t use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh” (v. 13).

The term for “opportunity” is

a military term meaning “a place where an offensive is launched or a base of operation.” We can’t make sin our base of operations for life.

Instead, Paul tells us that the base of operations for our lives must be the Holy Spirit. Instead of just following a code of laws, we are guided by the Holy Spirit who lives in us and directs our paths.

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit ...”

Galatians 5:16–17

Walking in the flesh leads to sinful behavior. (19–21)

One can easily see the difference in behavior of someone walking in the Spirit or someone living in the flesh. Paul describes that sinful lifestyle.

He first lists sexual sins and then the sins of false religion.

Paul next lists social sins of the flesh and then sinful addictions. Society tells us if we have these sinful desires we should act on them. For the believer, however, these sinful behaviors must be crucified with Christ (v. 24).

I decided a long time ago that instead of acting on my own desires I was going to live my life to a higher standard — the standard of God’s holy Word as revealed through His Holy Spirit.

Walking by the Spirit produces Christlike character. (22–26)

After describing what a believer’s life should not look like, Paul describes the qualities that should be obvious in a believer because of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Our relationship with God produces the fruit of love, joy and peace.

The Holy Spirit also impacts our relationships with others by producing the fruit of patience, kindness and goodness. The Spirit impacts our character with the fruit of faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

For September 29

PURPOSE EXPRESSED Galatians 6:1–10

Jesus has called every follower to serve others in love. In Galatians 5, we saw that this service is amplified when we serve under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is empowered by the fruit of the Spirit.

We experience joy when we fulfill God’s purpose for our lives through serving others. We are more like Jesus when we humble ourselves in service.

Serving others means helping to carry their burdens. (1–5)

We are called to “carry one another’s burdens” when a brother or sister has been “overtaken in any wrongdoing.” Perhaps Paul is referring to some of the works of the flesh from chapter 5 that can entangle a believer. “You who are spiritual” refers to a believer who is walking in the Spirit and resisting the works of the flesh in their own lives. Before we can help the brother remove the speck in his eye, we must make sure the log is not in our own eye.

With a gentle spirit we should “restore such a person.” The word “restore” was used for fishermen repairing their fishing nets and doctors setting a broken arm. This restoration of a brother was to be done with gentleness, which is part of the fruit of the Spirit. The goal is to restore the fallen brother or sister back to living the Spirit-filled life so that they can help build the Church. The believer must be careful in the restoration process not to fall into temptation themselves. We all have burdens. Burdens come in the form of a moral lapse; physical, financial, emotional or relational problems; or a host of other types of burdens. God did not intend for us to deal with these in isolation.

While we help carry others’ burdens, there is a load we must carry

ourselves. The word “load” in verse 5 is different from the word “burden” that others are carrying. “Load” refers to that which a person is able and required to carry alone.

By carrying our own load, we are able to examine ourselves, which is the word used for testing gold in fire to demonstrate its purity.

Serving others reaps future benefits. (6–8)

One of the purposes of the Church has always been to teach the life-changing Word of God. We must never forget that our purpose is to make disciples and to teach them. Paul indicates here that the teacher should be honored to share good things. The word for “to share” means “to partner.” Paul had several partners in the ministry who helped support his efforts.

Paul also worked at times to support himself. “All good things” could refer to financial help but also to prayer, encouragement, friendship and service. Honor those who teach us the Word by encouraging them and praying for them. Paul ends the passage by warning us that our actions have consequences; we will reap what we sow.

Seize every opportunity to serve. (9–10)

Continuing with his gardening imagery, Paul reminds the Galatians that the harvest is coming and challenges them not to quit. Faced with legalism on one side and lawlessness on the other, it would be easy for believers to give up.

He says to stay the course and continue to live in the Spirit. Do not let weariness and fatigue rob you of serving God and others by fulfilling His purpose every day.

EDITOR’S NOTE — The Sunday School lesson outlines are provided by Lifeway.

“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

Galatians 6:2

WORD search

- | | | |
|-------------|------------|--------------|
| BURDENS | GENTLENESS | LOVE |
| DECEPTION | GOODNESS | MOCK |
| DISCORD | GRACE | NATURE |
| ENVY | HARVEST | NEIGHBOR |
| ETERNAL | HATRED | PEACE |
| FAITH | IDOLATRY | RAGE |
| FITS | JEALOUSY | SELF-CONTROL |
| FLESH | JOY | SERVE |
| FORBEARANCE | KINDNESS | SOW |
| FREEDOM | LAW | SPIRIT |
| FULFILL | LIFE | WORKS |

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

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law."

GALATIANS 5:22-23

You Gotta' Hear This!



Glimpses of God in the everyday moments

Fortune teller

When our son, Clay, was about 8 years old, we were driving down the parkway and passed a sign for a local fortune teller named Madam Day. From the back seat, I heard a heated conversation between Clay and his sister. Here is what they said ...

Clay: "Stop it, Amy."

Amy: "You did it Clay. I'm telling."

Clay: "You better not."

Amy: Laughs a villainous laugh.

At that point, I intervened asking what Amy needed to tell me that Clay so desperately wanted to keep to themselves.

Learning tricks

Now, in Clay's defense we had been out of town and left them in the care of a college student in our church who became their best friend and yet a responsible caregiver. However, she sometimes taught them some tricks. For instance, she taught them how to prank call people. Clay took to it like a pro.

So back to the Madam Day story ...

I said, "Amy, what did Clay do?"

She had no problem throwing him under the bus. She said, "Clay prank called Madam Day!"

I said, "Clay DID WHAT?"

She repeated, "Clay prank called Madam Day!"

I said, "Clay, why in the world would you do that? What did you say?"

Clay paused and then admitted, "When she answered I said, 'Did you know I was gonna call you?'"

A good question

I really should have disciplined him strongly, but I couldn't stop laughing. It really was a good question! And it made me think of the possibilities of actually being able to discover the future.

Wouldn't it be nice if we could just pick up a phone, dial a number and ask God what our future holds? But I think we have something even better. We have His promise that He will provide abundantly and eternally. In fact, our eyes haven't seen and we can't even imagine what He has in store for us

We don't need a fortune teller when we have the promises of God.

MEET THE AUTHOR

Debbie Childers is a speaker, humorist and author based in Moody. She finds great humor in the fact that all through her school years, she got in trouble for talking and now she gets invited to do it!



Community of support

UAB's Geldmacher outlines latest on memory disorders, recommends respite ministries

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Do you know someone suffering from a memory disorder such as Alzheimer's disease? Most likely the answer is yes because, according to the latest research, roughly 7 million Americans currently have some form of dementia, and three-fourths of those cases are Alzheimer's.

Dr. David S. Geldmacher, director of the division of memory disorders and behavioral neurology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, shared this statistic and other information during a special seminar hosted by First Baptist Church Trussville in August.

While Geldmacher touched on the science behind it all, genetic realities and overall treatment options, he also emphasized the importance of caring for the caregiver.

A respite ministry can significantly help those caring for family members with a memory disorder, Geldmacher said. "A respite program (offers) a community where they can turn to for support, advice and interaction."

David George, retired president of WMU Foundation who currently serves with the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries, knows firsthand how respite offerings make a difference.

Vital helps for caregivers

He shares often how members of his church "saved his life" with a few simple but vital helps and how a weekday respite program at a nearby church also gave him much-needed breaks from time to time.

George also knows Geldmacher personally because he served as neurologist for George's wife, Allyson,



Photo by Alec Dixon/FBC Trussville

More than 500 people gather Aug. 18 at First Baptist Church Trussville to hear UAB's top neurologist in the area of memory disorders Dr. David S. Geldmacher.

who died Sept. 8 (about three weeks after the seminar) from end-stage Alzheimer's disease.

Bottom line, George shared as he wrapped up his introduction of Geldmacher, "Let your church help, find a support group now and prepare ahead of time."

Bob Smith, minister to seasoned adults at FBC Trussville, said he hoped the seminar would be beneficial. "We've tried to offer [resources and helps for you to have] before the crisis hits your family."

That crisis equates to \$270 billion per year in dollar value for Americans, Geldmacher noted as he described the social burden of memory disorders. "Unpaid caregivers accounted for more than 17.7 billion hours of informal care in 2018," he said. "More than 80% were spouses, and 58% were daughters.

"Women bear the vast majority of

care," he said, noting daughters-in-law fall third in line behind spouses and daughters for who generally serves as the caregiver.

And in the most conservative situations, the majority of families expect to face \$10,000 a year of out-

of-pocket costs in care of an individual with Alzheimer's or another form of dementia, Geldmacher said.

While no cure currently exists and technically no offerings for preventing memory disorders are available, researchers continue looking for answers and have determined that Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia can possibly be slowed down with a healthy lifestyle.

Getting good sleep (and enough sleep) is extremely important, Geldmacher said, noting sleep is aided by regular physical exercise, which is the most important thing anyone can

do. He suggests 20 to 30 minutes of persistent moderate activity five to seven days per week.

Other helps include a healthy diet (five servings of brightly colored fruits/vegetables daily, foods high in fiber but low in red meat and animal fat) and minimal alcohol intake.

Mental stimulation and social engagement also make a difference, he noted. Games, puzzles, hobbies, crafts, frequent conversations, clubs, reading groups, etc., are examples.

"We need to do something to keep our brain functioning. The more we use the brain circuit the stronger that brain circuit becomes."

Also, "taking medicines for conditions is important for helping," Geldmacher added.

With two decades of studies on the standard medicines in this area, researchers contend they do help brain cells work better, he explained.

Medicines have a role

"Medicines don't improve memory, but they do delay the worsening of memory and do help maintain independence. They don't reverse anything ... but medicines help with caregiver distress ... and help stabilize the situation," he said.

Choosing to use the various supplements marketed toward improving memory disorders isn't necessarily harmful in any way, but he hasn't found any science behind the claims being made, Geldmacher added.

Keeping family members with Alzheimer's or another form of dementia safe is key as well as remembering that attempting to use logic with them won't work, he noted.

They need a sense of familiarity, connectedness and for someone to point them toward what to do next. "A respite ministry is a great way of doing that. I recommend it highly."

To watch Geldmacher's full presentation, visit tabonline.org/geldmacher.

DifferenceMakers

201st ANNUAL MEETING of the Alabama Baptist State Convention

NOVEMBER 12 - 13, 2024
EASTERN SHORE BAPTIST CHURCH, DAPHNE



Make plans now to attend The Gathering,

our annual family reunion of Alabama Baptists! This year's theme will be DifferenceMakers, based on Acts 4:13. Highlighting our time together will be a message Tuesday evening from **Jason Allen**, president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo., and a native of Mobile. Preceding Allen's message will be the music of **RamCorps**, a Christ-centered high impact visual brass and percussion ensemble from the University of Mobile.

Other speakers include **Craig Carlisle** and **Rob Jackson** on Tuesday morning and **Albert Williams** and **Ben Bowden** on Wednesday morning. Also, the exhibit hall will provide opportunities to visit with state missionaries, along with state and SBC entity leaders, and see firsthand how your Cooperative Program giving is making a difference around the world. In addition, cartoonist **Joe McKeever** will be on hand to sketch caricatures of those who stop by.

For more information about the State Convention Annual Meeting, including hotel options and a complete schedule as it becomes available, visit alsbom.org/convention. Messenger information will be mailed to each church by October 1.



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alsbom.org/convention