



The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

INSIDE



New book, Nov. 1 prayer emphasis bring attention to persecuted church

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Annel Robayna, SBOM Hispanic ministry catalyst (left), baptizes Pedro Santizo on Aug. 9 at Iglesia Cristo la Roca in Enterprise as church leader José Rivas looks on.

EQUIPPING PASTORS

Hispanic church leaders seeking 'normalcy,' more training options

By Shawn Hendricks
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Amid the challenges of COVID-19, Hispanic Baptists throughout Alabama are ready to broaden their reach through training more pastors and multiplying church plants in the state.

They pretty much just need to know when and where, according to those who work in Hispanic ministry in the state.

Training options

Right now, the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions is considering new training options with helping Hispanic churches equip pastors for ministry. By the first of next year, they hope to either roll out their own training materials or implement an already established program with a similar focus, said

Annel Robayna, church planting strategist focused on Hispanic work with the SBOM.

Developing leaders

"Our main thing right now is to create a strategy across the state that will develop leaders, lay leaders, missionaries, church planters, pastors, [and] worship leaders that would equip the saints for the work of the ministry and that everybody has access to," Robayna said. "We're taking the rest of this year to plan it well and launch something beginning of next year."

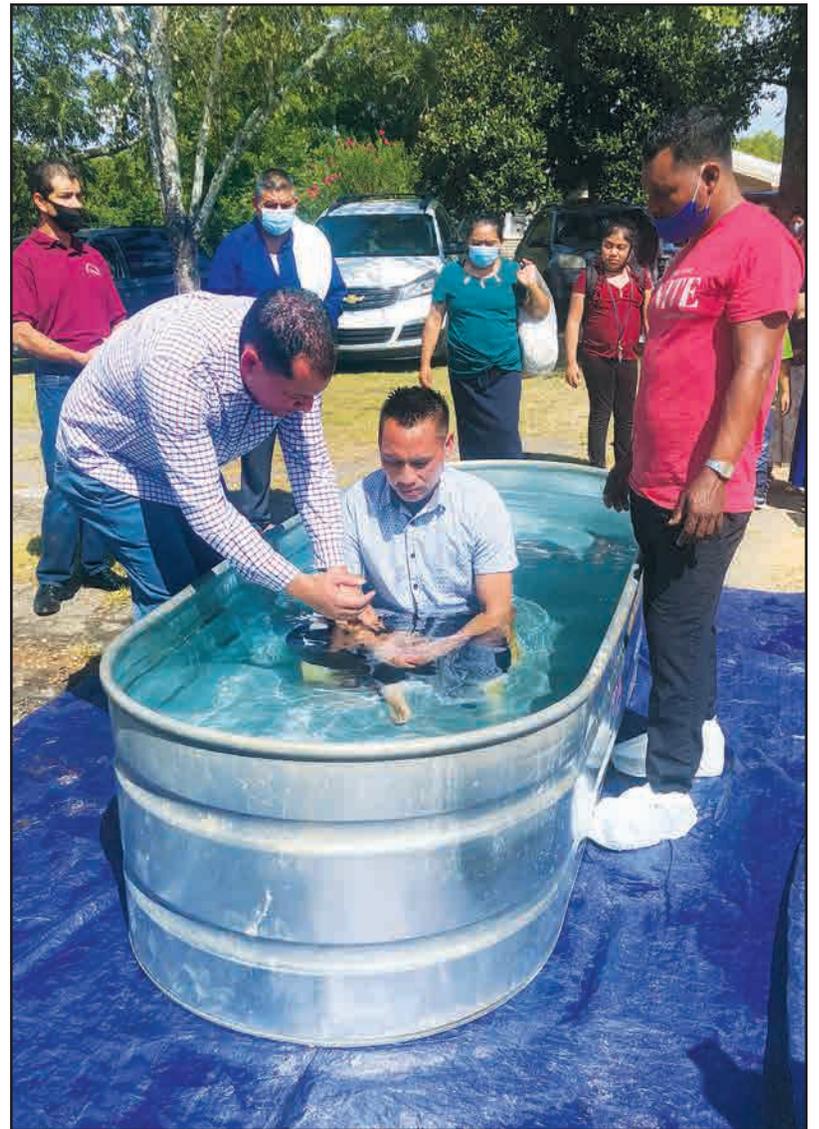


Photo courtesy of Annel Robayna

According to the Atlanta-based Bible Training Centre for Pastors, there are more than 3 million untrained pastors worldwide, which the website said makes up 85% of churches. The center's

training curriculum, Robayna said, is one of the options the state convention is considering as a source for training pastors. The program, he noted, trains leaders from "all walks of life and experiences" and equips them to train others for ministry.

One advantage with using a system like this one, he said, "is that it will target a lot of the language groups that we have in Alabama — Korean, Chinese, Spanish and others."

Right now, Cary Hanks, (See 'Can't stop,' page 11)



Iglesias Bautistas Hispanas de Alabama Facebook photo

In February 2020, more than 90 people from across Alabama gathered to participate in the 2020 Hispanic Evangelism Conference at Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery.



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Photo by Nathan Gober

Roger Willmore, DOM for Calhoun Baptist Association, records a sermon at Parker Memorial Baptist Church, Anniston, to be used at a Keswick Conference in Japan. In years past, Willmore has traveled to Japan to speak at the conferences, but this year they moved to video because of COVID-19.

Keswick Convention adapts to pandemic

For the past 12 years, Roger Willmore has traveled to Japan to preach at a Keswick Convention — a gathering that’s not your normal conference.

For one, there aren’t new themes or a variety of sermon topics. It’s the same outline every year and has been for 145 years. The Keswick Convention, which started in a small town in England by the same name and has spread around the world, is a revival-style meeting that follows a certain format and emphasizes key points of the faith, points like the assurance of cleansing from sin and the power of the Holy Spirit.

The convention’s ultimate purpose is the total dedication of life to God, Willmore said.

And preparation for the meeting’s sermons have taken a good bit of dedication, too.

Meticulous translation

“In Japan, they are very meticulous about the translation,” said Willmore, director of missions for Calhoun Baptist Association.

In the past he’s had to turn in sermons a month in advance to give translators time to get everything just right for when he

preaches live. That’s been no different this year, though pretty much everything else is.

Because of COVID-19, Willmore isn’t preaching in person. He recently recorded videos of sermons to be aired at conventions in Trinidad and Osaka, Japan. Then he was available by Zoom to interact with participants afterward.

‘Different experience’

It’s been a different experience for him, but he said he’s had two reactions. First, he’s thankful the conference has been able to keep going.

And second, he’s reminded to pray even more for the endurance of pastors in his association who are trying to navigate all that comes with gathering safely or streaming online because of COVID-19.

“Almost daily I watch pastors in our association who are coming back to gathering for worship services, facing positive cases in their churches and then having to decide when and how to shut it down again,” Willmore said. “Pastors all over the place are dealing with this all the time on a pretty large scale.” (Grace Thornton)

To read past articles about Keswick, go to thealabamabaptist.org and search for “Keswick.”



The crossword puzzle can be found on page 17.

TAB Media

“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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MY RASHIONALE

By Jennifer Davis Rash
President and Editor-in-Chief

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Pastors are people too — they need our love and grace

If you've been reading the October issues of *The Alabama Baptist* or faith-based content anywhere, you know October is the month set aside to show our appreciation to the pastors and ministers on our church staffs.

We've heard about some creative ways churches are honoring their pastors, such as the congregation of First Baptist Church, Carbon Hill, gifting Pastor Scott McCullar with a new Honda CRV.

Granted, that's not the type of gift McCullar and the other pastors receiving large gifts this year receive every October, but it's one that matched a need and gave the church family an opportunity to pour out love in a special way.

McCullar explained in a Facebook post that his 2005 Honda CRV had more than 200,000 miles on it.

"I was shocked and speechless and still am, really. I have no idea how to process this," McCullar wrote. "I don't deserve it for sure. I have loved and been loved by every congregation I have served, but I have never been loved like this."

Every church family will have those moments to gift a pastor or other minister on staff with a special gift, and the church likely will know exactly what to give when the time comes.

But most years, the gifts will be more routine — handwritten notes, gift cards, special weekend getaways, bonus checks, etc. — and that's OK.

I joked with my pastor that my gift to him this year was to

block all complaints coming his way for one month. But since I actually only said it to him and no one else (until now), I may be looking for another idea. Ha!

Our pastors and others in church leadership across the nation (and probably the world) could use a word of encouragement here and there.

They are people, just like you and me, with family responsibilities, various life concerns and individual skill sets that may or may not match perfectly with all that is required in church work.

Our friend Jerry Wilkins, retired director of missions for Tuscaloosa Baptist Association, shared some pastor-church mismatch stories with us recently.

Clear expectations vital

In some of the situations, it seems the pastor search committee that recommended the pastor did not have a clear understanding of the expectations and needs of the church or it didn't communicate those clearly to the candidate.

In other situations, the search committee failed to thoroughly evaluate how the pastor would fit in the various roles and expectations at the church.

It's more than hiring an em-

ployee to do a list of assigned tasks. It's prayerfully seeking the person God has called to disciple your church family to individually and corporately point people to Jesus.

Heavy responsibility

But the pastor position also means overseeing the operations of the church, managing a staff and slate of volunteers, caring for all members of the congregation and ministering to the surrounding community.

It means finding the strength and wisdom to lead the church family through those times of unexpected challenges and difficult news.

It means doing all that is expected while trying to keep a wide array of personalities happy and attempting to make the best decisions with the information and knowledge at hand.

Sometimes it means making a mistake and having to live with that mistake.

Sometimes it means spending energy covering up sadness, loneliness and/or discouragement for fear of looking weak.

Sometimes it means landing in a dry spell spiritually — pastors can end up there just as easily as the rest of us.

The "feet of clay" description is true. Pastors do have weaknesses and flaws they battle just like each of us does.

They must guard their hearts too, and we can help by remembering to pray for them consistently, encouraging them in a difficult season and cheering for them as they attempt to balance all that comes with being a pastor, no matter the size of the congregation.

Ways to encourage

Every once in a while, we can choose not to vent about how cold the Sunday School room was, how loud the music was or how the livestream failed.

Pastors need as much grace and love as anyone else, and a calm conversation sharing any concerns at the church we might have always strengthens the relationship and the congregation.

We all process and deal with life in different ways, but as long as we can talk to each other honestly and with kindness, then we can find our way through the situation — even if that means agreeing to disagree.

Give your pastor the gift of prayer, encouragement and a clearing of the air (in love and kindness), not only in October but throughout the year. 🙏

RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

We are receiving news from around the state about prayer vigils being held prior to Nov. 3 (Election Day) and are encouraged to learn how many

of our leaders are burdened to pull believers together to pray.

Many of the promotional items mention praying for God's will to be done, which reminds me that we

also need to pray for ourselves — for God to show us what we need to deal with in our own hearts and the ability to represent Him well, no matter the election results. 🙏

Your Voice



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

Disaster Relief needs continue: Can you help?

Cynthia Walker Watts
The Alabama Baptist

In a little more than a month's time, 475-plus Southern Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers from Alabama, South Carolina, Tennessee, Mississippi, Oklahoma and Kentucky responded to the damage in Baldwin County as a result of Hurricane Sally.

They have assessed damage, cut down trees, hauled debris, washed clothes, provided showers, driven skid steers, fed first responders and the communities, listened to and prayed with hundreds and truly been the hands and feet of Christ.

The needs have been tremendous. In one situation, trees totally blocked

a driveway, preventing the resident from getting prompt emergency care.

Others are dealing with roof damage with devastating leaks, flooded houses, destroyed vehicles and heirlooms, and extended power and water outages.

Hundreds of people need to be consoled, counseled, encouraged and reassured. Many need clean clothes, diapers, baby formula, cleaning supplies and other daily essentials.

Initially there were command centers in Gulf Shores, Mobile, Bay Minette and Robertsdale. Robertsdale will be the last one to close.

Although all critical needs are being met, not every request has been able to be filled.

Just as the disaster areas have needs, Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief also has tremendous needs.

Volunteers are needed to cook, do laundry, clean showers, cut down trees, listen to and pray with residents and sometimes help them cry.

Hurricane Sally is not the last disaster, only the most recent one. Many of the volunteers are retirement age and older. Who will replace them? Will you be there for the next one?

EDITOR'S NOTE — Cynthia Walker Watts recently served with SBDRL in coastal Alabama. Learn more about training and giving opportunities at sbdrl.org.

A preacher preaches messages as a doctor prescribes medicine. Some take it the right way, and it helps and heals. Others take it the wrong way, and it hurts and harms.

Make sure to follow the directions!

Franklin L. Kirksey
Robertsdale, Ala.

The "Jesus + Works" mentality thrives in cultures where we are focused only on personal success and how much we can gain by our hard work.

The gospel proclaims, "It is finished." There is nothing that we can do to earn salvation or favor with God. This is quickly becoming a foreign concept in a society that is driven by academic achievement.

Our job does not change. We must continue to boldly preach the gospel to all students and to help guide them along their journey.

Spencer Jones
Minister to high school students
FBC Trussville

Darkness can't push back darkness. Only God's light can. Hate can't push back hate. Only God's love can.

Let's be God's light and love.
Jay Wolf, pastor emeritus
FBC Montgomery

Letters to the editor from our readers

Thank you for the excellent editorial to clear the air about a name change for Southern Baptists. I kept hearing rumors and saw a Facebook post. Name change is a great way to lose your identity. Stay the course. People are interested in faith beliefs.

Pastor Bill Stephens
Crossway Baptist Church

When I was reading My Rationale in the Oct. 15 issue of TAB, I thought about the scene from "Back to the Future" where Doc is giving Marty instructions on how to set the time machine.

We know God is still in charge, but it is a very scary time. I am grateful to be married to a godly man as we have spent almost 100% of each day over the last eight months together.

We are staying close to home and really miss going out with Disaster Relief teams, being able to travel and just going out to eat.

Of course, we are able to watch church services and participate in Sunday School online, but we miss the contact with others. So I look forward to TAB each week!

Amelia Pearson
Alexander City, Ala.

It is easy to focus on our own small circle of friends and family and forget that Christians around the world are often facing challenges we can barely imagine.

The Alabama Baptist helps to open our eyes and our hearts to the persecution of Christians around the globe. We also are reminded of the work of our missionaries and are exposed to the work of the full kingdom of God across the globe.

Thank you to the staff for helping us to keep a global focus on the movement of God.

Tim Moore
Leeds, Ala.

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“Having one mission turns ordinary living into an extraordinary adventure.”

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onemissionstudents.org

The good news is our salvation is protected by the power of God — the power that spoke the cosmos into existence, cracked the earth open in the great flood, brought Jesus from heaven to earth and then from the grave to heaven. The power that forgives sin and causes grown up people to be born again also keeps us safe in Jesus.

I do not hold onto Jesus' hand — that would be a perilous way to live. Jesus holds me with His hand and nothing can undo His grip of love, grace and forgiveness.

Bob Adams
Retired pastor

The Lord always prepares His people for the future He has for them. God sees the end from the be-

ginning. Our God never panics and is always present with us in every moment.

When facing their own crisis moment, Joshua and the people of God had to determine one thing: Will we believe God?

President Ronnie Floyd
SBC Executive Committee

Let's be candid.

None of us are doing as well as we should, mentally or emotionally.

But there is hope. There's always hope.

Tony Martin
youcanhavehope.com

October is a great time to show [your pastor] appreciation because it has been designated on the calendar.

However, to really cause your pastor to feel immense joy in his work, have the church put together a plan to show its appreciation for him throughout the year. After all, showing support and love to your pastor every day is the best gift of all.

As (Heb. 13:17) says, “Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden ...”

Philip Jones
Multi-vocational pastor
ministry consultant for
Oklahoma Baptists

Make no mistake, it is our choice to speak death or life to someone. We have that choice. Sometimes the best response is no response.

Amy Hacker
theropetab.com

Hitting the wall

In life, we hear people use the terminology, “I’ve hit a wall.” Using that terminology normally refers to coming to a seemingly impassable point in a particular venture or task: “My computer quit running. I’ve tried everything I know, and I’ve run into a wall.” Or, “It’s been a long tiring day. I’m exhausted! I’ve hit the wall.”

We all come to these “walls” in life, and most often it is best to take a break. Move on to something else. Set the task completely aside. Come back to the difficult issue later, when we are refreshed.

We may never know all the answers. But that does not mean we should give up on tasks or ventures. Sometimes the best you can do is leave that task for another day (or a later time in the day).

A second set of eyes and another brain is often where the solution comes from. Don’t be afraid to call on someone else, someone not part of the team or issue. Let that person, that set of fresh eyes, bring his/her perspective.

On a number of occasions, I have come to one of those walls on a home project. While I’m taking a break, my wife comes up with a possible solution or at least spurs my thinking in a different direction which leads to an answer. You are not a Lone Ranger. Call on others.

Another great solution finder is prayer. Look to the Creator of all and ask for guidance. You may still need to take a break. That may actually be God’s counsel: “Take a break and I will reveal what you need.”

When you run up against a wall in ministry or any area of life, take a break, ask for another set of eyes and trust God. He is still in the delivery business — delivering answered prayers.

George Yates
Church health strategist
Alabama Baptist SBOM

From the *Twitterverse*

@macbrunson

Pastors, let your study be the meeting place between you and the Master. If there is something in there that shouldn’t be there, get it out. If there is something there that distracts, get it out. Keep it a sacred place.

@johnthweatt

“Half-hearted, cultural Christianity cannot produce full-throttled, earth-shaking results.” — David Young

@timkellernyc

No one Christian has all the gifts. We all know that. So why would any one church have all the gifts and not need anyone else?

@RogerMardis

“You can’t make the gospel any better, but you should make it louder.” @zachterry, great word tonight brother.

@drjamesmerritt

Whatever you do in life, you better do it all for Jesus. Then whether it gets noticed or not, thanked or not, praised or not, you won’t wind up a bitter old person.

@louiegiglio

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful” (Col. 3:15).

@brocraigc

“Be much in prayer. Prayer keeps the Christian steadfast.” — Spurgeon

@EdLitton

You and I cannot live for ourselves and God at the same time.

@myutmost

If you waste your time in over-activity, instead of being immersed

in the great fundamental truths of God’s redemption, then you will snap when the stress and strain do come. #myutmost — utmost.org

@TheTrinityChrch

We are worse than we think. God is better than we think. — @PastorMark

@sPeytonHill

There are some exhausted, faithful pastors leading their churches through a global pandemic, racial injustices and an upcoming election, and they are leading alone without any staff. Praise God for these men, and pray for encouragement and endurance.

@ricklance

In a world of confusion and chaos, we long for safety and stability. As Christians, we know that only the God of John 16:33 can provide that.

'We are all part of the BODY OF CHRIST'

'Jesus Freaks' and persecuted Christians: Voice of the Martyrs shares their stories

By **Martha Simmons**
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

For the last 53 years, The Voice of the Martyrs has served persecuted Christians around the world, and, in doing so, sought to become their voice and share their stories.

"My job is to tell the story," said Todd Nettleton, who heads up communications for the organization. Working through VOM, Nettleton has traveled the world to interview persecuted Christians from more than 20 nations.

He writes for VOM's free monthly print magazine, hosts a weekly half-hour radio broadcast and podcast and helps write devotional books, among other outreach efforts.

Stories of the courage and faith of people who overcome severe punishments inflicted on them for merely practicing and sharing their faith are endless, Nettleton said.

Many of these stories can be found in the updated version of the book "Jesus Freaks," originally published 20 years ago, which shares the experiences and perspectives of persecuted Christians who are "the ultimate Jesus Freaks."

The book is authored by the writing team of VOM and the contemporary Christian music group DC Talk, whose award-winning single "Jesus Freak" motivated the name of the book.

"This book has been an amazing inspiration to a whole generation of people," Nettleton said, who hopes the updated version reaches a new generation.

A former sportswriter, Nettleton has applied his writing skills to VOM outreach for some 20 years. So how did he transition from writer to radio host?

"The Lord laid that in my lap," he said with a laugh. Nettleton had arrived at "kind of a crossroads"



Photos courtesy of Todd Nettleton

Todd Nettleton, chief of media relations for The Voice of the Martyrs, speaks to a guest during VOM's weekly radio broadcast. Nettleton and VOM staff recently updated 'Jesus Freaks,' a collection of stories from the persecuted church.

professionally and wanted to do more. He had conducted thousands of radio interviews for VOM and thought he might be good at hosting a radio show, but he never broached the subject to anyone other than his wife. Then one day, "my boss came into my office and said, 'We want to have a radio program and we want you to host.'"

Launched six years ago, VOM Radio's weekly program is broadcast by more than 1,050 stations in the United States — 23 in Alabama — as well as satellite radio and online. You can find your local station by entering your zip code at vomradio.net/stations.

For Nettleton, it's a labor of love. "When we go in the studio, I always have a feeling of gratefulness," he said. "I can't believe I get to do this. I can't believe I get to interview these people."

While Christian persecution is ongoing in many countries worldwide, Nettleton said most of the martyrs'

"love for the Scripture and my desire to be in the Scripture every day," he said.

"It's life-giving sustenance. I want to live that way."

Nettleton also encourages Christians in America to seek to understand the degree to which fellow believers in other parts of the world are persecuted.

Body of Christ

"I think the biggest thing we need to understand is we are all connected. We are all part of the body of Christ. When one part of the body suffers, we're all supposed to feel it.

"But if we don't know, how can we feel it?" Nettleton asked.

By educating themselves, Christians can offer more informed and specific prayers, he said. A good way to start is by participating in the International Day of Prayer (see story, page 7). While it's important to provide aid, donate Bibles, write to the imprisoned and take missionary trips, it's prayers persecuted Christians want the most, Nettleton said.

"The most important thing we can do is pray for them. Every single time that we ask that question, that's the first thing they ask for."

These martyrs don't pray to be released from prison or that their suffering ends, he said. "They pray that they will be faithful under persecution in spite of the suffering."

Despite their dire circumstances, Nettleton added, "There's a sense of joy we find among persecuted Christians. It's sort of counterintuitive but it's really very common among them."✝

stories and even their locales are unknown to the average churchgoer.

One such place is the Northeast Africa nation of Eritrea, where more than 500 Christians are imprisoned. "Some of the pastors I've met there have been in prison 15-plus years. No trial, no charges, no lawyers. You just disappear into the prison system in Eritrea," Nettleton said.

For His glory

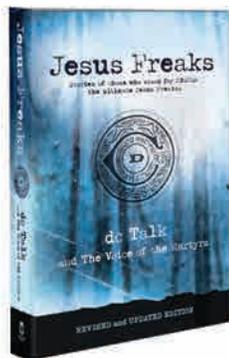
Such accounts deeply influence his everyday life. "One of the things I have is a great confirmation that God can use every situation to bring about His plan and for His glory."

Hearing from Christians "who would give anything just to have a Bible" sparked Nettleton's own

"I think the biggest thing we need to understand is we are all connected. We are all part of the body of Christ. When one part of the body suffers, we're all supposed to feel it."

Todd Nettleton

Chief of Media Relations and Message Integration, VOM





IMB photo

In this IMB file photo taken in Luang Prabang, Laos, a woman offers a morning food offering to Buddhist monks. The Communist regime in Laos, a predominantly Buddhist nation, tightly controls every aspect of religious life in Laos and has passed laws that make it difficult to build churches or conduct religious activities. Christians who have converted from the primary religions — Buddhism and traditional animism — are the most targeted for persecution. Laos ranks No. 20 on Open Doors' 2020 World Watchlist of countries where Christians suffer the most persecution.

Persecution story: Lao Christians jailed

For over three months, four Lao Christians have been jailed in the country's Khammouane province for planning a Christian funeral that is contrary to the local customs.

According to Radio Free Asia, on July 3, the four Christians traveled to Khammouane's Phousath village to attend a funeral that was deemed by village authorities to have violated Lao customs and "divided community solidarity." As a result, they were arrested before they could conduct the Christian ceremonies, said a Phousath village official.

Performing ceremonies

The local villagers wanted to perform ceremonies for the deceased Christian "according to our culture handed down to us by our ancestors," the official said. "When someone dies, we help by making donations, sharing food and asking [Buddhist] monks to come and pray at the home."

"But [the Christians] wanted to do things that violate our traditional customs. They were preparing things that we felt were strange and wrong and do not understand, and so we acted in order to prevent them from happening," he said.

While no trial has been held to prosecute these four Christians who are from different villages, the police investigation has been completed, and no decision was made as to what happens to them next. Their wives and children are facing hardships due to the loss of income and uncertainty about the four men's fate.

An official in the religious affairs department of the Lao central government told RFA on Oct. 12 that his department will now work with the Lao Front for National Construction and the Evangelical Church of Laos to win justice for the four imprisoned villagers. (International Christian Concern)

To read more stories of persecuted believers around the world, go to persecution.org.

DAY OF PRAYER for Persecuted Church

'Bring their needs before the Father'

On Nov. 1, Christ followers around the world will recognize the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church — a global prayer movement for Christians who boldly witness for Christ at any cost in nations where Christianity is not welcomed.

Each day, millions of Christians around the world are persecuted for their faith. From Pakistan to Kazakhstan, Nigeria to North Korea, Christians routinely face discrimination, harassment, violence and even death for their faith in Jesus.

Over the years, the IDOP has served as a platform to highlight the stories of persecuted

Christians and mobilize the global Church to respond to their plight.

In so doing, the IDOP has also been a source of solidarity and encouragement to persecuted Christians by reminding them that they are part of a larger, global family of believers.

'Pray for us'

"When we ask persecuted Christians how we can help them, the first thing they say is 'Pray for us!'" says Todd Nettleton, spokesperson for The Voice of the Martyrs and host of VOM Radio. "IDOP is a direct response to their No. 1 request."

In advance of the IDOP, VOM, a non-profit organization serving persecuted Christians since 1967, has released a new video telling the story of Christians in the Central African Republic who were forced to flee their homes when Islamists attacked.

The video, "Janette: Central African Republic," also tells of the courageous faith that leads the believers

to forgive their persecutors.

"You and your church will be inspired to pray for and support Christians like Janette who have lost everything because of their Christian faith," according to VOM.

'Serving with us'

"A pastor from Vietnam once

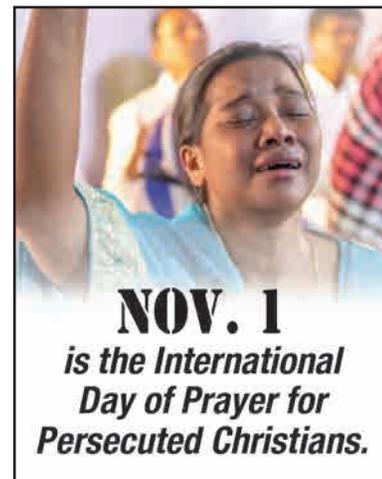
said, 'When you pray for us, you are serving with us in Vietnam!' On IDOP Sunday — and really every day throughout the year — you can serve with our persecuted brothers and sisters by bringing their needs before our Father in heaven," Nettleton said.

"Pray for 600 imprisoned Christians

in Eritrea. Serve with imprisoned pastors in China — and pray for their families also. Pray for Christians facing growing threats in India. Pray for Janette and those who share her story. Please pray for persecuted Christians!"

"Janette: Central African Republic" is available for free download (or to request as a free DVD) at persecution.com/idop, along with additional free resources for individuals and churches, such as presentation slides, a church bulletin insert, a sermon outline, a guide with tips and ideas for churches, and free sheet music to the Keith and Kristyn Getty hymn "Christ Our Hope in Life and Death," featured in this year's video.

IDOP resources are also available for purchase, including a set of prayer map posters highlighting countries where Christians are persecuted, a special issue of VOM's magazine and prayer reminder bookmarks/brochures. (National Religious Broadcasters)



VOM Facebook photo

Alabama constitutional amendments



Unsplash.com

Voters on Nov. 3 will see proposals to change voting language, judiciary, gun rights, more

By **Martha Simmons**
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Alabama voters will see six proposed constitutional amendments on the Nov. 3 ballot. If approved, they'll be tacked on to the state's 1901 constitution, said to be the longest and most-amended constitution anywhere in the world.

Here are summaries of the proposed amendments and a snapshot of what they mean, drawn from information provided by the Alabama Secretary of State's office and analysis offered by the Alabama Policy Institute.

Read the full text of the amendments at tabonline.org/2020-amendments.

No. 1

Proposing an amendment to the Constitution of

Alabama of 1901 ... to provide that only a citizen of the United States has the right to vote.

The state constitution grants the right to vote to U.S. citizens who meet certain requirements. This amendment does not change those requirements. Amendment No. 1 merely substitutes the word "only" for "every" in the original language.

If a majority of voters vote "yes" for Amendment No. 1, the state constitution will grant the right to vote to "only" those U.S. citizens who meet the requirements.

If a majority of voters vote "no" for Amendment No. 1, the state constitution will continue to grant the

right to vote to "every" U.S. citizen who meets the requirements.

No. 2

The result of a 19-month study by legislators, judges and lawyers, proposed Amendment No. 2 would make the following changes to the state's judicial system:

- ▶ Allow for the entire state supreme court to appoint the director of courts and for a 10-year term, rather than the chief justice

making the appointment, a protocol intended to prevent a revolving door (Alabama has in the past decade had five different chief justices and, therefore, five directors of courts).

- ▶ Allow district courts to no longer hold court within municipalities with fewer than 1,000 population, instead moving those proceedings to the county seat.

- ▶ Expand the Judicial Inquiry Commission from nine to 11 members.

- ▶ No longer disqualify judges from holding office when the JIC files a complaint against them with the Court of the Judiciary.

- ▶ Remove the state legislature from the process of impeaching judges and provide that only the Court of the Judiciary may remove judges from office.

No. 3

Proposing an amendment

to the Constitution of Alabama of 1901 ... to provide that a judge, other than a judge of probate, appointed to fill a vacancy would serve an initial term until the first Monday after the second Tuesday in January following the next general election after the judge has completed two years in office.

Currently, if a judge in Alabama dies, resigns, retires or is removed from office before the end of his or her term, the term of the person appointed to fill the vacancy has varied considerably. This amendment is intended to standardize the terms of appointed judges.

No. 4

Proposing an amendment to the Constitution of Alabama of 1901 ... to authorize the Legislature to recompile the Alabama Constitution and submit it during the 2022 Regular Session, and provide a process for its ratification by the voters of this state.

This amendment would allow the state legislature to rearrange the constitution and remove racist, repetitive and no longer applicable language. These fixes would have to be approved in —

yes — another constitutional amendment.

No. 5 and 6

Relating to Franklin County, proposing an amendment to the Constitution of Alabama of 1901, to provide that a person is not liable for using deadly physical force in self-defense or in the defense of another person on the premises of a church under certain conditions.

Relating to Lauderdale County, proposing an amendment to the Constitution of Alabama of 1901, to provide that a person is not liable for using deadly physical force in self-defense or in the defense of another person on the premises of a church under certain conditions.

Identical in all respects except for the county name, these two amendments would put into the con-

stitution a local version of the state's already-existing "stand your ground" law that also applies to the use of deadly force in churches. API's assessment says such local versions of existing state law has "little practical effect" unless the state law changes.✝

Read the full text of the amendments at tabonline.org/2020-amendments.



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Like *The Alabama Baptist*, Jimmy covers our state helping seniors improve the quality of their lives.

SBOM to hold statewide Call to Prayer on Nov. 1

By Lanell Downs Smith
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Alabama Baptists are invited to join together on Nov. 1 for a statewide day of prayer for spiritual awakening and revival in America, as well as for the local church and individual hearts.

“Our nation is in obvious crisis,” said Tim Cox, president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention and senior pastor of Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea. “The only way our nation will get back on its feet is for God’s people to get on their knees.”

With much at stake in America today, Cox said now is the time for the Church to be truth and light in the darkness.

“This is not political; it is biblical,” he said.

To participate, Cox suggested churches consider:

▶ Praying specifically for America during worship services on Nov. 1.

▶ Calling out to God for spiritual awakening and revival (2 Chron. 7:14).

▶ Praying for those in leadership (1 Tim. 2:1–4).

▶ Praying for a peaceful and fair process for voting on Nov. 3 (Rom. 12:18; 13:1–7).

The spiritual and emotional problems facing Americans make prayer essential, said Brad Smith, pastor of Eastview Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa.

Praying for the lost

“As I understand it, two out of every three people that we encounter are potentially lost,” Smith said. “There’s a high suicide rate and the coronavirus has added to depression and the abuse of drugs and alcohol.”

Smith noted Eastview Church will center its Nov. 1 service around focused prayer, Scripture reading and praise, with a time of testimonies and reminding worshippers that regardless of politics, COVID-19 or the economy, God is in control and can be trusted.

‘Pray for peace’

“We need to pray for the lost, for families and for marriages,” Smith said. “We are coming up on an election, and there’s such division in our country. We need to pray for peace.”

When Christians gather in prayer and repentance, Smith added, they find encouragement in knowing other churches

are doing the same thing.

“Every great revival has begun with God’s people praying,” he said. “If this at least brings revival to me, to us as Christians individually, God has done a work.”

Important resource

Rick Lance, executive director for the State Board of Missions, said prayer is the most important resource for believers, not only during the pandemic but at all times.

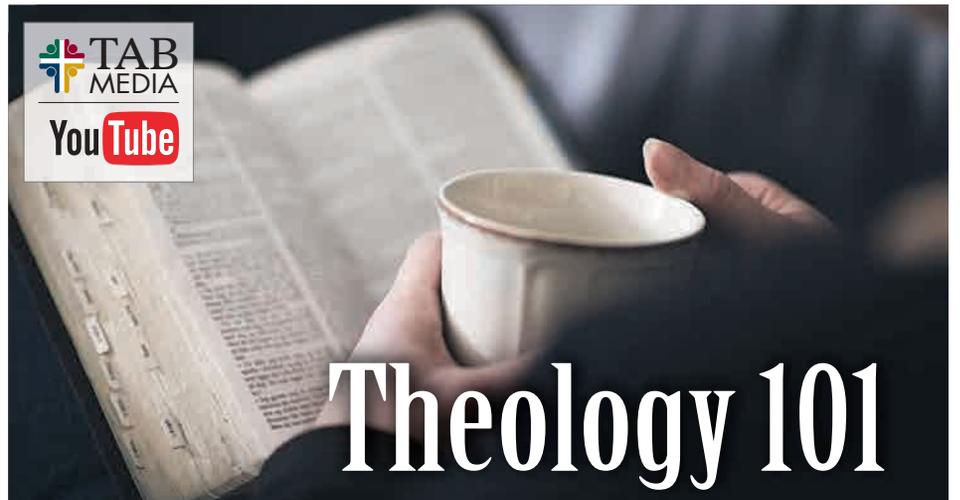
“The value of prayer is because the God of the universe loves us and thus loves and hears the prayers of His children.

“With all the unique problems of 2020, where could we turn but to the Lord?” Lance asked. “I encourage Alabama Baptist churches to participate in the Statewide Day of Prayer for Our Nation — to spend time on Nov. 1 during Sunday worship asking God’s blessings, protection and guidance for our nation as we face significant challenges during the weeks and months ahead.”

For prayer resources, visit tabonline.org/day-of-prayer.

“We need to pray for the lost, for families and for marriages. We are coming up on an election, and there’s such division in our country. We need to pray for peace.”

Brad Smith
pastor, Eastview Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa



BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Biblical Mysteries

Understanding Mysteries Is Not Enough

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Many truths in the Bible are termed mysteries. These divine truths have not always been fully revealed but were kept hidden until God moved, in His own time, to disclose them. God sometimes called and used special messengers such as prophets and apostles as agents of His disclosure, but foremost He sent His Son to make them known.

Guided by love

Among God’s marvelous mysteries, we have considered godliness, God’s kingdom, God’s will, Christ’s indwelling of believers, the relation of Christ and the Church, and Gentile inclusion in the people of God. The list of divine mysteries is quite impressive and important.

Even so, one Bible passage reminds us of an occasion when understanding God’s mysteries is not enough: the cherished and oft-read love chapter, 1 Corinthians 13.

One verse in particular stands out: “Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love I am nothing” (v. 2). When love is missing, understanding mysteries is not enough.

Love is the one quality that when absent makes all other qualities or abilities of naught.

God’s revealed truth, great as it is, amounts to zero if the understanding of it is not accompanied by love.

Unbeatable union

The combination of understanding divine truth and the love that God inspires is an unbeatable union in spiritual matters and ministries.

Thus, this single verse of Scripture suggests the question: What value exists in understanding what God has revealed about Himself, His spiritual kingdom and His will, along with understanding the indwelling of Christ in believers, the relation between Christ and the Church, plus the inclusion of people from all nations, tribes and tongues in His church, if love is left out?

Straightforward answer

The biblical answer is straightforward: all such knowledge adds up to nothing.

What then is the goal toward which all God’s children should aspire? It is to take all our understanding of God’s disclosed mysteries and let it be infused with His love shed abroad in our heart by His Spirit.

Jerry Batson is a retired Alabama Baptist pastor who also has served as associate dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University and professor of several schools of religion during his career.



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South Asia

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Prayer /// Become a prayer advocate for South Asian people by receiving requests through IMB (imb.org/pray) or from field personnel directly through the following:

Partnership /// Lead your church or small group to partner with personnel in South Asia.

Level one /// Adopt a missionary family for whom you will pray, communicate and assist with ministry needs (care packages, materials, etc.).

Level two /// Send volunteers to work alongside field personnel. Projects can be developed between your group and the field and may include prayer walking, food distribution, faith sharing, ESL, strengthening church leaders and a multitude of other things.

Level three /// Become a South Asia advocate helping to tell the story of ministry in South Asia to churches in your area. Helping to recruit prayer partners and volunteers to go to the field are key responsibilities.

SOUTH ASIA SPOTLIGHT

Two opportunities to attend: (10-3 both days)

November 7, Meadow Brook Baptist Church, Birmingham, featuring guest speaker **TODD LAFFERTY**, Executive Vice President, IMB

December 5, First Baptist Church, Prattville, featuring guest speaker **KR**, South Asia

Register at alsbom.org/southasia



HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS! ROMANS 10:15 ~ NASB

‘CAN’T STOP THE GOSPEL’

Hispanic congregations seeing gospel fruit despite the challenges of COVID-19

(continued from page 1) who works with the Central Alabama Baptist Hispanic Ministry Coalition, is training Hispanic leaders in the Birmingham area, but he also hopes to see training options expanded. The coalition Hanks directs is a nonprofit group with a board made up of members from seven Baptist associations in the state, churches and the SBOM.

Hanks helps train Hispanic Baptists for ministry and coordinates the Hispanic Baptist Bible Institute that meets at Indian Springs First Baptist Church in Shelby County. The institute is an extension of the Hispanic Bible Institute in Louisville, Kentucky.

Train and equip

While the program he works with has helped provide Hispanic pastors with solid theological training, Hanks said there is a need for a more church-based, reproducible process in Alabama — one that

allows trained pastors, who may lack the credentials required by some academic programs, to be able to train and equip other pastors for ministry.

Strong response

Hanks plans to continue the current program he is working with for now, but he is open to utilizing the same curriculum as SBOM after his current class of students graduate.

The coronavirus pandemic has only complicated things, both Hanks and Robayna said.

Both men have been working to help Hispanic pastors and ministry leaders as they navigate the economic and social challenges that have come with COVID-19.

“Like the Anglo churches, they’ve had to figure it out,” said Hanks, a former International Mission Board missionary who served in Ecuador for 15 years. While most churches now are holding in-person



Iglesias Bautistas Hispanas de Alabama Facebook photo

More than 30 Hispanic churches comprise the Iglesias Bautistas Hispanas de Alabama (Hispanic Baptist Churches of Alabama), and are united under three purposes: preach, train and encourage.

services, many Hispanic pastors continue to work through the best approaches to video conferencing and livestreaming with less staff and resources. But the response by Hispanic pastors overall has been strong.

‘Heightened interest’

“A crisis like this really kind of heightens people’s interest in the gospel,” Hanks said. Church leaders are “working hard to

find ways to maintain the fellowship and unity and to continue to guide the churches that they pastor.”

Robayna, who joined the SBOM in 2019, said right now churches of all ethnicities are seeking a sense of “normalcy.”

He described this year as one of learning and uncharted territory for Hispanic churches.

The SBOM has provided special online trainings covering a variety of issues among these congregations, which include family relationships and studies that are focused on the denomination.

“We are strengthening the bases of what our beliefs are and how to practice our belief and what does it mean to be Southern Bap-

tist,” Robayna said. “We’re working with [churches] to join their local associations and join Baptist work. That has been happening all on-line.”

One of the keys to his ministry work, Robayna said, is understanding that each Hispanic church is unique.

Continued change

“There are Central Americans, there are South Americans, there’s people from Puerto Rico, from the Islands, from Cuba,” he said. “Even though we kind of speak the same language, all churches are different, the context is different.”

“I have pastors who are ministering to indigenous Guatemalans who are in the northern part of the state,” he said. “When I talk about indigenous, I’m talking about people [for whom] Spanish is [their] second language, and English is their third language.”

And lives are continuing to change for Christ, he said.

“As far as locally, I’ve had three churches baptizing new believers,” he said. “I have some reporting that their offerings are the best they’ve ever been.”

“COVID has not stopped the church or the power of the gospel.” ✠





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The pandemic through the eyes of a 9-year-old

By Karen Allen
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Last spring, Conner Bruton was enjoying life as a blue-eyed, tree-climbing, basketball-playing 9-year-old boy.

When the COVID-19 pandemic changed so much around him, he began keeping a journal that records a timeline of events.

His grandmother thought the journal could serve as a learning tool. Now she recognizes that it can also serve as a historical keepsake.

“It was a way to continue working on the 3 R’s (reading, writing, ‘rithmetic) with schools closed,” said Margaret Cox, Conner’s permanent legal guardian whom he calls Mom. “Sometimes I would assign a topic; sometimes I didn’t. Punctuation and grammar [are] checked on occasion, but the content is all Conner’s.”

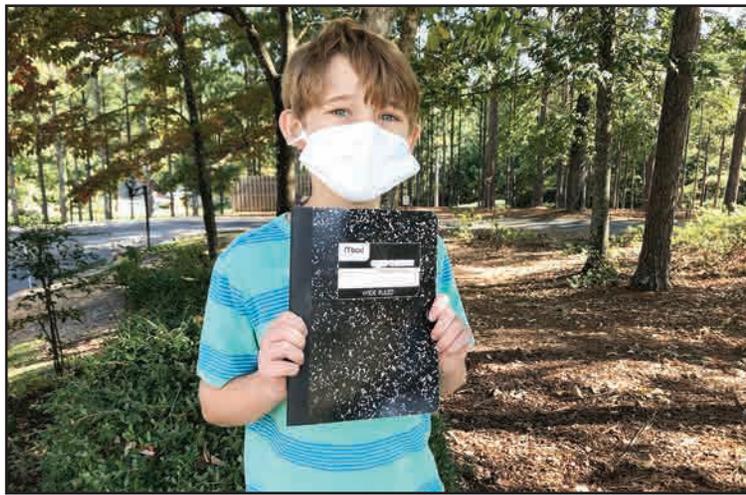
Through his eyes

Many local churches canceled their first service the day before Conner began writing. Shelves were being emptied by people flocking to the grocery store. A feeling of panic and fear was beginning to pervade communities.

In the sporadic entries from March 16 through Sept. 30, Conner’s simple words represent the feelings of so many.

► **March 16** — China said the coronavirus started from an animal, but some people like me think that a China lab created it. Everyone stocked up on food and toilet paper because they knew they were going to have to stay home for a long time.

► **March 19** — The coronavirus has been spreading. There have been (at least) 9,385 deaths in the world. My mom had to go to two grocery stores, and she said there was no



Conner Bruton holds his coronavirus journal, in which he has chronicled life during the COVID-19 pandemic.
Photo by Karen Allen

toilet paper in either store. Almost everyone is in their home. I think that after five days everybody will want to see someone other than their parents.

► **March 20** — I wish I could be at the park playing with my mom and dad. Something else I would do would be playing at the playground at my church. I would also go to church. These are some things I would rather do than be stuck at home!

► **March 30** — Life with COVID-19 is really stressful. My mom has taken up watercolor painting, so I get to see beautiful pictures. Dad does not have much time for anything because of his work. This is the life of COVID-19.

► **March 31** — There are only 12 days until Easter. I love Easter because there is chocolate and more importantly, Jesus rose again! This will definitely be a different Easter.

► **April 2** — COVID-19 is so bad! I hate it! All I have been doing is school, watching TV, playing games and playing outside.

‘Thankful’

► **April 3** — I am thankful that no one in our family has COVID-19. I am also thankful that my dad can work from home. Something else I am thankful for is technology (computers,

cell phones, FaceTime). Fourth, I’m thankful for my mom. Without her, I would not be able to learn during the massive outbreak of coronavirus.

► **June 15** — I went to the beach. It was very different. My whole family could not come, so I got my own bed. This year we could not go to any store so I could not get a souvenir.

► **July 15** — Pandemic mountain vacation. This is the first time I’ve ever been to the mountains. It was very fun! I went on hikes and saw waterfalls. We even got to go in a store!

Compassion

A touching addition to Conner’s journal was the day he decided to clean out his toys in the basement.

► **July 17** — Today, I got all my toys from the basement and put them in boxes saying “free.” I got a chair and whenever a car came by, I would wave a sign that said free stuff. I got lots of customers, and some gave me tips! I gave the tips to the children’s hospital.

Obviously, this young man has a compassionate heart, but it doesn’t stop with toys. He also gives thought to the spiritually needy.

► **Aug. 4** — Why do I think God allowed the pandemic? I think He allowed it because so many people

did not believe in God. Also, there was starting to be too much sin in the world. That’s why I think God allowed COVID-19.

The journal came in handy a time or two for school assignments. When asked about remote learning, Conner had this to say:

► **Aug. 16** — Remote learning is a good fit for me. First, I will not be exposed to COVID-19 and neither will my family. Second, we don’t have to get up as early! Third, I get to sit in a comfy chair. Finally, I get the best teacher ever!

► **Sept. 30** — It’s Wednesday, and there’s still COVID-19.

Conner’s diary notes the highs and lows of living

through a pandemic, and though a child, Conner expresses feelings most of us have experienced.

“I wish [the coronavirus] would have stayed in China. I had to celebrate my [10th] birthday differently,” he said. Cox quickly added that Conner’s birthday prompted the family to go to several places in Alabama they would not have otherwise gone.

‘It’s not fun’

Cox also said Conner has used some of his time during the pandemic to memorize Scripture.

But Conner misses playing with his friends like he used to.

Of the pandemic, he said, “It’s not fun.” ✝

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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CHURCH POSITIONS

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MINISTER OF YOUTH & EDUCATION

Farley Community Church in Huntsville, Alabama, is currently seeking a full-time minister of youth and education. Please reply to: personnel@farleycc.org.

FULL-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC & WORSHIP LEADER

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Sunday, December 6

Facebook Live Events

Decatur 2:00 PM | Oxford 2:15 PM |
Mobile 2:30 PM | Dothan 2:45 PM |
Gardendale 3:00 PM

Visit five of our campuses virtually and hear updates from area staff around the state.

Join us at facebook.com/alabamachild for these live events.



Alabama Baptist
CHILDREN'S HOMES
& Family Ministries

Drive-Thru Donation Drop-Off

2:00–4:00 PM at each of the campuses listed to the left

Many of our friends and donors choose our annual Christmas Open House as the time they bring a monetary gift or items from our needs list to help our children and families. If this is something you plan to do or would like to do, staff will be on-hand to greet you and accept donations on December 6 from 2:00–4:00PM.

While we will miss being able to share guided homes tours and fellowshiping over holiday treats, we are excited to be able to offer these opportunities to connect over the Christmas season and hope you can join us in these new ways this year!

Find more details at alabamachild.org/openhouse or call (888) 720-8805.

3 stories you should know



Photo courtesy of Dewayne Rembert

Dewayne Rembert wrote on Facebook Oct. 19 that he 'can almost guarantee my Anglo friends invited to a Hip-Hop Revival didn't really expect for this to happen yesterday ... during a RAP song. Jesus will have His way!' Prayer partners from FBC Montgomery felt the movement of God that day, as did people from Flatline Church at Chisholm, Montgomery, the church where Rembert is pastor, and others who attended. Many heard the gospel and responded. (TAB)

'Ministerial exception' ruling questioned

Several faith organizations, including the SBC's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, are urging a federal appeals court to reconsider its application of the "ministerial exception" rulings by the U.S. Supreme Court in cases involving employment decisions by churches and religious institutions.

The groups filed an amicus brief Oct. 13 calling on the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago to rehear a case where a three-judge panel ruled in favor of a music director who was fired by a Catholic church after marrying his same-sex partner. The brief asserts the 2-1 decision by the appeals court offers a "cramped conception of the ministerial exception" that the Supreme Court "has expressly rejected."

Read full details of the case at tabonline.org/demkovich. (BP)

NAMB to emphasize Hispanic church plants

The North American Mission Board will emphasize Hispanic church planting starting in 2021 as demographic projections estimate the U.S. Hispanic population will grow by 30% over the next decade.

The Hispanic population currently makes up nearly 20% of the U.S. population and is far and away the fastest growing ethnic group in the U.S., which led NAMB in recent years to produce Send Network resources for Spanish-speaking church planting missionaries. Send Network also made a Spanish version of its Multiplication Pipeline available.

Projections say the Hispanic population will increase to 74 million by 2030 and is on track to become the largest ethnic group in the U.S.

Read more at tabonline.org/namb-hispanic. (BP)

Headline news from around the Southeast

Georgia

Early in the COVID-19 shutdown, Georgia Baptist Pastor Wellness consultant Tanaya Meaders recognized the need for pastors to take care of their emotional health, according to Georgia's *Christian Index*. Now a number of tools are available, such as a self-assessment that allows pastors to see if they are dealing with depression and, if so, to share those results with a doctor and seek help. Counseling services also are available.

Florida

When Doug Saunders arrived as the new pastor of Parkview Baptist Church in Fort Pierce four years ago, he found a small, predominantly elderly congregation. Now the church has grown, capturing the city's diversity in age and ethnicity, reports the *Florida Baptist Witness*. Worship experiences have been enhanced with the installation of new screens in the sanctuary, offer-

ing multimedia presentations during services. "Parkview is so unique, a slice of heaven with people of all ages, backgrounds, ethnicities."

Louisiana

Prior to a vote that could protect pro-life laws in Louisiana, FBC Ferriday erected 100 crosses on a nearby field to proclaim love for the unborn. The crosses advocate for voting Yes on Amendment No. 1, reports Louisiana's *Baptist Message*. Known as the Love Life Amendment, the change would add verbiage stating nothing in the state constitution protects a right to abortion. Currently, there is no specific language on abortion.

Mississippi

The medical marijuana ballot initiative in Mississippi is "about as clear as mud," according to an article in *The Baptist Record*. "If a simple majority votes No (second oval), [it] is defeated —

period. If a simple majority votes Yes (first oval), the votes for Initiative 65 (third oval) or the alternate 65A (fourth oval) will be counted. If the first oval marked Yes succeeds, and either 65 or 65A gets over 40% of the total vote, the measure will become law. That is why only the second oval should be marked if you're against [it]."

Tennessee

Tennessee Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers are headed back to Louisiana, this time to assist with cleanup from Hurricane Delta. It will be the 80th response for the state's DR teams in the past five years, reports Tennessee's *Baptist & Reflector*. "To put the last five years in perspective, consider that Hurricane Delta will be the 249th official response ... since 1978 when it officially began with a response to a tanker explosion in Waverly. That averages out to about five responses per year since 1978."

Alabama news

OBITUARY

► **Bill Barnett**, pastor of **Union Hill Baptist Church, Oneonta**, died Oct. 17. He was 66.

A native of Houston, Texas, Barnett was a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and the University of North Texas in Denton.

He served churches in Texas and Alabama and was a high school science teacher before being called to Union Hill in 1994.

Barnett is survived by his wife, Nancy, and three sons: Brad, David and Michael.



BARNETT

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

► **Jacob Simmons**, who currently serves as minister to single adults and pastoral care at Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, will become pastor of the newly named **Hope Community Church**, formerly McElwain Baptist Church, Birmingham, on Nov. 1.

The McElwain congregation found a new partner and a fresh vision when nearby church Shades Mountain Baptist adopted it in recent weeks. Now that fresh vision includes a new pastor and a new name, too.

Shades Mountain pastor Danny Wood said the name fits because from the beginning of the adoption process, their talks with the vision team at McElwain “have had a tone of determined hopefulness.”

“The church continues to have a strong desire to make an impact on the east side of Birmingham with the good news of the gospel,” he said. “This new name is a natural choice in light of the journey that brought us here and the vision we all share for the future.”

Before serving for the past five years at Shades Mountain, Simmons attended church there while he was in college and seminary. He and his wife, Suzanne, have two children.

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► **Pillar of Truth Ministries** is the newest church plant to cooperate under watch care with



SIMMONS

the CLBA. Thanks to Alabama Baptists and the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering, the association gave Church Planting Partnership money to Pillar of Truth Ministries at a recent meeting. **Shawn Bernard** is pastor. **Eddy Garner** is CLBA director of missions.

COOSA RIVER ASSOCIATION

► **Bryan Camp** is the new pastor of **West-side Baptist Church, Talladega**.

GENEVA ASSOCIATION

► **Tim K. Bedsole Sr.** is the new **interim associational mission strategist** for Geneva Baptist Association.

Ordained by Bethesda Baptist Church in 1983, Bedsole served as pastor of Corinth Baptist Church, Slocomb; Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Slocomb; and Little River Baptist Church, Uriah. He also served for 28 years as a U.S. Army Chaplain.



DYESS

He is a graduate of the Baptist College of Florida, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Princeton Theological Seminary. He will serve for a period of one year to allow the association time to select a new AMS.

► **Patrick Dyess** is the new pastor of **Hacoda Baptist Church, Kinston**. After having him supply preach there for some time, the church ordained him into the ministry Oct. 11. Dyess and his wife, Nikki, have two children.



BEDSOLE

JUDSON ASSOCIATION

► **Brandon Turner** is the new **associational mission strategist** for Judson Baptist Association. He also serves as pastor of **Judson Baptist Church, Abbeville**. Turner studied theology at The Baptist College of Florida in Graceville and was licensed to preach in 1999.

He became Judson Baptist's associate pastor in 2008 and then became senior pastor in 2013. He and his wife, Nicci, have 10 children and four grandchildren.

TUSCALOOSA ASSOCIATION

► **Shannon Moses** is the new pastor of **Chapel Hill Baptist Church, Northport**.

TUSKEGEE LEE ASSOCIATION

► Because of COVID-19, **Parkway Baptist Church, Auburn**, didn't get to have the big

50th anniversary celebration they had planned on Sept. 20. But they did the next best thing — they held a small gathering and used it to kick off a year of celebration that will later include a dinner and a ceremonial opening of the church cornerstone.

As part of the special service Sept. 20, Pastor Jeff Redmond preached, and Donna Wynn presented a video showing the beginnings of the church. (TAB)



TURNER



Photo by Lonette Berg

Persecuted church

Tajikistan questions religious affiliation on 2020 census

DUSHANBE, Tajikistan — A decision of the Tajikistan government to include a question about religious affiliation on the nationwide 2020 census is raising concern among citizens and human rights groups.

This is the first time the Tajikistan census has included a question about religious affiliation since 1937, when the country was part of the former Soviet Union.

On the 2020 census, taken Oct. 1–15, respondents could choose from “Muslim,” “Christian,” “non-believer,” “refused to an-

swer” or “other (specify).”

The concern is that Tajik officials might target people because of their response or because of their refusal to answer.

The Tajik regime has a history of punishing the exercise of religious freedom.

The United Nations Human Rights Committee said the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states that “no one can be compelled to reveal his thoughts or adherence to a religion or belief.”

Tajikistan is No. 31 on Open Doors' 2020 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian. (Forum 18)



COMMONS WIKIMEDIA

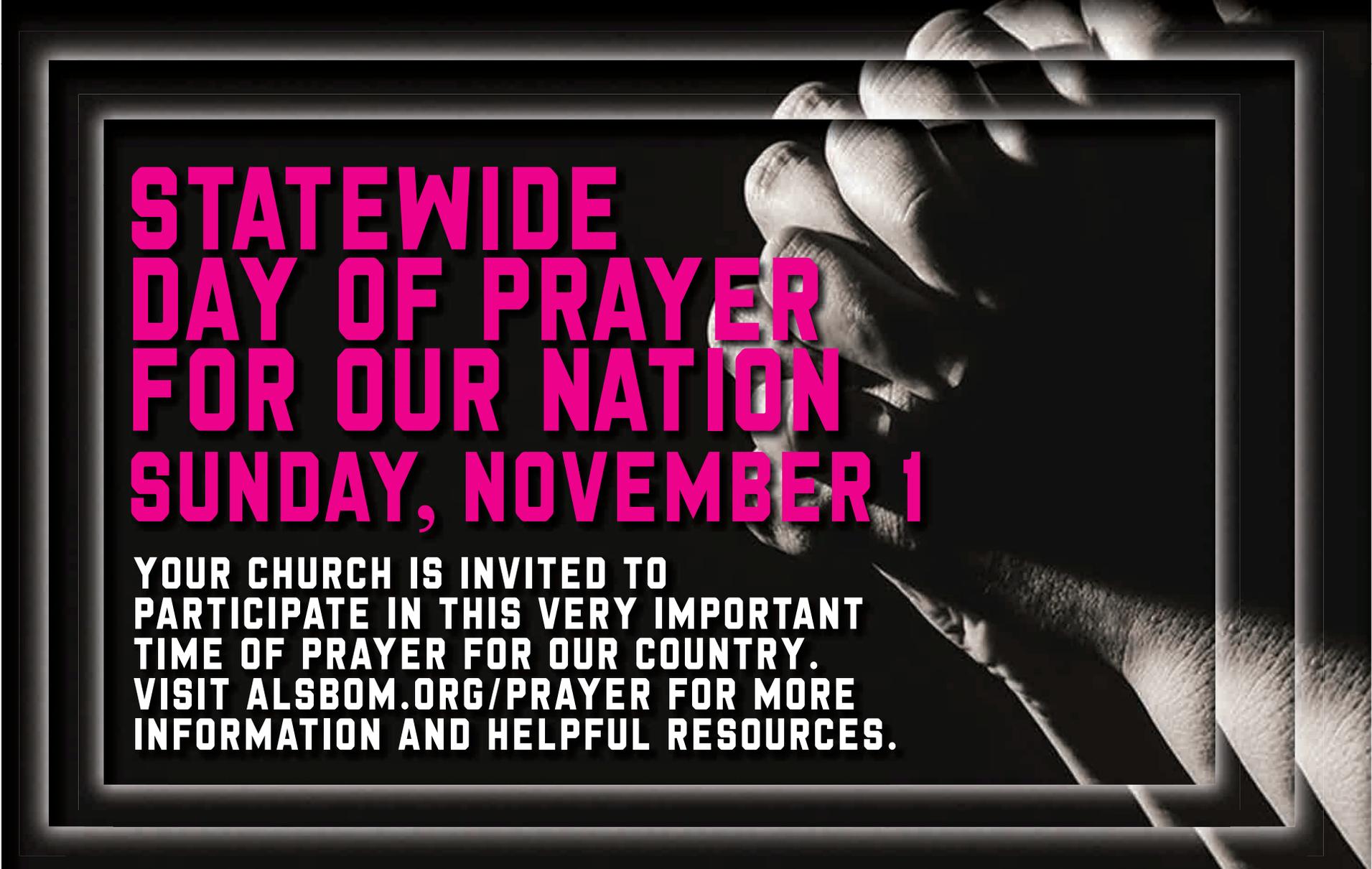
Want to see your news in The Alabama Baptist?

Email your information to news@thealabamabaptist.org.

Church announcements should arrive three weeks prior to the event.



ONE MISSION: The Great Commission ONE PROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANY MINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries



STATEWIDE DAY OF PRAYER FOR OUR NATION SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1

YOUR CHURCH IS INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS VERY IMPORTANT TIME OF PRAYER FOR OUR COUNTRY. VISIT ALSBOM.ORG/PRAYER FOR MORE INFORMATION AND HELPFUL RESOURCES.



Online State Missions

Celebration

Tuesday, November 17

Although the 2020 Annual Meeting of the State Convention will not be held this year, please join us for an hour of inspiration and information at live.alsbom.org and the **SBOM Facebook** page, **Tuesday, November 17**, 2-3 p.m. Then, at 6:30 p.m. that same day, tune in for the International Mission Board Sending Celebration, also at live.alsbom.org or the **IMB Facebook** page.

The Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference has also moved completely online, all day **Monday, November 16**. Visit albaptistpc.com for details.

Doctor shares how God uses bivocational ministry

Russell Stanley says there was a distinct time in his life when he recognized the call to pastoral ministry.

And there was another distinct time when he realized that didn't mean he couldn't also be a doctor.

"My father was a physician, and I was raised in a medical home," said Stanley, who grew up in west Texas. "I thought I wanted to be a doctor, too, before I felt called into the ministry."

He felt like it was an either-or situation, so he went to seminary and began serving at a small, rural church in west Texas.

'Great things'

"A lot of great things happened there — we had some people get saved and baptized," he said.

But Stanley felt God nudging him again to get outside the walls of the church in a different way. So he did. He enrolled in some night courses, then went to medical school. And

in the meantime, he didn't stop preaching.

"God began to morph my understanding of calling into bivocational ministry," Stanley said. "For small churches, it's the way of the future."

Becoming a doctor limited his ability to be at the church during the day, but it added capacity for different kinds of ministry. What he found was the same people who made up the backbone of many small, rural churches — widows and other senior adult women — were the ones he got to help with managing important life issues in his urogynecology work.

In his general OB-GYN work, Stanley got to minister to women who had lost babies or were battling cancer.

He — along with his wife, Lauren, and their six children, including two sets

of twins — brought that calling to Alabama recently to do a fellowship at UAB Hospital, and he became pastor of Center Hill Baptist Church, Jemison, too.



STANLEY

He says he sees his medical work not only as a ministry itself but as a way for God to move him around to different areas.

And he's glad it brought him to Alabama.

"It's really interesting the way your calling can put you

in different places," Stanley said. "God has changed my understanding of calling over the years, that it doesn't have to be one way or another. When God calls you to preach at 18 like He did with me, it doesn't necessarily mean that's all you may be called to do. It may be, but it may not be. He can use you in different ways that complement each other in ministry." (Grace Thornton)

PASTOR'S CONFERENCE
ALABAMA
BAPTIST
2020

ONE
another

Join us online at albaptistpc.com
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16

The 2020 Pastors Conference will be completely virtual. Sermons will premiere online Nov. 16 at albaptistpc.com.

Subscribe to the Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference on YouTube to receive notifications when the sermons premiere.

Christian Crossword

By Udena McKee Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

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Across

1. A receptacle made of bronze. (Ex. 30:18)
6. Political party.
10. ___ David prevailed over the Philistine. (1 Sam. 17:50)
11. ___ in a secret place. (1 Sam. 19:2)
12. Abram the ___. (Gen. 14:13)
14. Look not thou upon the wine when it is ___. (Prov. 23:31)
15. Whose son ___ striping is. (1 Sam. 17:56)
17. Variant of "aeon."
19. African plant.
21. Take two ___ stones. (Ex. 28:9)
23. ___ no man any thing. (Rom. 13:8)
25. Do we, then, ___ify the law. (Rom. 3:31)
26. A king of Judah. (1 Kings 15:9)
27. Light of Israel shall ___ for a fire. (Isa. 10:17)
29. The calf and the ___ lion. (Isa. 11:6)
32. I am ___ and Omega. (Rev. 1:8)
34. An eagle's nest.

37. Storage place for crops.
38. Not beautiful.
39. Above him were ___s. (Isa. 6:2)
41. The Lord was not ___. (Num. 14:16)
43. He weighed the ___ of his head. (2 Sam. 14:26)
44. Laid it in his own new ___. (Matt. 27:60)
47. Winter melons with yellow rinds and sweet flesh.
49. We have come from a ___ country. (Josh. 9:6)
50. And they went ___ Joshua. (Josh. 9:6)
52. A nourisher of thine ___ age. (Ruth 4:15)
54. Seize, especially to arrest.
56. It is not in man that walketh to ___ his steps. (Jer. 10:23)
57. Whosoever shall compel thee to go a ___. (Matt. 5:41)

Down

1. Then released he ___ unto them. (Matt. 27:26)
2. She again bore his

- brother ___. (Gen. 4:2)
3. Ancient city. (Josh. 11:8)
4. Part of the psyche.
5. Casting a ___ into the sea. (Matt. 4:18)
6. ___ He was set, His disciples came. (Matt. 5:1)
7. ___ opened his mouth. (Matt. 5:2)
8. Old world goat with large horns.
9. Gross. (abbr.)
10. Direction.
13. Seth lived 105 years, and begot ___h. (Gen. 5:6)
16. Jerusalem, the ___ city. (Neh. 11:1)
18. There were those who said, ___, our sons. (Neh. 5:2)
20. A marked feeling of well-being.
22. Send one of ___. (Gen. 42:16)
24. ___ of Egypt. (Josh. 15:4)
26. That in the ___s to come. (Eph. 2:7)
28. He departed thence and found ___. (1 Kings 19:19)

30. And by our law he ___ to die. (John 19:7)
31. With me there should be yea, yea and ___. (2 Cor. 1:17)
33. Beloved Son, in whom I am well ___. (Matt. 3:17)
35. Will a man ___ God? (Mal. 3:8)
36. Adam called his wife's name ___. (Gen. 3:20)
38. Yet I will not lift ___ my head. (Job 10:15)
40. A bower covered with vines.
41. Neither shall thy name any more be called ___. (Gen. 17:5)
42. ___ no fruit grow on thee henceforward. (Matt. 21:19)
45. But are as the angels ___ God in heaven. (Matt. 22:46)
46. No ___ was able to answer. (Matt. 22:46)
47. He took the ___ and gave thanks. (Matt. 26:27)
48. Alcoholic beverage.
51. They shall be ___ flesh. (Gen. 2:24)
53. Direct current. (abbr.)
55. Symbol for Bismuth.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For November 1

Explore the Bible

By Robert L. Olsen, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



GOD ACTS Isaiah 46:3–13

Chapter 42 begins with a reference to the servant of the Lord, a theme that occurs four times in the Book of Isaiah.

Based on the context, the servant of the Lord can be a reference to Israel, but it ultimately has its fulfillment in Jesus.

The True God (3–7)

The chapter begins with the continuing theme against idolatry. Isaiah takes the tone of mockery against idols because of how worthless they are to save or help the people of Babylon.

The passage calls to mind Elijah mocking the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18, when Elijah scoffs at the prophets and encourages them to yell louder to Baal because he might be asleep.

Not only do the Babylonians go into exile, but the idols do as well, showing the complete folly of idols — they are made by people, put on display by people and then petitioned for help by the people, but the idols do nothing.

In fact, they are less than helpful because people must carry them around, making their existence physically burdensome.

Not only are the idols physically burdensome, but they are spiritually numbing.

The idea that there are forces at work that need to be appeased is a hindrance to spiritual vitality. In fact, it is a spiritual burden.

Serving Jesus on the other hand is spiritual relief. Jesus Himself says, “Come to Me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. All of you, take up My yoke and learn from Me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for yourselves. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matt. 11:28–30).

When we realize God is not a being who needs to be appeased and when we understand God’s grace, it is spiritually refreshing, allowing us to serve God in gladness not out of a sense of obligation.

The Trustworthy One (8–11)

One of the confidences we have with God is that He is faithful to do what He says He will do.

In contrast to idols which need to be “appeased” for the worshiper to get what he or she wants, God cannot be coerced.

We trust God will do what is best for us because He loves us, even when we are unlovable in so many ways.

Many people think of Christianity as a set of rules one must follow in order to be made right with God. They think of the Bible in a negative sense.

However, the fact that God has revealed Himself to us in Scripture is a wonderful blessing.

Whereas the pagans had to wonder about how to “appease” the gods, often in the form of sacrifice, we know how to please God — by following His will — and the will of God is this: “to believe in the one He has sent, which is Jesus” (John 6:29).

The Just One (12–13)

In spite of God’s faithfulness, Isaiah has to chastise those who refuse to obey God. He reminds them that God is near to us, and He alone brings salvation.

Knowing God’s will for us should give us the desire to follow Him.

However, sometimes we, too, are far from Him or stubborn like the Israelites.

We may be holding a grudge against someone, we may be unwilling to forgive, we may think of ourselves as worthless or we may be involved in not paying taxes or being greedy or selfish.

When we sin, we choose to obey our own desires instead of God’s, making ourselves our own god, which is idolatry.

While we sometimes think we know best or think God doesn’t really understand our predicament, we have to pray for God to forgive us of our sinful attitude and turn back to Him.✠

Bible Studies for Life

By Jeffery M. Leonard, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Biblical Studies, Samford University



COMMITTED TO HIS WORD Psalm 119:1–11

While the songs that fill up the Book of Psalms exhibit a great deal of variety and creativity in their expressions of worship, most follow a basic pattern: theme, development, resolution. The theme of a psalm is its “big idea,” an idea that psalmists go on to develop in the body of the psalm, before they finally bring this theme to a resolution.

One technique for getting into the shoes of a particular psalmist is to read the first line or two of a psalm and zero in on that psalm’s theme. Once you have it, close your Bible and think about your own experience with this “big idea.”

If the theme is God’s majesty expressed in creation (Ps. 8), you might think of moments when you’ve marveled at some natural wonder and been struck by the awesomeness of God’s creative power. If the theme is praise for God’s many blessings (Ps. 9), you might pause to consider ways God has blessed you, too.

If the theme is feeling abandoned by God (Ps. 13), you might reflect on moments when you have felt those same feelings of loneliness and worry over whether you would ever find God’s presence again.

Once you’ve had a few moments to mull over your own connection to the psalmist’s theme, open your Bible again and read the psalm. Now that you know this technique, listen to the psalmist’s situation with a more sympathetic ear. You can converse with the psalmist, sharing the psalmist’s joy or pain in a way you might not have before.

God’s word guides our daily walk. (1–4)

A great psalm for this kind of Bible reading is the majestic Psalm 119. To do this properly though, you first must correct a terrible mistranslation that mars the beginning of the psalm. Like Psalm 1, Psalm 119 begins in many translations with the word “blessed.” While “blessed” — the Hebrew word “baruch” — is found in a great many contexts in the Bible, Psalms 1:1 and 119:1 are not

among them. Here, the Hebrew word is “ashrey,” a word that means not “blessed” but “happy.” In fact, the Hebrew term is a plural form that we just don’t use in English; it means literally, “O! The happinesses of the person who” Then, we close our Bibles and ask the question, “What makes us happy?”

The answer no doubt will be different for each of us, though there are some themes almost all of us would share: family, friends, good food and those sorts of things. With these ideas of happiness swirling around in our heads, we reopen our Bibles to see how the psalmist defines happiness. His answer: O! The happinesses of the person who follows God’s law.

God’s word leads us to live unashamed. (5–8)

A million things can give us temporary pleasure. Too many of those temporary pleasures give us moments of happiness that flicker out in an instant and leave behind more grief than true joy. Long-term happiness, the kind of happiness that lasts a lifetime, is happiness that comes from ordering our lives in accordance with God’s word.

When we let God’s word set the guardrails for our lives, we gain a kind of enduring happiness that comes without guilt, without regret and without sorrow.

God’s word keeps us from sin. (9–11)

So often in Scripture, following God’s law is cast in images of a path, a way or a road. Psalm 119 makes ample use of this imagery as it asks how we can stay on the “path of purity.” The psalmist begs God, “Don’t let me stray.”

How is it that we can stay on this path and not stray? It is by following God’s word. As Psalm 119:105 affirms, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”

It is when we let God’s word light our way that we are guided on paths that lead to true, enduring happiness.✠



Media reviews

TV/MOVIES

ClearPlay's new service lets families 'clean up' Disney Plus titles

By Michael Foust
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The best feature of Disney Plus is its wide selection of popular films — from Marvel to Star Wars to studio classics — and it's all available for one low price.

But if you have children, there's a downside: Many of those movies aren't exactly kid-friendly.

"Black Panther," for example, contains tons of gruesome violence. "The Rise of Skywalker" has multiple frightening scenes. And "Hamilton" — the musical ode to the Founding Fathers — is filled with coarse language.

Thankfully, there's a new product that offers a solution.

Content filters

ClearPlay, a Utah-based company, began offering filters for Disney Plus movies in recent weeks, shortly after adding Netflix titles to its lineup. (Previously, ClearPlay only filtered Amazon Prime titles.)

In layman's terms, this means you can watch "Black Panther" without the megaviolence, "Hamilton" without the profanity and so forth. All you need is a laptop or computer. (More on that in a moment.)

It's one of the most exciting advancements for film-loving families

in the past decade, simply because Disney's library dominates the family movie realm. ClearPlay is the only company filtering Disney titles.

Greater parental control

Tim Winter of the Parents Television Council applauded ClearPlay, saying the technology gives "parents greater control over the content their families consume."

"Our research has shown that just because a content rating suggests a program is appropriate for children, that is often not the case," Winter said.

ClearPlay requires a monthly subscription fee (after a 30-day free trial) and a Google Chrome browser. Then, by downloading the ClearPlay extension on your Chrome browser, you can filter out the violence, sex and language from Disney Plus films. (You can transfer it to your television through an HDMI cable or a mirroring device.)

Filters are available for every Marvel and Star Wars title, and for several dozen other films too. (The catalog is expanding weekly.) ClearPlay also offers a filtering Blu-ray player.

Visit ClearPlay.com for more information and to subscribe.

Also, worth considering this month:

► **"The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader" (Disney Plus)** — The final movie in the Narnia movie trilogy enters the Disney Plus lineup. ("The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe" and "Prince Caspian" already were on the platform.) It's based on the



ClearPlay

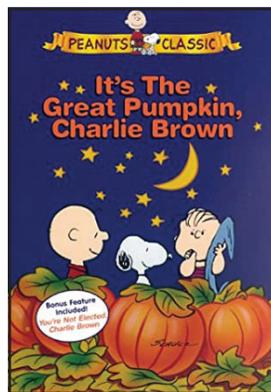
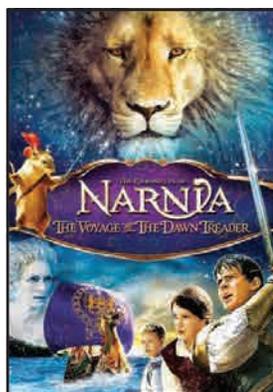
Screenshot

C.S. Lewis novels and is filled with Christian symbolism. "Dawn Treader" is rated PG for some frightening images and sequences of fantasy action.

► **"The Mandalorian" Season 2 (Disney Plus: Oct. 30)** — A bounty hunter travels the galaxy seeking justice while protecting a tiny creature called the Child (also known as "Baby Yoda"). The Mandalorian is set in the Star Wars universe and was well received by most fans, including those who disliked the latest trilogy. I have not watched the second season, although the first season was mostly family friendly. (ClearPlay offers filters

for the first season.) Season 1 episodes were rated TV-14, so the series is not appropriate for young children.

► **"It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown" (ABC: TBA)** — First aired in 1966, this fall-themed classic tells the story of Linus on his quest to witness the Great Pumpkin, a friendly Santa-type figure no one



Meet the reviewer

Michael Foust covers the intersection of faith and entertainment as a media reviewer for The Alabama Baptist. He also is the husband of an amazing wife and the father of four young children.

has ever seen. Despite ridicule from his friends, Linus remains resolute. Some Christians see faith-centric symbolism in the plot: Don't care what the world thinks. After all, the Christian

faith also involves belief in what is not seen.

► **"Father Brown" Season 8 (Amazon's BritBox)** — It's one of the most family-friendly detective shows on television, and Season 8 is now on Amazon's BritBox. The plot involves a Catholic priest who has an uncanny ability to solve murder

mysteries. Biblical themes, including God's grace and mercy, are plentiful.✠

EDITOR'S NOTE

Reviews of films, books, music or other media that appear in TAB are intended to help readers evaluate current media for themselves, their children and grandchildren in order to decide whether to watch, read or listen. Reviews are not an endorsement by the writer or TAB Media.

God's work, *God's way*

Missionaries work toward long-term partnership with Portuguese leaders

By Mario Russo
International Mission Board

In 2017, International Mission Board workers Mark and Hannah Bustrum attended a retreat with missionaries from the region and invited national partners to participate. For more than a decade they had worked to strengthen relationships with Portuguese believers but inviting them to this retreat was about more than building or maintaining those relationships.

“We know that national partners have keen and unique insights into their culture,” Mark says. “So we invited them to be the main speakers at our meeting to help us learn how to be more impactful with the gospel in our specific European context.”

Because of their mutual relationship, Mark and Portuguese church leaders realized partnership in the gospel was not only possible but essential. Working toward a shared goal gave them both a sense of responsibility to bring the gospel to Europe.

“Working with national partners is not just a good idea,” says Mark. “It’s vital to long-term ministry to have our local partners speak into



PORTUGAL

IMB photo

and guide the ongoing strategy. We don’t do our work apart from our local partners.”

Special partnership

God used that attitude toward partnership in an essential way. In 2018, the Bustrums returned from their scheduled assignment in the U.S. and followed up with their local leaders.

As they talked, they prayerfully considered what they learned from

their time together on the retreat the year before. Mark said one message was especially clear. His national partner told him, “God loves Europeans. God wants to save Europeans. So come to Europe and work alongside us for the long term to make a difference with the gospel for God’s glory in Europe.”

But how? What would a long-term partnership look like?

Once again, Mark’s national partners had an answer.

“Europe is like an old lady who is learning to dance again,” said one Portuguese church planter. “Missionaries want to come in and sweep her off her feet, but we need to be patient and take our time. We need to think for the long term how to reach Europe with the gospel.”

Today, IMB workers and Portuguese believers are committed to this type of sustainable partnership for the sake of the gospel. The Bustrums and their national partners have submitted themselves to prayer, fasting and Bible study. They have made this their priority and have been completely committed to God’s work, God’s way, God’s timing.

Together, Mark says they have taken ownership of the mission to bring the gospel to unreached people in their city; not in their own

strength or wisdom, or clever marketing or strategy, but through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Through intentional times of prayer, fasting and study, God led them to plant a church in their city in 2019. They realized many people were living in one part of the city and commuting for work to another part. One part of the city had a church, but no healthy church existed across town. The Bustrums and local believers formed a core group and started meeting in homes in the local community. God blessed that work and the church grew.

Full church plant

In 2020, that small core group of people has grown to become a full church plant. They have been meeting and developing leaders to lead the church and its ministries. In early 2021, it will become an independently self-supported church.

Mark believes this type of relationship will be key to reaching the unreached in Portugal and beyond.

“Because we believe the gospel, we want to continue in humility and partnership.”

EDITOR’S NOTE — Mario Russo works among European peoples and is a contributing writer for the IMB.



IMB photo

Mark and Hannah Bustrum, pictured with their daughters, are IMB missionaries working among European people groups in Portugal.



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