

# The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.



Photo courtesy of Robert Reed  
Robert Reed (center)  
hosts the Sand  
Mountain Worship  
Collective at its first  
meeting July 19.

## Sharing gifts

### Sand Mountain Worship Collective meets churches' needs, helps musicians grow

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

**C**an you send us anybody?" That was the question Robert Reed's father-in-law, Steve Townson, asked him a few months ago — and set something new in motion.

Townson, pastor of Poplar Springs Baptist Church in Bryant, needed someone to lead worship there.

"It's a very small congregation,

and they don't have anyone to lead the music," said Reed, bivocational music minister at Nazareth Baptist Church in Rainsville. "He told me, 'Sometimes I might try to get a hymnal and lead something a cappella.'"

#### For a season

That's when he asked Reed if he could send him anybody to help — even if it was just for a month at a time.

"We've got a lot of talented people in our church, but many of them are at Nazareth for this season — maybe their kids are in the youth group, or their spouse teaches a Sunday School class," Reed said. "But it got me thinking, 'What if that person could go to another church that's struggling to have somebody lead worship and just serve there for a month and come back?'"

He talked to Keith Wrenn, direc-

tor of missions for DeKalb Baptist Association, of which Nazareth is a part, as well as Chris Guinn, director of missions for Sand Mountain Baptist Association, which serves Poplar Springs Baptist.

"Both of them said my father-in-law's church is not the only one; both had 6 to 8 churches in their association with no music leadership whatsoever," Reed said. "I thought,

(See 'Huge need,' page 2)

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# ‘Huge need’

## Worship leaders, musicians network to serve at other churches

*(continued from page 1)*

‘Well, I don’t know a lot of the other worship leaders and musicians at a lot of the other churches, but what if we could network and create some kind of schedule of musicians who could take their talents and abilities and go serve at another church, even if it’s just for a short time?’”

### Good for everyone

Reed said he thought it could be good for everyone — it would help the churches have music in their worship services, and it would help musicians share their gifts and gain experience.

That was the beginnings of the idea for the Sand Mountain Worship Collective, which met for the first time July 19. Reed hosted a worship circle at his house that night and invited area singers and musicians to come and bring their instruments.

About 30 people from six churches

played worship music and talked, and at the end, Reed had several people say they were interested in serving here and there at churches in the area.

“From here, we can start working on helping some churches on a rotating basis,” Reed said.

He added that even though short-term help is the setup, he could also foresee some people going to serve for a few weeks, then think “I love this” and consider staying.

Reed also wants the Sand Mountain Worship Collective to involve mentoring in areas such as choosing songs to match a sermon and selecting singable keys.

“I’ve been convicted lately that I’ve been doing music ministry for 30 years, and I haven’t taken anyone under my wing and disciplined them to do what I do,” he said.

Wrenn said he’s excited about the collective and what it might do to

meet a “huge need” in his area.

“I was talking with one of the pastors yesterday at a church I had visited a few months ago, and they don’t have anybody who knows how to play any instrument, and they don’t have a music pastor,” he said. “He was wondering what do they do? Without a music program, it’s kind of hard — music kind of sets the stage for the preaching.”

Townson said he’s been praying and his church has been praying for God to send someone their way, and he’s excited to see what happens with Sand Mountain Worship Collective.

### ‘Same situation’

“I know it would help us, and I know of other churches that are in the same situation,” he said. “And if this could go statewide, I’m sure there’s many other churches who might have the same need.”

“I’ve been convicted lately that I’ve been doing music ministry for 30 years, and I haven’t taken anyone under my wing and disciplined them to do what I do.”

**ROBERT REED**

*bivocational music minister, Nazareth Baptist Church, Rainsville*



Photo courtesy of Robert Reed

The Sand Mountain Worship Collective met for the first time July 19 at Robert Reed’s home.

## 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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The crossword puzzle can be found on page 13.



# GUEST EDITORIAL

for this week's edition of **The Alabama Baptist**

By Russell Klinner, Executive Director, Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center

## Thank you for your faithfulness in investing in God's work at Shocco Springs

**I**t has been an amazing summer at Shocco Springs. Thousands of guests have walked our campus, and countless lives have been touched and changed. By every measure, it has been another record season in our history.

Standing here in 2025, I am humbled to realize we are living in the fruit of something planted long before any of this was visible.

In 1947, a small group of faithful Baptists gathered with a dream — a holy place intentionally set apart for ministry, retreat and renewal. They planted the seed without 300 employees, 1,000 acres or modern facilities. What they did have was vision, faith and a willingness to give generously so the work could begin.

### Branches of ministry

When I began my work here 33 years ago as a summer groundskeeper, I was assigned the task of planting a few small trees around campus. At the time, they were little more than thin saplings in the soil.

Today, if you walk to the chapel yard or up around Twin Lodge, you'll see those same



When students come to Christ during their summer camp experience, church leaders sometimes hold a baptism service at Shocco before heading home — such as what took place with the Florida church group above this summer.

trees as towering oaks — branches stretched wide, offering shade, beauty and a place for people to gather.

In the same way, what you and others did in 1947 may have

seemed small. But like those oaks, it has grown and become branches of ministry reaching far and wide, sheltering generations and bearing fruit beyond anything they could have imagined.

During the 2025 summer alone, we welcomed thousands of guests, hosted more than 300 staff members in countless roles, served 80,000 overnight stays and prepared over 200,000 meals.

We witnessed students making first-time commitments to Christ, baptisms in the lake, pastors encouraged, marriages strengthened and lives renewed.

Every person who walks these grounds experiences something that began with your faith, generosity and vision.

To the Baptists of Alabama — thank you. Thank you for your prayers for me personally, for trusting us to steward this ministry and for believing in God's work at Shocco Springs.

Because of your faithfulness, we can continue planting today, confident that generations to come will sit in the shade of what God is growing here.

**“I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.”**

# Your Voice



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

## First person: Has ministry become your idol?

By **Chuck Lawless**  
chucklawless.com

**M**ay I be honest with you? I started full-time ministry at 20 years old, and I quickly grew enamored with the excitement and the perceived prestige of ministry. I would never have admitted it then, but I made ministry my idol — and I confess that I still run that risk this many years later.

Here are some signs that suggest ministry may have become an idol for you:

**1.** You tie much of your self-worth to your ministry success. Even if you know better than to think that way, your heart still

moves in that direction if your ministry has become an idol.

**2.** Your spouse and family, even if they don't admit it, feel like your ministry is more important to you than they are. This is the danger, too — many great families are reticent to be honest, lest they harm what matters so much to you.

### Conversations

**3.** You tend to talk more about your ministry than about your Lord. The conversations you do have about the Lord are more perfunctory than personal, more job-related than Jesus-focused.

**4.** You continually think about the next step on the ladder of min-

istry success. Idols work that way, actually — they never fully satisfy, and they leave you longing for more.

**5.** You refer to the congregation you lead as “my church.” That's not an automatic marker, but it often accompanies other markers in this list.

**6.** You spend more time thinking about the temporary rewards of ministry than about the crowns you'll lay back at the feet of Jesus in eternity. Again, that's the way idols work: They turn our focus toward the temporal and challenge us to treat the fleeting as if it were eternal.

**7.** You regularly compare yourself to other ministry leaders — and strive to do better and grow something bigger than they do. When we long for worldly recognition, our work becomes part of our idolatries.

**8.** You tend to point out others you believe are guilty of ministry idolatry. Sometimes it's easier to see in others what we refuse to see in ourselves.

**9.** You remind others about your ministry successes. This one, of course, goes full circle to #1 above.

**10.** You don't like reading this post. You could have multiple reasons for disliking this post, but it's possible you don't like it because it hits too close to home.

What would you add to this list? Where do you see yourself most vulnerable?

“Making the decision to follow Christ was the best decision I could have ever made. People are seeking hope, and that is only found in knowing Jesus and putting your faith in Him,” said **Audrey Kittila**, who was crowned the 80th winner of this year's Miss Georgia Scholarship Competition.

“To me, the drudgery is part of the point,” said **Brad East**, who teaches theology at Abilene Christian University in West Texas, on the ethics of using AI to preach sermons. “I do not want pastors preaching sermons out of Scripture who themselves do not read or study Scripture. I just don't. It is missing the point of what we are trying to do there.”

When we face trials, it's easy to be discouraged. But just because we're disappointed doesn't mean we have to be discouraged. During these moments, it's important to remember that God isn't surprised. Long before we face a problem, God already has a plan.

**Craig Groeschel**  
Founding pastor of  
Life.Church

## What the Bible says about work

**M**any Americans will enjoy an extra day off on Sept. 1. Though Labor Day is not a Christian holiday, the Bible has quite a bit to say about “work.”

Genesis 2:15 reminds us, “The Lord God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it.”

Proverbs 14:23 reveals, “All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.”

Second Thessalonians 3:10 makes it very clear what happens if you don't work. “In fact, when we were with you, this is what we commanded you: ‘If anyone isn't

willing to work, he should not eat.’”

There are so many other verses which deal with work, both in the physical sense and in the spiritual realm as well. Just Google what the Bible says about work.

As Christians, we need to teach our children and grandchildren what it means to work and why we do it. And, as we do so, let's challenge ourselves and them to also heed Colossians 3:23, “Whatever you do, do it enthusiastically, as something done for the Lord and not for men.” (Lonnie Wilkey, retired Baptist editor)

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“We often treat Jesus the way Saul treated David. We want him to slay giants and sing evil spirits away, but we don’t want Him to be King.”

A. W. TOZER

pastor, author, magazine editor (1897–1963)

“I would say reaching the children in their youth, that is my biggest hope for them,” said **Holden Smith**, pastor of Gilberttown Baptist Church, on the impact of Vacation Bible School. “God is seemingly well pleased to love and draw children to Himself. We are very moldable as children. What we learn as children sinks in, and it stays with us for a very long time.”

“The Great Commandment is to love God with all of ourselves — mind, body, strength, spirit. God in His infinite wisdom imbued human beings with the ability to reason and to think and to explore and to discover and to co-create,” said **Beck Taylor**, president of Samford University, on key characteristics of the academic vocation. “These are virtues I think the academy is

meant to shine a light on and to elevate. The second part of that Great Commandment is to love your neighbor, so we’re not just accruing these academic goods to ourselves. We’re thinking about how we can better serve the people around us.”

“I want kids to know that learning about Jesus, worshipping Him and going to church can be fun,” said **Yancy Richmond** — “Yancy” to her preteen audiences — whose songs are played in some 175 countries, and she has a YouTube channel that had more than 14 million views last year. “I want them to have a passion for worship and realizing it’s a way we can engage and respond to God and all He has done. I also love to encourage kids and families to make Jesus ‘loud’ in their life every day.”



Posts were removed because someone took a fence.

# Lass WORDS

BY KEN LASS

The Alabama Baptist



## DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS

### Shelter from the storms of life

**A**s I write this, I can hear the thundering hammers and the clanking of crowbars. The neighbors next door are having their roof replaced.

I am always amazed at how quickly and efficiently this process happens. The workers arrive right after sunrise and will work until the last ray of light disappears over the horizon, often finishing in one day.

The first job, of course, is to strip off the old shingles. Every one of them. You can’t just replace some because the new ones won’t match the old.

Even if it’s the same brand of shingle, the old ones will be faded and darker and look different. The roof will resemble a patchwork quilt, so the surface has to be completely redone.

#### Disposing of old shingles

Then they put down a water-resistant underlay, to assure there will be no leaks. Finally, the new shingles are nailed into place, giving the house a fresh, new appearance.

Yes, you guessed it. I feel another analogy coming on. Accepting Jesus as Savior is like having your roof replaced — seeking His will for your life can also be quick and efficient. But first it involves disposing of the old shingles — the sinful activity you’ve fallen into over the years,

the exposure to temptation that you allow to hang around in the shadows. It all has to go.

You can’t just get rid of some of it. Otherwise your spiritual walk will look like that patchwork quilt — some good, some bad. That’s not what God wants. He wants to adopt you as His child. He wants all of your life.

#### Firm foundation

The next step is the underlay. A thorough knowledge of God’s Word will provide the sin-resistant foundation for your walk. Knowing who He is, how much He loves and what He wants of you are at the core of your faith. Then will come demonstrations of your faith — the nailing down of the new shingles. A changed life. A new, fresh you.

In the book of Revelation, John writes, “He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” So get your roof replaced today. Because in this challenging world we live in, the storms of life are coming.

#### MEET THE AUTHOR

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

# 3 stories you should know



Johnny Hunt (left), SBC president in 2009, and Ronnie Floyd, chair and spokesperson for the GCR Task Force, respond to questions at a press event in Atlanta on Aug. 12, 2009.

The Alabama Baptist file photo

Staff members of The Baptist Paper, a sister publication to The Alabama Baptist and part of TAB Media Group, continue their review of the audio files from the 2009–2010 meetings of the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force. They've made it through three of the six meetings and roughly half of the 90 hours of audio available from the full group sessions. Four articles have been published so far and can be found in previous print editions of The Baptist Paper or online at [tbponline.org](http://tbponline.org).

## Baptist leaders appeal for end to abortion pill

Three Alabama Baptist leaders are among those from 22 states who joined the Family Research Council in taking a public stand against the abortion pill mifepristone.

Greg Davis, ALCAP president; Craig Carlisle, state convention president; and Rick Lance, State Board of Missions executive director, signed the letter, which was sent to the White House, the Department of Justice and the Food and Drug Administration. The letter asked President Donald Trump to protect women from the dangers of mifepristone. In June, Southern Baptists adopted a resolution calling for federal and state lawmakers to stop the “manufacture, sale and distribution of the chemical abortion drugs” and to “enforce the Comstock Act prohibiting the mailing of abortion pills.” (Baptist Message)

## Hawaii Baptists reflect on fire recovery efforts

Aug. 8 marked the second anniversary of the devastating Maui fires that changed the landscape of Lahaina and nearby communities, displacing thousands of families with fewer than 50 homes rebuilt from the nearly 2,000 destroyed.

Amid the recovery, extraordinary ministry of hope and healing has taken place, with volunteers contacting survivors, sharing the love of Christ, distributing some 200 Bibles, offering prayer to families and providing practical assistance through the Maui Fire Caring Ministry.

Over 14 months, the ministry contacted 748 people — every single fire survivor, plus additional survivors who came to their attention. Read more on the efforts at [tbponline.org/Hawaii](http://tbponline.org/Hawaii). (Craig Webb, Hawaii Pacific Baptist Convention)

# Persecuted church

## Pastor, congregant gunned down; woman kidnapped in Nigeria

A Baptist pastor and a congregant were gunned down and a woman kidnapped July 7 in Nigeria during a church's evening worship time.

Quoting the TruthNigeria news outlet, Christian Daily International-Morning Star News reported that the 15 to 20 gunmen who stormed Bege Baptist Church in Yaribori village in Nigeria's Katsina State are believed to be Islamic extremists, TruthNigeria says, as Christian Daily-Morning Star reports.

Elsewhere in Nigeria, at least 100 Christians have been slain in Plateau State since May, sources told Christian Daily-Morning Star.

Nigeria ranks No. 7 on Open Doors' 2025 World Watch List of the 50 places most difficult to be a Christian.

## Deadly torture, abductions spotlight persecution across Pakistan

Recent incidents of deadly torture and of abductions that result in forced marriage indicate the daily risk of persecution that some religious minorities face in Pakistan.

Christian Daily International-Morning Star News reported the following cases in Pakistan:

► Kashif Masih, a 35-year-old Catholic, was tortured and beaten to death May 11–12 in Pakistan's Punjab province. Masih's brother said Muslim assailants beat Masih, accusing him of stealing a mobile phone.

► A 15-year-old Catholic girl was reunited with her parents May 21, five months after a

29-year-old Muslim man and four accomplices kidnapped her in Sambrial Tehsil in Punjab province. Her family's attorney said she was subsequently forced to convert to Islam and marry her abductor. At the time of her rescue, she was four months pregnant from repeated rapes. Three assailants are in prison; two remain at large.

► On May 16, a judge gave custody of a kidnapped 16-year-old Catholic girl to her 32-year-old Muslim captor. The girl's father said she was abducted April 30, forced to convert to Islam and marry the kidnapper.

Pakistan is No. 8 on Open Doors' 2025 World Watch List of 50 places most difficult to be a Christian.



# U.S. military celebrates 250 years of chaplaincy

In 1775, a year before there was a United States and six weeks after the Continental Army was formed, George Washington made a declaration that has shaped the military ever since.

“We need chaplains,” he reportedly remarked, prompting action by the Continental Congress near the start of the Revolutionary War.

## Always needed

The U.S. military chaplaincy marked 250 years July 29. Across the globe, thousands of clergy in uniform continue to provide counsel and care to military members of a range of faiths or no faith.

“In times of peace and war, our chaplains have held fast as beacons of hope and resilience for our troops, whether enduring the brutal winter of Valley Forge,

comforting the wounded and dying on the battlefields during the Civil War, braving trench warfare in World War I, storming the beaches of Normandy during World War II, marching the frozen mountains during the Korean War, slogging through the rice paddies and jungle battlefields of Vietnam or traveling the bomb-filled roads of Iraq and Afghanistan,” said retired Chaplain (Major General) Doug Carver, a former Army chief of chaplains in charge of the Southern Baptist Convention’s chaplaincy ministries, at the denomination’s June annual meeting in Dallas.

Chaplains serve in hospitals, hospices and manufacturing plants, and while chaplaincy researchers see commonalities among them, there are also key differences in the military.

All are involved in gaining the trust of people who



U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Sean Hurt/Released  
Cmdr. John Logan, a Navy chaplain aboard the aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush, reads a prayer during a sunrise Easter service held on the flight deck.

are in their particular milieu, enabling them to think and sometimes pray through their times of greatest need and day-to-day struggles.

## Dedication

An example of both the danger and the dedication of military service chaplaincy is the 1943 death of four

chaplains — two Protestant, one Catholic and one Jewish — who helped save some of those aboard a World War II ship, turning over their life jackets and praying and singing hymns before it sank.

“It was a real defining moment,” said retired Gen. Steve Schaick, who served as Air Force chief of chap-

lains from 2018 to 2021, and in the same role for the Space Force from 2019 to 2021. “The stories that came from that really kind of highlighted chaplains at their best.”

The Army’s chaplaincy corps also includes religious affairs specialists and religious education directors.

Some service members provide armed protection to unarmed chaplains and set up worship spaces in on-base chapels or makeshift altars on truck hoods in the field.

“The longer you serve in the chaplaincy, ... religious affiliation becomes secondary,” Schaick said. “It’s ‘How’re you doing today?’ and ‘I’d love to hear what’s on your heart’ and ‘How can I be able to help you today?’”

“Those kind of questions, quite frankly, are impervious to religious distinctions.” (Adelle M. Banks, Religion News Service)

## Faith Moments

### Six responses to current trends happening in churches

While the world is consumed with “wars and rumors of wars,” our focus remains on the advancement of God’s Kingdom and the anticipation of His soon return.

Yet, until that final trumpet sounds, we must evaluate the spiritual health of the Church in America and consider how we should respond to current trends. Below are six key trends Gallup News is reporting and six ways we can faithfully respond:

**1.** Only 20% of Americans attend church weekly, down from 32% in 2000 — a continuation of a two-decade-long decline in regular church engagement.

**2.** The number of U.S. adults identifying as “practicing Christians,” those who attend church regularly and say faith is essen-

tial to their lives, has dropped from 45% in 2020 to 20% in 2024.

**3.** A striking 57% of Americans say they seldom or never attend church, a significant increase from just 13% who rarely or never attended in 2000.

**4.** Millennials (born 1984–1995) and Gen Z (born 1996–2015) are bucking expectations. Millennials now report a 39% weekly church attendance rate, up significantly from 21% in 2019, surpassing Boomers for the first time. Gen Z is showing a growing interest in faith communities that offer authenticity, connection and a sense of purpose. So while the overall number of Americans attending church declines, there is a slight uptick among Millennials and Gen Z.

**5.** The average annual attrition rate (people leaving your church)

hovers around 10–15%. This attrition includes moves, life transitions, disengagement or deaths.

**6.** Post-pandemic recovery is uneven. While a few churches have surpassed their pre-2020 attendance levels, many are operating at around 85% of their pre-COVID numbers.

### How to respond

► **Don’t panic — pray and evangelize.** The drop in overall attendance and practicing Christians is sobering, but it’s not a death sentence. It’s a wake-up call. The gospel still changes lives.

► **Reengage the marginalized majority.** With 57% of Americans seldom or never attending church, the missions field isn’t just across the ocean, it’s across the street. Relational evangelism, hospitality and community service are bridges

back to gospel conversations.

► **Millennials and Gen Z are not lost causes.** The uptick in attendance among Millennials and Gen Z is both surprising and encouraging. These generations crave authenticity, purpose and community. Churches focusing on the gospel, mentoring, authenticity, transparency and hands-on missions connect with them.

► **Retention is discipleship.** If a church expects to lose 10–15% of its people annually, it needs a clear plan for ongoing outreach and disciple-making. Small groups, one-on-one follow-ups and next-step membership pathways help anchor people in the church’s life.

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



# Alabama news

## ALABAMA-CRENSHAW ASSOCIATION

► **Elbert Smith** is the new pastor of **Weed Baptist Church, Brantley**. Previously he served as pastor of New Prospect Baptist Church, Marl.

► **New Harmony Baptist Church, Luverne**, celebrated its 175th anniversary July 13. It is the oldest active church in Crenshaw County. Danny Duncan, a former member, was the guest speaker. James Norman, a deacon and the church pianist, presented the history of the church and provided special music during the service. The church



Photo courtesy of Anne Lambert

was honored with two presentations by Jack Anderson, the associational missionary for Alabama-Crenshaw Association, and Jim Lambert (left), a commissioner

for the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission. Malcolm Butts (right), who has been the pastor for 20 years, accepted the plaques on behalf of the church.

► **Oakdale Baptist Church, Grady**, celebrated its 75th anniversary July 13. Sam Brassell, a former pastor, was the guest speaker. Three previous pastors in attendance were recognized, J.C. Turn-



Submitted photo

er, Steve Carson and Chip Smith. A plaque from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission was presented by Jack Anderson (left), the association's missionary, to pastor Tommy Norman (right). Photos depicting the church's history were on display. A fellowship meal was served following the service.

## AUTAUGA ASSOCIATION

► **Justin Hall** is the new senior pastor of **First Baptist Church Prattville**. He has served as student pastor for the past eight years. Hall and his wife, Adrienne, have two children.



Submitted photo

## BETHLEHEM ASSOCIATION

► **First Baptist Church Uriah** celebrated its centennial anniversary June 22. Special guests included former choir director of 35 years, Archie Covington, who led music for the service, and the guest preacher, Steve Dunn (pictured right),

the association's missionary, who was called to ministry and married his wife, Deborah, at FBC Uriah. Members Kenneth Cumbie and Harold Cole sang a duet, and sisters Jane House and Kathy Helton also sang a special song.

The church history was compiled and hand written by Patricia Powell-McCullers and copies, rolled up as a scroll, were given

to everyone. Wendy Westerhouse (second from left), executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented a commemorative plaque to all the deacons. Pictured left to right are Sherril Stanton Taylor, anniversary coordinator, and Chris Strength, deacon chair. Bill Knight is interim pastor.



Photo courtesy of Kay Woodyard

## BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

► **First Baptist Church Shannon**, near Bessemer, celebrated its 100th anniversary July 13. Former pastor Don Maddox was the guest speaker. Brad Robertson, associate pastor, produced a video showcasing the church's history featuring testimonies, baptisms, homecomings, Christmas plays and more. The church received

## OBITUARIES

### JAMES "JIM" AUCHMUTY

James "Jim" Auchmuty — longtime pastor of Shades Crest Baptist Church in Hoover and First Baptist Church Roebuck Plaza in Birmingham — died Aug. 5, nine days after preaching his final sermon. He was 90 years old.

Auchmuty was ordained at First Baptist Church Lanett in 1953 and graduated from Howard College (now Samford University) in 1957.

He started his ministry at Providence Baptist Church in Lanett, then served several other churches in the state, including West End Baptist in Aliceville, Calvary Baptist in Abbeville and First Baptist Elba.

After Shades Crest Baptist called Auchmuty as their pastor in 1972, he served there 27 years. When he retired in 1999, the church named him pastor emeritus. It was his longest tenure, but only barely — he came out of retirement the following year and served another 25 years as pastor of FBC Roebuck Plaza.

Over the years, Auchmuty served in part-time and volunteer roles as an industrial



AUCHMUTY

chaplain, fire chaplain and director of a funeral ministry that provided preachers and pallbearers to local funeral homes. He also taught courses at Samford and wrote several books.

In addition to his first degree, Auchmuty earned a bachelor of divinity and master of theology from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, and a doctor of ministry from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He also received an honorary doctor of divinity from Judson College in Marion, where he served as a trustee.

Auchmuty was preceded in death by his wife of 61 years, Sue. He is survived by his daughters, Jenni and Robyn; son, Jimbo; eight grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren.

### BUDDY NELSON

Buddy Nelson, a longtime pastor in Alabama Baptist life, died July 30.

He currently was serving as interim senior adult and education minister at Golden Springs Baptist Church in Anniston, one of several interim roles he served since retiring in 2016. He also had been active in and supportive of Calhoun Baptist Association, according to CBA director of missions Roger Willmore.

Nelson previously served as pastor of First Baptist Church McClellan in Anniston; River-

chase Baptist Church, Hoover; First Baptist Church Oxford and Liberty Baptist Church, Leitchfield, Kentucky.

Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, described Nelson as a "dear friend."

"We have known each other since our days at Samford. We served together in various ways in our state convention life," Lance said. "Buddy always had a winsome attitude. He personified a servant spirit. His pastoral ministry was well received by the people he served. I am so grateful to have known him as a friend and as a colleague in ministry."



NELSON

Nelson held a bachelor's degree from Samford University and a master of divinity degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He also was a youth minister for FBC Birmingham early in his ministry.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, he wrote "Getting Off the Fence Post: Choosing How to Face Difficult Times," a collection of 90 devotionals.

Nelson is survived by his wife, Becky; two children and four grandchildren.

a special plaque presented by Joyce Peters (left), a commissioner for the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, with pastor Tommy Hannah (right) accepting on behalf of the church. Commemorative bookmarks were given to those in attendance. The Campbells, a southern gospel group made up of church members, sang during the service and at a 2 p.m. concert following the meal.



Photo by Toni Wall

### CALHOUN ASSOCIATION

► **Don Pilcher** recently retired as director of **Calhoun Baptist Association's** New 2 You Thrift Store ministries. He served 11 years in this position. The association honored him with a reception June 26. Pilcher is pastor of Blue Mountain Baptist Church, Anniston. Jerry Duncan is the new director of New 2 You Thrift Store ministries. He has actively served in this ministry for many years. Duncan is a member of Lakeview Baptist Church, Oxford. Roger Willmore is director of missions.



PILCHER

### CHEROKEE ASSOCIATION

► **Justin Morris** is the new pastor of **Tates Chapel Baptist Church, Centre**. He and his wife, Casey, have three children.



Submitted photo

### CHOCTAW ASSOCIATION

► **Terry Long** recently retired from his two ministry positions — director of missions for **Choctaw Baptist Association** the past 10 years and the **State Board of Missions** as a part-time evangelism and revival strategist. Throughout his ministry, Long has served churches in Alabama, Tennessee, Louisiana, Arkansas and Mississippi. He earned a bachelor's degree in biblical studies from William Carey University, Hattiesburg, Mississippi; a master's degree from New Orleans Seminary and a doctorate from Southern Baptist Center for Biblical Studies, Jacksonville, Florida. He is the author of two books, "100 Days at the Cross" and "When the Fire Falls: 10



LONG

Characteristics of Genuine Revival." He and his wife, Judy, have been married 47 years and have four adult children and nine grandchildren. Long is available for pulpit supply, revivals, conferences and evangelism training. Contact him at long286@bellsouth.net or 205-245-4286.

### CLEBURNE ASSOCIATION

► **Cedar Creek Baptist Church, Heflin,**

dedicated its new community prayer garden June 22. It is available to everyone and is open 24 hours a day. Patrick Nolen is pastor.



Submitted photo

### FAYETTE ASSOCIATION

► **Mike Perrigin**, pastor of **Chapel Hill Baptist Church, Fayette**, for more than 10 years, recently received a certificate of recognition and appreciation from the University of Alabama for 20 years of service and commitment as a mechanic in the department of physics and astronomy.



Submitted photo

### MOBILE NETWORK

► **Danny Baxter**, pastor of music and senior adult ministries for **Woodridge Baptist Church, Mobile**, retired Aug. 1 after serving almost 10 years in this position. The span of his ministry includes serving eight churches in Alabama, Texas, Mississippi, Arkansas, Kentucky and Georgia. Baxter earned a bachelor's degree in music education from Samford University and a master of arts in education/administration from Southwestern Seminary. He and his wife, Cindy, have two adult daughters and three grandchildren. Mark Williams is senior pastor.



BAXTER

► **Connor Donovan**, previous pastor of **Hollinger's Island Baptist Church, Mobile**, is now pastor of Temple Baptist Church, Shawnee, Oklahoma. He and his wife, Julie, have two children.

### MORGAN ASSOCIATION

► **Central Park Baptist Church, Decatur**, will celebrate its 75th anniversary Sept. 21 beginning with a program at 9:15 a.m. in the "Out-back" to walk down memory lane with friends old and new to give thanks for God's grace and abundance of love for using the church as a beacon of light for His Glory. The worship service begins at 10:15 a.m. in the sanctuary, focusing on God's plan for the church's next 75 years. Friends, former staff and members are invited to join us for this 75th anniversary celebration. A free catered luncheon will be served at noon. For lunch reservations, call the church office at 256-355-4628 by Aug. 31. Matt Haines is lead pastor.



CAINE

### TUSKEGEE LEE ASSOCIATION

► **Sawyer Caine** is a new student ministry associate for **First Baptist Church Opelika**. He has been serving as an intern for a year. Jeff Meyers is senior pastor.

## Jim Pounds retires after 25 years of service at Beeson

After 25 years of service to Samford's Beeson Divinity School, Jim Pounds retired in mid-July.

Pounds first came to the school as a student in 1997, following careers first in aerospace engineering and then in insurance in Vestavia Hills.

"I thought it'd be interesting to go to seminary," he said.

In 1997, Pounds enrolled at Beeson and earned a master of divinity in 2000. "Coming back to school at 36 years old for a divinity degree — with a very technical background ... it was a new kind of writing," Pounds said.

Pounds said learning from professors such as Frank Thielman, Robert Smith Jr. and Ken Mathews was a joy. After graduating, Pounds went to work at Beeson, hired by founding dean Timothy George. In 2013, Pounds took on the role of director of operations.

Pounds' duties at Beeson were numerous, including overseeing the school's budget and finances, managing facility maintenance, supervising renovations and improvements, managing Hodges Chapel, serving as the point of contact for the school's HR and payroll functions and participating in the admission and scholarship process.

### Using his gifts

"My gifts are in business decision-making and analysis," Pounds said.

"The school needs at least one person to sit in this role to support the dean and other leaders.

"If I can use my primary gifting to help the dean and the rest of the faculty not have to worry about non-academic tasks, then I've made a small contribution to what the mission of the school is about."

In addition to his role as director of operations, Pounds also founded and directed the school's Lay Academy of Theology, which offers courses to the general public, covering a wide array of theological topics, all taught by Beeson professors.

"It's been a lot of fun," Pounds said. In retirement, Pounds said he'll work on some long-put-off chores and spend time with his grandchild, as well as travel with his wife, Debra.

They are members of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills. (Samford)



POUNDS



Photo courtesy of Bibb Baptist Association

Samford University's Ministry Training Institute gave certificates to 16 graduates in their first graduation ceremony at Bibb Correctional Facility.

## MTI at Bibb prison holds first graduation

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

Taylor Gurley said when he first agreed to teach theology courses at Bibb Correctional Facility, he wondered how it would go. He knew the prison's reputation as one of the worst in the nation, at least it had been at some point in the past.

It didn't take long, though, before his picture of teaching there "radically changed." The inmates may wear uniforms, he said, "but the men I teach every Wednesday are my family and brothers in Christ, just like the members at Four Points, and I love them."

Gurley, pastor of Four Points Baptist Church in Centreville, has taught courses at Bibb since 2022 through Samford University's Ministry Training Institute, a certificate program that offers theological and practical training to equip people to be leaders in their churches and communities.

### 'Inside the walls'

"We're essentially training inmates who already love Jesus, we're just training them theologically," Gurley said. "They're going to be much better evangelists inside the prison than I'm ever going to be. I'm training them to be better disciples or evangelists inside the walls themselves."

In May, MTI gave certificates to 16 graduates in their first graduation ceremony at the prison.

Gurley said the prison MTI has added to some robust work other

ministries have also been doing there in recent years.

"If you were to talk to people 10, 15, 20 years ago about Bibb and then see what it looks like today, you would see what a radical transformation has happened there," he said.

### Effect of the gospel

"MTI, along with the other ministries at the prison, is a reminder to us that God is sovereign in salvation and the gospel always has an effect even in the darkest of places."

Bill Russell, associational mission strategist for Bibb Baptist Association, said Bibb Correctional Facility "is right here in our mission field, our backyard."

Bibb Association partners with MTI to provide books for the students in addition to Gurley's teaching.

"It became a ministry priority for us — we were going to put it in the association's budget, but once the churches found out about it, they provided us with the monetary resources needed," Russell said.

He said they feel like it's an investment that is bearing fruit.

"The prisoners who are participating in it are chosen by the chaplain, then they are giving themselves totally to the teaching and the work, so we feel like it's improving their life," Russell said. "They can be people who make a difference in the world."

# COMPELLED

2 CORINTHIANS 5:14

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# GOD IS MOVING

## Cloverdale Baptist selling building, celebrating legacy of God's work

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

**D**eena Weston said it's amazing to see the parking lot of Cloverdale Baptist Church on Sundays these days — it's full, even overflowing, which is different from how it was in 2016 when she joined the church.

But the parking lot is full with an unexpected kind of growth.

The Montgomery church currently hosts three congregations holding services on Sunday mornings, plus another on Fridays.

And now Cloverdale Baptist is in the process of selling its building to one of those groups — Wesley Church, a Global Methodist congregation.

"They started out as a group of about 100 people and have grown to over

500," said Weston, administrator for Cloverdale Baptist. "At the end of last year, they came to our deacons and trustees and asked, 'Would you consider letting us appraise this property and consider selling it to us?'"

### Praise and testimony

The Cloverdale congregation — now about 20 members — decided they would, and now they're waiting on a date to wrap up the sale of the property they've met on for more than 80 years.

A special service was held Aug. 17 to celebrate all God has done over the years in that building.

Weston said it was "a song, praise and testimony service," with former pastors, former ministers and "anyone who has experienced God in this building."



Facebook/Cloverdale Baptist Church  
Cloverdale Baptist Church in Montgomery is in the process of selling its building to Wesley Church, a Global Methodist congregation.

She said after the Cloverdale Baptist congregation sells the church building, they will take 40 days to pray and talk about what their next step is.

"It's very possible we'll purchase another building and keep meeting," she said. "Over time we might pur-

chase a building we could be good stewards of, large enough to grow but small enough for a smaller group to maintain."

Neal Hughes, director of missions for Montgomery Baptist Association, said Cloverdale Baptist "is not only a congregation of legacy but a church family that's legendary."

"Pastors and state missionaries alike — the late Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions Executive Director George Bagley was a member — have faithfully served this body of Christ through many years of Christian pilgrimage," Hughes said.

He said he and his wife, Mary, "deeply love these dear friends and will keep them close to our hearts and in our prayers."

One of the other congregations that has been meeting in the Cloverdale Baptist building is Southside Gospel Fellowship, a new church planted there by Montgomery Association in 2021.

Southside's pastor Cameron Bell said details are "still up in the air" about how much longer they will meet

at that building, but they've already purchased a new facility for their church and are preparing for the move.

"About a month ago, we bought a building — the Lord sovereignly orchestrated the events where a church building in our area became available right around the time Cloverdale Baptist let us know that Wesley Church was considering purchasing their building," Bell said.

He said they hope to move by early 2026, but it largely depends on how much volunteer help they're able to get with renovations.

For churches or construction teams willing to adopt a room or help in some other way, a list on Southside's website (sgfmontgomery.com) details the work still needed.

"All help is appreciated," Bell said.

He said God is moving at Southside.

### A blessing

"We're seeing the Lord add to our church and people going through our new members class," he said. "We've also got people in the pipeline to get baptized pretty soon."

Weston said it's been a blessing for Cloverdale Baptist to have been a part of Southside's story, as well as Wesley Church's and The Regathering, a Messianic fellowship that meets there on Friday nights.

That group plans to continue sharing space with Cloverdale Baptist wherever they move.

"I'm excited to see what God will do next," Weston said. "He's closing a chapter, but He's opening some chapters at the same time."



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# UPCOMING EVENTS

sponsored by the State Board of Missions

## Elijah Robbins named new Baptist campus minister at University of West Alabama

As students are starting a new school year at the University of West Alabama, Elijah Robbins is also starting a new season of ministry there as UWA's Baptist campus minister.



ELIJAH ROBBINS SBOM photo

While at Perimeter Road Baptist Church, Elijah served as a college ministry leader and helped start an on-campus outreach at Valdosta State University in Georgia. He focused on equipping students to grow in and share their faith.

"The thing that excited me most about the ministry I oversaw was equipping students to share the gospel well. ... The response from the students was great: many of them said that they had never started a gospel conversation and that they were beginning to feel equipped to share the gospel with others for the first time."

Before his ministry there, Robbins served as a pastoral intern at two churches and as a missionary for a year with The World Race.

He is working toward a master of divinity degree from Southern Baptist Theo-

logical Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, and holds a bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary studies from Valdosta State.

Ben Edfeldt, director of the office of collegiate and student ministries at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said he is excited about Robbins's new role at UWA.

"Elijah will serve well at the University of West Alabama," Edfeldt said. "His passion for the Lord and leading students to know and follow Him will lead to great fruit at the BCM at UWA. I'm excited for the days ahead in Livingston."

Rick Lance, SBOM executive director, echoed Edfeldt's excitement.

"The State Board of Missions welcomes a bright new addition to our state missionary ranks," Lance said. "Elijah Robbins is an outstanding leader who will serve well at the University of West Alabama as our state missionary/campus minister. He and his young family will be assets to the local community as well as to the students with whom they will minister."

To learn more about the UWA BCM, visit [facebook.com/UWABCM](https://facebook.com/UWABCM).

To learn more about the UWA BCM, visit [facebook.com/UWABCM](https://facebook.com/UWABCM) or scan the code below with your smartphone's camera.



## Healthy Church Live: Sept. 9

To help you develop a more healthy church, Edwin and Andrew Jenkins will present a reproducible process for moving any church into a position of greater health on Tuesday, Sept. 9, from 9 a.m. until 4

p.m. at the State Board of Missions in Prattville.

The cost is only \$10, which includes materials and lunch.

Healthy Church and Healthy Systems are a 2-part resource, reproducible in

any ministry environment, to empower pastors and their teams to reach their God-given potential. You won't want to miss this excellent training.

Register today at [alsbom.org/hcl](https://alsbom.org/hcl).

## WORD search

- |           |             |
|-----------|-------------|
| ADVOCATE  | HIGH PRIEST |
| ARBITER   | HOPE        |
| ATONEMENT | INTERCESSOR |
| BLOOD     | JESUS       |
| BRIDGE    | JUDGMENT    |
| CONFESS   | JUSTIFY     |
| COVENANT  | MEDIATOR    |
| CREATOR   | MERCY       |
| CROSS     | PEACE       |
| ETERNAL   | POWER       |
| FAITH     | RECONCILE   |
| FEAR      | REDEEMER    |
| FORGIVE   | SACRIFICE   |
| GOD       | SALVATION   |
| GRACE     | SAVIOR      |
| GUILT     | SIN         |

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

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."

1 TIMOTHY 2:5-6

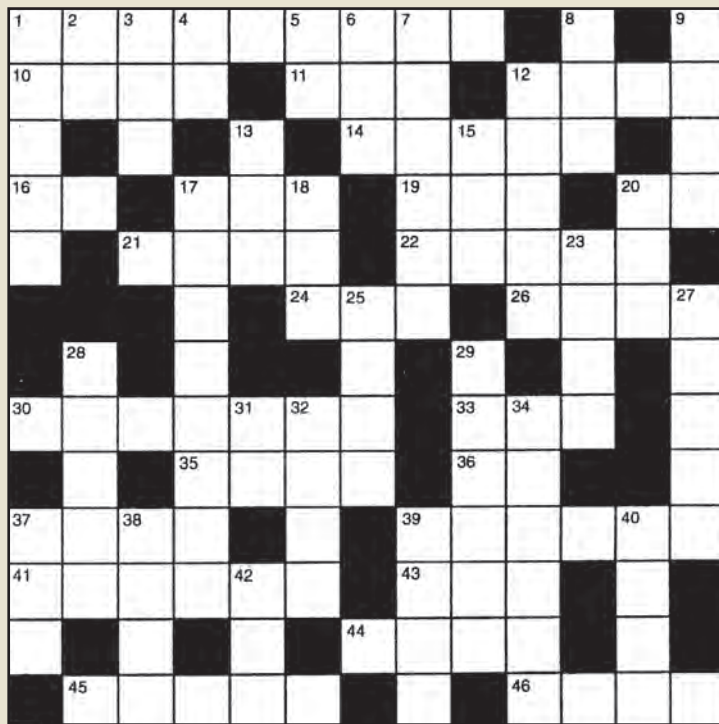
# CHRISTIAN Crossword



**UPCOMING EVENTS**  
sponsored by the State Board of Missions

**ACROSS**

- 1. \_\_\_ rather than choice gold. (Prov. 8:10)
- 10. John's place of exile. (Rev. 1:9)
- 11. In addition.
- 12. Supplicate.
- 14. Divine radiance.
- 16. Leave.
- 17. Earthen vessel.
- 19. 502. (Roman numeral)
- 20. Like.
- 21. Entice.
- 22. Church official. (Titus 1:5-6)
- 24. Lair. (Ps. 10:9)
- 26. Shade trees.
- 30. Treasured jewel. (Ex. 28:18)
- 33. Consumed.
- 35. Adam's grandson. (Gen. 4:26)
- 36. Thus.
- 37. At once. (Mark 1:30)
- 39. Embalming ingredient. (John 19:40)
- 41. Sew.
- 43. Snake-like fish.
- 44. God that answereth by \_\_\_. (1 Kings 18:24)
- 45. Beauty's wondrous exchange. (Isa. 61:3)
- 46. Hemispherical structure.



By Martha Wall Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

**DOWN**

- 1. Solomon, and others.
- 2. Opposite

- 3. Ancient.
- 4. \_\_\_ are not of the night. (1 Thess. 5:5)
- 5. And (Latin).
- 6. Derogative name. (Ps. 22:16)
- 7. \_\_\_ bell. (Ex. 28:34)
- 8. Shed tears.
- 9. The \_\_\_ of the Lord run to and fro. (2 Chron. 16:9)
- 12. \_\_\_ goeth before destruction. (Prov. 16:18)
- 13. Clay's problem. (Jer. 18:4)
- 15. Medium for anointing. (Ex. 25:6)
- 17. The ungodly ... scorneth \_\_\_. (Prov. 19:28)
- 18. Though they be \_\_\_ like crimson. (Isa. 1:18)
- 20. His \_\_\_ brought
- directions. (abbr.)
- salvation. (Isa. 59:16)
- 23. Otherwise.
- 25. Extremities.
- 27. Contained evidence of theft. (Gen. 44:12; plural)
- 28. Goliath, for one.
- 29. Precious stone. (Ex. 28:20)
- 31. In contact with and supported by a surface.
- 32. Early shipbuilder. (Gen. 6:13-14)
- 34. Labored hard.
- 37. Generous invitation. (Matt. 7:7)
- 38. Canola and corn.
- 39. Mount \_\_\_. (Gen. 14:6)
- 40. An oasis. (Ex. 15:27)
- 42. A signal.

*All Bible verses are KJV unless otherwise specified.*

## Unwind resumes Aug. 21 — sign up now!

If you're a youth leader, there's a Zoom call you should be a part of on Thursday mornings at 9 during the school year. 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. "The beauty of this is it's all different ministry sizes with a common goal of sharing what God is doing at their church and resourcing each other. It's my favorite thing I get to do."

Unwind resumes on Thursday mornings starting Aug. 21. Jump on the call and be a part of talking about what God is doing in youth ministries all around the state.

To register, visit [ym-link.org/unwind](http://ym-link.org/unwind).

To register, visit [ymlink.org/unwind](http://ymlink.org/unwind) or scan the code below with your smartphone's camera.



## Get Acquainted Day at the SBOM facility

Are you new to Alabama or new to your church staff? Or would you just like to learn more about ways to partner together for ministry and missions? Get Acquainted Day is the perfect chance to find out how the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions can partner with you to fulfill the Great Commission.

be Sept. 4, 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., with lunch provided.

To register, visit [alsbom.org/gad](http://alsbom.org/gad).

To register, visit [alsbom.org/gad](http://alsbom.org/gad) or scan the code below with your smartphone's camera.



Hear about all the ministries, meet your state missionaries and tour the SBOM facility in Prattville. Get Acquainted Day will

# Faith leaders issue appeal to pray fervently for Ukraine

Ukrainian Baptists are joining with other religious groups in asking people of faith globally to pray for Ukraine on Aug. 24.

Valerii Antoniuk, president of the Baptist Union of Ukraine, issued the international appeal.

“Millions of people in Ukraine continue to suffer today from the war caused by the armed aggression of the Russian Federation,” Antoniuk said in a statement.

“In this time of trials, we need not only political and humanitarian support, but also spiritual solidarity — through prayers, compassion and fraternal participation.”

The date was selected because it marks the 34th anniversary of when Ukraine regained its freedom from the

Soviets in 1991, said Ivan Kundarenko, head of the Baptist Union of Ukraine’s apologetics department.

“As Ukrainians, we have democracy in our blood,” Kundarenko said, noting Ukraine was a sovereign nation long before it was part of the Soviet Union.

Since Ukrainian Independence Day falls on a Sunday this year, Ukrainian faith leaders saw it as an opportunity to involve the global church in interceding for the people of Ukraine and praying for a just and lasting peace, Kundarenko said.

## Religious freedom

The prayer initiative culminates the next morning with the National Prayer Breakfast in Kyiv, an event sponsored by the Office of the President of Ukraine.

For Kundarenko, that

means a future in which Ukrainians maintain their heritage and unique identity as a people, and a future in which their right to exercise their faith freely is protected.

“In Russian-occupied territory, religious freedom is gone,” he said.

Igor Bandura, vice president of the Baptist Union of Ukraine, echoed the need for prayer.

He mentioned three specific requests:

▶ Hope amid suffering. “With millions affected, pray God strengthens their hope.”

▶ Faith under persecution. “Ask for steadfast faith to minister boldly and share the gospel with love.”

▶ Peace amid nuclear tensions. “Ask for wisdom for leaders to prevent catastrophe.” (Baptist Standard)

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Andrew Britt, Committee Chairman  
 Fairview Baptist Church in Selma, Alabama



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**choose well.**

# Giving faithfully

## Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering supports variety of ministries across Alabama

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

When Rebekah Taylor was in the ninth grade, her dad got a new job and they moved to a new church.

“It was a big transition for me,” Taylor said. “My old church was much smaller, and when I moved here, I knew maybe three families.”

But then something happened that made Taylor “more open to making new friends,” she said. Jamie McGlaughn, who serves on the Women on Mission leadership team at MeadowBrook Church in Gadsden — Taylor’s new church — suggested she go to Complete, an annual event for girls in grades 7–12 put on by Alabama Woman’s Missionary Union.

Taylor went, and she said she was forever impacted by hearing from missionaries and others who were living their lives full-out for Christ. In addition to that, she found a community of people from across the state who want to live their lives similarly.

“Going through Complete made me more confident in myself to go out and make new friends and share the gospel with people,” she said. “It’s given me more confidence, and I think it’s done the same thing for my friends as well.”

### Identity in Christ

Trish Jackson — who serves as NextGen consultant for Alabama WMU — said the goal of Complete is to give teen girls an opportunity to meet and hear from female role models who have found contentment in Christ and have given their lives to serving him in a variety of ways, from their workplace to overseas missions.

“We try to articulate to them that if God gives you your identity, He



Photo courtesy of Jamie McGlaughn  
Jamie McGlaughn (left) with the group of girls she took to Complete this year from MeadowBrook Church in Gadsden.

may be calling you to something,” Jackson said. “God has wired you for a purpose, and you can use that for giving Him glory.”

Since this year’s event, she’s had a jar in her office filled with sticky notes, each representing a teen girl who wrote something on it anonymously during Complete.

“I bet there are at least 200,” she said. “They were dialed in and connected and wanted to respond. They wrote decisions they had made for Christ, things they wanted to give up and things they wanted to do with their life.”

McGlaughn said she loves coming to Complete and seeing “the light come on in their hearts and minds.” She’s been bringing groups for more than 25 years.

“Complete is an opportunity for young women to gather together, sit

under sound biblical teaching, be led in meaningful worship according to God’s Word and just have fun with one another and enjoy being a part of a church family,” she said.

“They get to participate in breakout sessions that are centered around missions and ministry, and they get to fall in love with what missions really is and how they can be a part of missions in their community and their local church.”

Complete is supported by the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering which, in addition to supporting Alabama WMU, also assists disaster relief, church planting, church revitalization and partnership missions. These ministries are also undergirded by prayer support provided during the Week of Prayer for State Missions.

This year’s Week of Prayer is Sept. 7–14, with an offering goal of

\$1.2 million. Complete is featured on Day 2.

Taylor said she is grateful for Alabama Baptists’ gifts to the offering that “give young people the opportunity to grow in the Lord and become confident in themselves enough to try something new, to go out and share the gospel or sing in front of their church or start a Bible study.”

“It gives those girls an opportunity that they wouldn’t have otherwise if these people weren’t giving,” she said.

Since the offering’s inception in 2016, giving has surpassed \$12 million. The two namesakes are spiritual giants from the state — Kathleen Mallory and Dr. Martha Myers.

Mallory — who served as leader of Alabama WMU from 1909 to 1912 and then head of national WMU for 36 years — lived a humble lifestyle so she could give as much money as possible to missions.

### Honoring their legacy

Myers, who grew up in an Alabama Baptist church, went on to serve 25 years as a medical missionary in Yemen before being killed by an extremist there in 2002.

The offering honors their legacy by continuing to fund missions and ministry in the state and around the world, and Alabama Baptists have been “so faithful” to give, said Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

“God has blessed the Great Commission ministry efforts supported by this important offering,” he said, noting this year the offering is celebrating a decade of faithfulness. “Through this offering and the continued giving through the Cooperative Program, Alabama Baptists continue to be difference makers for Christ.”

For more information about and downloadable resources for the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering, visit [myers-mallory.org](http://myers-mallory.org).



# Myers-Mallory

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Photo courtesy of Kentucky Today

Keith Smith, pastor of South Sub Church in Littleton, Colorado, was the camp speaker at Alto Frio Camp, which included campers from Trinity Baptist Church in Kerrville, Texas.

## Late-summer camp offers respite for Kerrville students after crisis

Kids from Trinity Baptist Church in Kerrville, Texas, received a much-needed time of fun and rest following last month's devastating floods in their area.

Leaders took a group of third through fifth graders to Alto Frio Baptist Encampment in Leakey, Texas, July 21-24 — helping these young campers start taking the first steps toward hope and healing in the aftermath of devastation.

### 'Prayer is so vital'

"It was definitely a camp after a crisis, but our church really pulled together to rally around us in prayer," said children's minister Kellee Parish. "The church made prayer

cards for the campers, and the counselors received so many encouraging texts throughout the week.

Prayer is so vital, and it's how we are able to keep moving during this time."

In response to the tragedy at nearby Camp Mystic, organizers of Alto Frio Camp immediately began taking extra precautions to ensure safety.

Leaders at Alto Frio had already postponed the July

14 start of a youth camp with 500 students to ensure that road conditions would allow churches enough

time to arrive safely. To help streamline communication, camp organizers also began posting updates on their social media pages to include the condition of the Frio River along with

the camp's emergency response plans.

John Wheat, pastor of Trinity Baptist, said he was confident in the procedures the camp provided.

### 'Leap of faith'

"It was exciting as a pastor to see that kids were experiencing normalcy though there was a tragedy in our community and that families were able to take a leap of faith and trust the camp experience," Wheat said. (Kentucky Today)

***"It was definitely a camp after a crisis, but our church really pulled together to rally around us in prayer."***

**Kellee Parish  
children's minister,  
Trinity Baptist Church  
in Kerrville, Texas**

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# EXPLORE THE BIBLE

## Sunday School Lessons

By Jay T. Robertson, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Systematic Theology, University of Mobile



### For August 24

#### GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS Psalm 5:1–12

David prayed Psalm 5 in the morning as he considered another day of contending with his enemies. “Prayer should be the key of the day and the lock at night. Devotion should be both the morning star and the evening star,” Charles Spurgeon wrote. Psalm 5 is an individual lament psalm and the first instance of a psalm with prayers for the punishment of enemies.

#### The Source of Righteousness (1–6)

In the midst of a distressful situation, David cried out to God with urgency and expectation. David pleaded with the Lord to pay careful attention to him and his sufferings. The three imperatives utilized by David in verses 1–2 (“listen to,” “consider” and “pay attention”) reveal the intensity with which David prayed to the Lord for deliverance and justice.

David also addressed God with three different designations: “Lord,” “my King” and “my God.” David may have been the divinely appointed king of Israel, but he fully understood that God was the ultimate King of Israel and all the earth. David demonstrated his personal reverence for God and his unwavering confidence in Him during this challenging time of distress.

“In the morning” signifies the priority and persistence of prayer in David’s life. The first waking thought he had in the morning was to go to God for help so he could handle the pressures of the day. It also implied persistence.

As David faced many challenges throughout his life, he kept on asking, seeking and knocking for God to open the door of His storehouse and provide for his needs. We also are to persist in prayer even if the answer of God is delayed.

Because God is righteous and just, He does not delight in wickedness and He hates evildoers. The proud will not stand up

to God and survive. They will receive justice at the Judgment. Secret sin on earth is open scandal in heaven.

The terms David used to describe the wicked in verses 4–6 shed some light on what his enemies were attempting to do to him. Through arrogant boasting, lying, violence and treachery, they were seeking to remove David from the throne and replace him illegitimately.

#### The Benefit of Righteousness (7–10)

David starkly contrasted himself with his enemies. They were haughty while he was humble. Godly people recognize that they come before God only through “the abundance of Your faithful love.” It is because of God’s lovingkindness that David could approach the Lord and fellowship with Him. He responded to God’s mercy, kindness, goodness and faithfulness by bowing before the Lord in reverential awe.

Believers respond to God’s righteousness and mercy by desiring to live a life that reflects God’s righteousness and mercy. David prayed for God to direct his way as he faced his enemies. He prayed that God would reveal their guilt, bring them to judgment through their own schemes and drive them out. David prayed for God to punish the evildoers because they had rebelled against God when they attacked God’s anointed king.

#### God’s Blessing on the Righteous (11–12)

David prayed for the just ends of the wicked according to God’s revealed standard of justice (Deut. 25:1), and he urged those who are regarded as righteous by God’s grace to celebrate His blessings joyfully.

David concluded the psalm by expressing the assurance enjoyed by the faithful. He prayed that the truly faithful will always rejoice in the Lord and be assured of His care and provision.

### For August 31

#### GOD'S PRESENCE Psalm 42:1–11

We have had such an encouraging quarter studying selected psalms. We have been convicted, challenged, comforted and renewed. Now we come to our final lesson of the summer, and what a study it is! At the outset, we all need to admit that we need this study as we face the daily challenges of life in a Genesis 3 world.

Psalm 42 is a maskil — a psalm of instruction. Written by the sons of Korah, it provides wise counsel about trusting God through tough times. Christians may get down, but we are never out because of the One who has saved us. Even in despair, we have One we can hope in who hears us and helps us.

#### In Times of Longing (1–5)

The psalmist had a consuming desire to experience God. He was thirsty for the living God to satisfy the longing of his heart.

Like a panting deer in desperate need for water, he cried out to God. The parched soul will never find its fill elsewhere. It is always longing for the Lord.

The psalmist poured out tears day and night. He longed for a deeper personal awareness of God as he suffered the loneliness of his alienation because of his absence from public worship at the temple in Jerusalem.

No specific historical information is supplied concerning the context for this psalm, but we can discern the psalmist was far from Jerusalem and was taunted by enemies of God.

They accused God of abandoning the psalmist. The psalmist was heartbroken as he remembered the times he had led the procession of the people of God to the house of God with joy and thanksgiving.

The psalmist examined himself by asking hard questions designed

to challenge him and bring him to a place of introspection about his state of sorrow.

Although he felt isolated from God, the psalmist engaged his mind to override his emotions and feelings by hoping in God and praising Him for His faithfulness. Relief from depression is found in trusting the immutable character of God.

#### In Overwhelming Times (6–8)

In the midst of being overwhelmed by his deep depression, the psalmist was determined to remember who God is and what He had done in the past. He was apparently about 100 miles away from Jerusalem.

The psalmist referred to the rushing water and waterfalls near the headwaters of the Jordan River to describe his emotional and spiritual condition before God. Speaking metaphorically, the psalmist says he was barely able to keep his head above water as the waves of despair continually crashed against him. As he desperately struggled, he remembered God’s faithful love for him and prayed to his God.

#### In Seasons of Waiting (9–11)

The psalmist prayed to God, whom he described as “my Rock.” He knew that God is an unassailable fortress in Whom he could find protection from the crashing waves. He asked, “Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about in sorrow because of the enemy’s oppression?” He asked these questions because God was not coming to his aid immediately. It appeared that God was not listening and did not care.

Deep down the psalmist knew the answer to his questions, so he preached the truth to himself. To put your hope in God is to wait expectantly for Him, anticipating Him to act. The psalmist knew deliverance would come in God’s timing.

*“As a deer pants for flowing streams,  
so pants my soul for you, O God.”*

Psalm 42:1

# BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

## Sunday School Lessons

By Bryan D. Gill, D.Min.

Director of the Office of Faith, Learning and Vocation, Samford University



### For August 24

#### GENEROSITY 2 Corinthians 8:1–9

Why is it that when people start talking about generosity and giving away our hard-earned money, we start squirming in our seats and suddenly have somewhere else to be? What if we shifted our thinking about giving from something we have to do to something we have the privilege of doing?

Having the Christian character trait of generosity is exactly that. We have the freedom to see our resources, time and energy as ways that we get to serve the Lord. Being generous involves how we spend our money, time and possessions but also our giving love and grace to others.

In this passage for today, we will look at one of Paul's letters to the church in Corinth and how he taught them about generosity.

#### Generosity does not depend on wealth. (1–2)

Paul used the Macedonia churches as an example for the Corinthians to follow regarding giving generously. Despite the hardships they were facing and their poverty, the Macedonian churches were generous and exceeded Paul's expectations.

There is a similar story about giving found in Mark 12:41–44. Here we see the poor widow who gave two copper coins in the temple while the wealthy people "were putting in large sums."

I imagine the large amounts making a lot of commotion and bringing attention to the givers. But after two copper coins were dropped into the treasury, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. For they all gave out of their surplus, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had — all she had to live on."

In the same way, the Macedonians were generous even in their poverty. Being generous isn't a matter of wealth; it's a matter of the heart.

#### Generosity begins with giving ourselves to God. (3–6)

If generosity is going to be part of our character, we must start with our relationship to God. Giving your money doesn't mean you are close to God.

"Slacktivism" is a new term that essentially means you can support a cause with very little effort such as reposting something on social media, signing an online petition or sending a little money to a fundraiser. Slacktivists are not fully invested. They are just doing the minimum to make themselves feel better.

But the generosity of the Macedonian churches grew out of their commitment to the Lord. When we are cultivating generosity in our lives, we should start by growing closer to the Lord. Generosity will be a natural response when we invest in our relationship to God.

#### Generosity is a response to Christ's generous love for us. (7–9)

When we are devoted to the Lord, we understand His love for us. Jesus gave up everything to rescue us from sin. To follow Jesus means to surrender everything to Him, not just our money.

When Jesus transforms our hearts, we become generous with our money, time and other resources.

Perhaps generosity looks like giving someone your old vehicle, that furniture in the basement or a service you provide at your company. Or perhaps it means being generous with the love and grace we've been given.

The Corinthians were called to excel in grace even as Christ has been generous in His grace to us. Being gracious and loving is sometimes the most generous thing we can do, and it doesn't cost us a dime.

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

### For August 31

#### INTEGRITY 1 Peter 3:8–17

Over the last several weeks, we have been looking at Christian character traits. 1 Peter 2:12 reminds us, "Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles so that when they slander you as evil-doers, they will observe your good works and will glorify God on the day He visits."

The goal for exhibiting these character traits is not for us to be glorified for being a good person but for others to see our good works and glorify God. Living these traits points to a life that is focused on God and one that shows evidence of the Holy Spirit's work in our hearts.

This week's lesson focuses on integrity.

Integrity can mean several things, such as the strength of a type of building material or the dependability of a product.

For our purposes, we are referring to integrity as living a life of holiness that withstands scrutiny. To do this, we will look at Peter's instructions for those suffering for doing good.

#### A life of integrity pursues goodness and righteousness. (8–12)

When Christ transforms us, our actions change.

Our thoughts are different and as a result, the way we treat people changes.

Our natural self was full of evil and deceit.

But God, living in our hearts, transforms our old ways and allows us to be defined as good and righteous.

A life lived with integrity will be defined by good, not evil; peace, not destruction; righteousness, not deception.

#### A life of integrity is centered in the lordship of Christ. (13–15)

If our goal is to live a life that reflects the character of Christ, we are free to do what is good and right.

We tend to slip into old habits and wicked ways when we try to please others rather than Jesus.

When we aim to please other people, we do so out of a fear that they will not accept us. When we aim to please Jesus, we do so out of love toward our Savior. Rather than fear, we are to live under the lordship of Christ.

In Romans 8:31, Paul says, "If God is for us, who is against us?" If our goal is to please the Lord by living a life of integrity, our lives will glorify God even in the face of persecution.

#### A life of integrity maintains conduct that withstands any scrutiny or criticism. (16–17)

The last part of our passage for this week says, "For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil." I've often thought about this verse, and recently it became clear as to what it means.

We live in a time when doing the right thing is not always rewarded. The world seems upside-down, and there is no absolute right or wrong.

However, as Christians we aim to please God, not others.

And to God, there is a right and wrong. There may be times when we will have to suffer for our actions.

Peter is encouraging us here by saying that if you are going to have to suffer, let it be because you're accused of doing good rather than evil. Living a life of integrity is to, as Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung penned in the early 1900s, "Do the next right thing."

**"For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil."**

1 Peter 3:17



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