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INSIDE



Storytelling breaks mental barriers, offers unique opportunity to share Christ to all ages

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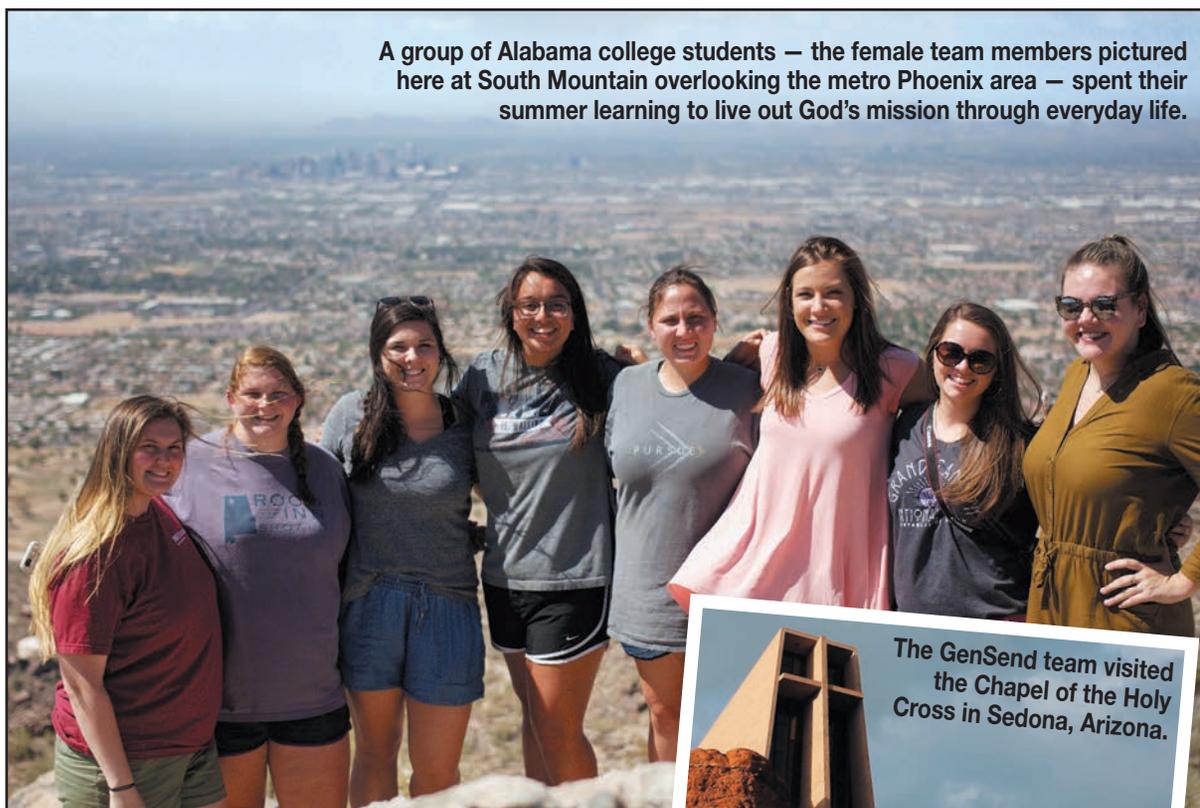
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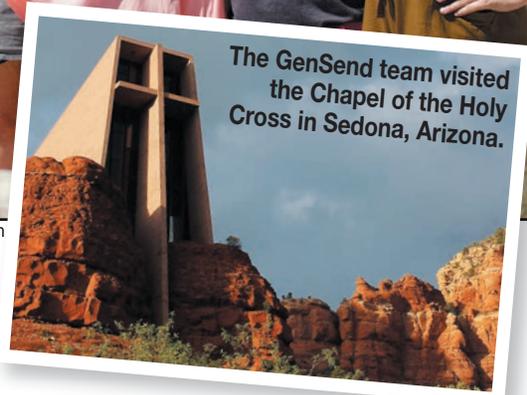
North Shelby Baptist youth help visually impaired kids

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A group of Alabama college students — the female team members pictured here at South Mountain overlooking the metro Phoenix area — spent their summer learning to live out God's mission through everyday life.

Photos by Brandon Dunn



The GenSend team visited the Chapel of the Holy Cross in Sedona, Arizona.

Eternal impact

NAMB's Alabama student team wraps up summer in Phoenix

By Danielle Waddell
Special to The Alabama Baptist

A team of 14 Alabama college students recently returned home from a summer spent learning to live out God's mission through everyday life.

The students — mostly strangers connected through One Mission Students — met for the first time in March but in a matter of months their lives would be interwoven after weeks serving God together in the 100-plus degree days in Phoenix.

Their opportunity came through

GenSend, a product of the Cooperative Program that commissions college students to explore the world of church planting through a North American Mission Board-organized experience. The Alabama students were among nearly 200 students who served 15 cities in the U.S.

Reaching communities

Through the GenSend program, students work with newly planted churches to more effectively reach their respective communities or, in the case of the Alabama GenSend team, engage an under-churched area

in which there is potential to plant a church in the future. This was the first year Phoenix participated in the GenSend experience. Leaders in the area focused efforts on residents of the Encanto area.

The Alabama team ranged in age from rising sophomores to a recent college graduate. They worked to share the gospel by building relationships through time spent in coffee shops, interactions at the gym, conversations on the light rail and prayerful encounters in parks.

"As we went throughout the day, it
(See 'Students,' page 6)

GenSend Phoenix team from Alabama

Danielle Waddell, University of Alabama — First Baptist Church, Attalla

▶ Becca Shipman, University of South Alabama — Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile

▶ Alexis Alvarez, Jeff State Community College — New Hope Baptist Church, Pell City

▶ Cass McIntyre, University of South Alabama — First Baptist Church, Butler

▶ Kathleen Cater, University of North Alabama — Harmony Baptist Church, Moulton

▶ Laurel Tolbert, Auburn University — Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea

▶ Caleb Howell, Jacksonville State University — Greenbrier Road Baptist Church, Anniston

▶ Lindsey McCarty, University of South Alabama — Sunrise Baptist Church, Mobile

▶ Noah Grayhek, University of South Alabama — Sunrise Baptist Church, Mobile

▶ Brandon Dunn, University of Alabama — Shoal Creek Baptist Church, Decatur

▶ Charlee Anderson, University of North Alabama — First Bible Church of Decatur

▶ Jacob Runyan, Auburn University — Jasper's First Baptist Church

▶ Hannah Williams, University of North Alabama alumna — Ridgecrest Baptist Church, Montgomery

▶ Justin Hicks, Auburn University — Eastern Hills Baptist Church, Montgomery

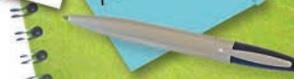
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BACK TO CAMPUS



Fall 2017



COMMENT

Trends in Church Giving

Home ownership in the United States is dropping. According to a Gallup study released in July, home ownership has dropped from a 71 percent average between 2001 and 2009 to a 63 percent average between 2010 and 2017. Home ownership has dropped 10 percent among U.S. adults age 49 and below and 7 percent among those between the ages of 50 to 64. It has dropped in every income group and every region.

The only exception is adults 65 and over where there has been a slight increase in home ownership — up from 81 percent to 82 percent.

What does home ownership have to do with stewardship?

In its analysis, Gallup concluded, “The recent declines in home ownership appear to be a function of many Americans not having the financial means to own a home rather than a result of changes in attitudes about home ownership. The vast majority of nonhomeowners, particularly younger adults, say they intend to buy a home in the next decade.”

Fewer resources

Did you read the words “many Americans not having the financial means to own a home?” One of the major trends in Christian stewardship today is that younger families have fewer resources than their parents. That impacts giving.

A Pew study based on the Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplements showed that in 1967, 33 percent of senior households lived in poverty. That percentage dropped to 11 percent in 2010. In the last seven years it has climbed back up. Today the National Council on Aging found that half of older adults living alone and 1 out of 4 older adults living in two-elder households lack the financial resources required to pay for basic needs (2016 Elder Index).

Poverty rate

Households age 35 and below had a poverty rate of 12 percent in 1967, the study found. By 2010 that had increased to 22 percent and the



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

percentage of children living in poverty continues to grow (now about 1 in 4 in Alabama).

The bottom line is Americans have fewer financial resources than in past years and that is impacting all charitable giving including gifts to churches. Churches can no longer expect members will increase their giving from year to year. Many members struggle with expenses for housing, health care, food, clothing and other survival items.

Teaching basic money management skills and helping members understand how their faith impacts spending decisions is a pressing need as financial resources continue shrinking.

Another trend impacting Christian stewardship is that people are giving less consistently to churches. According to The Giving Institute, 53 percent of all charitable giving went to churches in 1987. In 2014 that percentage was 32 percent. That is a dramatic downward slide that shows no signs of stopping.

Estate giving

Also disappointing was the finding by the latest study by State of the Plate that fewer than 1 in 4 Christians planned to make an estate gift to their church. As Barry Bledsoe of The Baptist Foundation of Alabama is fond of saying, estate giving is the best opportunity most believers have to demonstrate their Christian stewardship values.

The report indicated 59 percent of churches are either flat or declining in giving. And while most

Americans attend small to medium churches, larger churches get most of the money. One study found that 10 percent of the nation’s churches receive 50 percent of church giving.

It is encouraging that 96 percent of church members report giving to their church but the average gift of an American family still falls in the 3 to 5 percent range of total income.

Church members seem to have more of a giving nature than nonchurch members, the State of the Plate study found. About 90 percent of church members reported giving to their church and at least one nonchurch charity. Only about 60 percent of nonchurch members reported giving to a charity.

Online giving

That finding highlights another trend in stewardship. Technology allows givers to bypass traditional giving channels such as denominations and give directly to a church or ministry. Online giving is an example. Now a giver may respond to a sense of obligation, passion or persuasion and make a gift directly to a cause.

While possible 25 years ago, it was much more cumbersome. Today it can be done on a smartphone with little effort. As a result, giving is becoming more diverse and fewer dollars are being channeled through churches or denominations.

Despite these trends perhaps the real task for the Church regarding Christian stewardship is the same as it has always been. Giving is supposed to be an act of worship.

Theologian Mark Allan Powell said, “The offering is an act of worship, an instance in which we are invited to give up something that we value — our money — as a sacrifice to God. In many ways it is the high point of the liturgy. We come to church to worship God and at no other point in the service are we provided with so pure an opportunity for worship as this.”

The offering is not about raising money to pay the bills although a church has bills to pay. The offering is not about satisfying a God who is asking for what we have. God does not need anything from us. The offering is because of a Christian believer’s need to express commitment to God. It is a time to joyfully express one’s love for God.

Act of worship

In a simple and sincere way Christian believers come before God offering a sacrifice representing love and devotion. As Jesus’ story about the widow’s mite (Luke 21:1–4) teaches, it is not the size of the gift that matters, not even the benefit it may bring to the recipient that counts. It is the attitude and motivation of the giver that is primary. Giving is always supposed to be an act of worship and that is more than a trend. 🇺🇸

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

A RIGHT TO VOTE

Some Christians still seem to have a hangover from the days when it was considered unseemly or unspiritual to vote in elections. As if our citizenship in heaven means we have no citizenship here on earth. However, Paul used his earthly citizenship to advance God’s kingdom when he used his Roman citizenship to advance God’s

kingdom and to go to Rome. He said, “I appeal unto Caesar” (Acts 25:11).

So the question for those Christians who don’t vote is why aren’t they using their citizenship (and the right to vote that goes with that citizenship in the U.S.) to advance God’s kingdom?

As a citizen of the U.S., you have a right to vote and be heard in the public square. God’s kingdom may be bigger

than politics but the civil government was ordained by God to serve God and keep order (see Rom. 13). How can it do that properly if we allow ungodly people to manage the affairs of state?

Win Johnson
Montgomery, Ala. 🇺🇸





"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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Builders for Christ

Alabama-rooted ministry approaching 4 decades of church construction

By Karen O. Allen
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Here's the church. Here's the steeple. Open the doors and see all the people. Remember the church rhyme? As children it brought a smile to our face. The "building" did not seem as important as the wriggling "people" (fingers) inside. But Alabama's Builders for Christ (BFC) group prefers to focus on the building so the people will have a place for corporate worship and fellowship.

Every summer BFC volunteers from around the country converge at a site that has undergone an extensive screening process. The project site could be anywhere from Maine to Louisiana or the upper Midwest. Volunteers (aka construction missionaries) give one week of their time for one purpose: to construct a church or church addition in a community with accelerated church growth or dire need. The motto on the BFC truck reinforces the purpose: "a network of Christian laypersons who build churches for congregations who are rapidly leading others to a saving knowledge of Christ as Savior and Lord."

The vast majority of volunteers are non-skilled laborers (e.g. teachers, health care workers, homemakers, salespersons, truck drivers). Skilled volunteers include home builders, engineers and architects. Some are newcomers while many are seasoned BFC veterans. No matter the age, gender or skill set, there is a job for everyone.

The BFC leadership team prepares months in advance for the 15-week construction period that begins in late May and goes through mid-August. Along with planning and coordinating, the leadership team provides advice and consultation to the host church throughout the entire process. The leadership team is composed of a project team leader, construction leader, financial analyst, church team leaders and kitchen coordinator.

Wood and light steel framing, electrical work, plumbing, HVAC services, roofing, drywall, cabinetry, carpentry, hardware installation and painting are services provided by the construction missionaries. Typically it will take about eight months before a building is ready to be occupied.

'Constructing' meals

While the kitchen team may not swing hammers and drive nails, they play a vital role in the building effort "constructing" 300 to 500 meals per day. They prepare a big breakfast, a sandwich/fruit lunch combo and



Photo courtesy of Builders for Christ

Builders for Christ rebuild the worship center and family life center for Roaring Forks Baptist Church following the devastation of the 2016 fires in Gatlinburg, Tennessee.

finally a hearty dinner "equivalent to that of a Thanksgiving meal," said Lawrence Corley, BFC founder.

Corley, a Birmingham architect and member of Brookwood Baptist Church, Birmingham, describes the "BFC seed" as having been planted following his pastor's return from the Southern Baptist Convention in 1979. The pastor gave the disheartening announcement that it would not be possible to tell the world the good news by the year 2000

as hoped. Laypeople were going to have to be enlisted to help fulfill the daunting challenge.

Corley accepted the challenge and focused his efforts on helping build churches.

The first church construction project took place in Adamson, Oklahoma, in 1981. It didn't take long before a network of interested churches began to form.

In 1994, Appleton, Wisconsin, made its debut as the first official construction site under the "Builders for Christ" name. Another BFC team was developed in 1991 and aptly named Team "B." In 2005 Team "C" was added. Corley serves as team leader for Team "A" while Earl Rhyne and Allan Ivemeyer from Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, have served as team leaders for "B" and "C," respectively. With the combined efforts of all three teams, BFC boasts a total of 70 projects in 21 states in the past 37 years.

When asked about the ministry name, Corley says "Builders for Christ" was decided collectively by the volunteers and represents a comprehensive body of builders, not just contractors, electricians, etc.

Volunteers represent a variety of groups including Baptists, Methodists, nondenominational churches, Lutherans, Catholics and Presbyterians as well as come from various states.

Gatlinburg project

This summer BFC went to Gatlinburg, Tennessee, to rebuild the worship center and family life center for Roaring Forks Baptist Church following the devastation of the 2016 fires. The project logged 25,000 square feet. Seventy-six church teams from 22 states with 1,850 volunteers paid their own expenses to sweat in the sweltering heat. Twenty-two teams were from Alabama Baptist congregations.

Kellyann German, a four-year BFC veteran from Meadow Brook Baptist Church, Birmingham, said, "Every year we encounter churches with different ministries and different needs. This year's trip was unique in that it followed a disaster."

At least two other churches have been built by BFC in response to a disaster — Phil Campbell's Mountain View Baptist following the April 2011 tornadoes and First Baptist, Chalmette, Louisiana, following Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

German said she and her husband plan to "serve Christ by serving His church" through BFC as long as they can. ✝

For more information
on Builders for
Christ, visit [www.
baptistbuildersforchrist.org](http://www.baptistbuildersforchrist.org).

Communicating the **gospel**

Storytelling breaks mental barriers, offers unique opportunity to share Christ to all ages

By Denise George
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Jesus knew firsthand the incredible power storytelling had upon His listeners. He communicated God's truth, love, care and redemption through fascinating narratives. Jesus was never without a story to teach or preach.

In His stories, He most often used everyday concrete objects His audience could understand. He told them about a farmer planting seed, a woman making bread, a vineyard owner taking a trip, a persistent widow demanding a judge's justice, a rebellious son, a woman's lost coin, a Good Shepherd's missing lamb.

Rather than use abstract concepts to explain and teach God's love and care, He told stories of birds of the air and lilies of the fields.

"Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear ... look at the birds of the air ... your heavenly Father feeds them ... see how the lilies of the field grow" (Matt. 6:25-28). His listeners could see, hear and touch birds and lilies unlike the intangible, invisible, abstract mental concepts of worry and trust.

"With many stories like these, He presented His message to them, fitting the stories to their experience and maturity," according to The Message translation of Mark 4:33-34.

Jesus' example

We live in a storytelling culture where books and films are eagerly consumed, touching the human heart and making difficult concepts understandable and often leading to life changes. Through Scripture, Jesus Himself teaches Christians how to share the gospel through stories. Why do stories communicate so well?

► **Stories are hardwired into our human DNA.**

Throughout history generations of people have communicated through narrative. Stories are a natural part of life. Even when people sleep, they most often dream in stories.

The Bible itself is a story — the story of Christ and redemption — and Scripture contains many stories within this greater story. A well-told narrative holds a deeper message than what's merely on the surface and stories communicate those lessons well. If all history were taught in understandable narrative format, the multitudes would be eager and excited learners.

► **Stories create readiness to receive God's Word.**

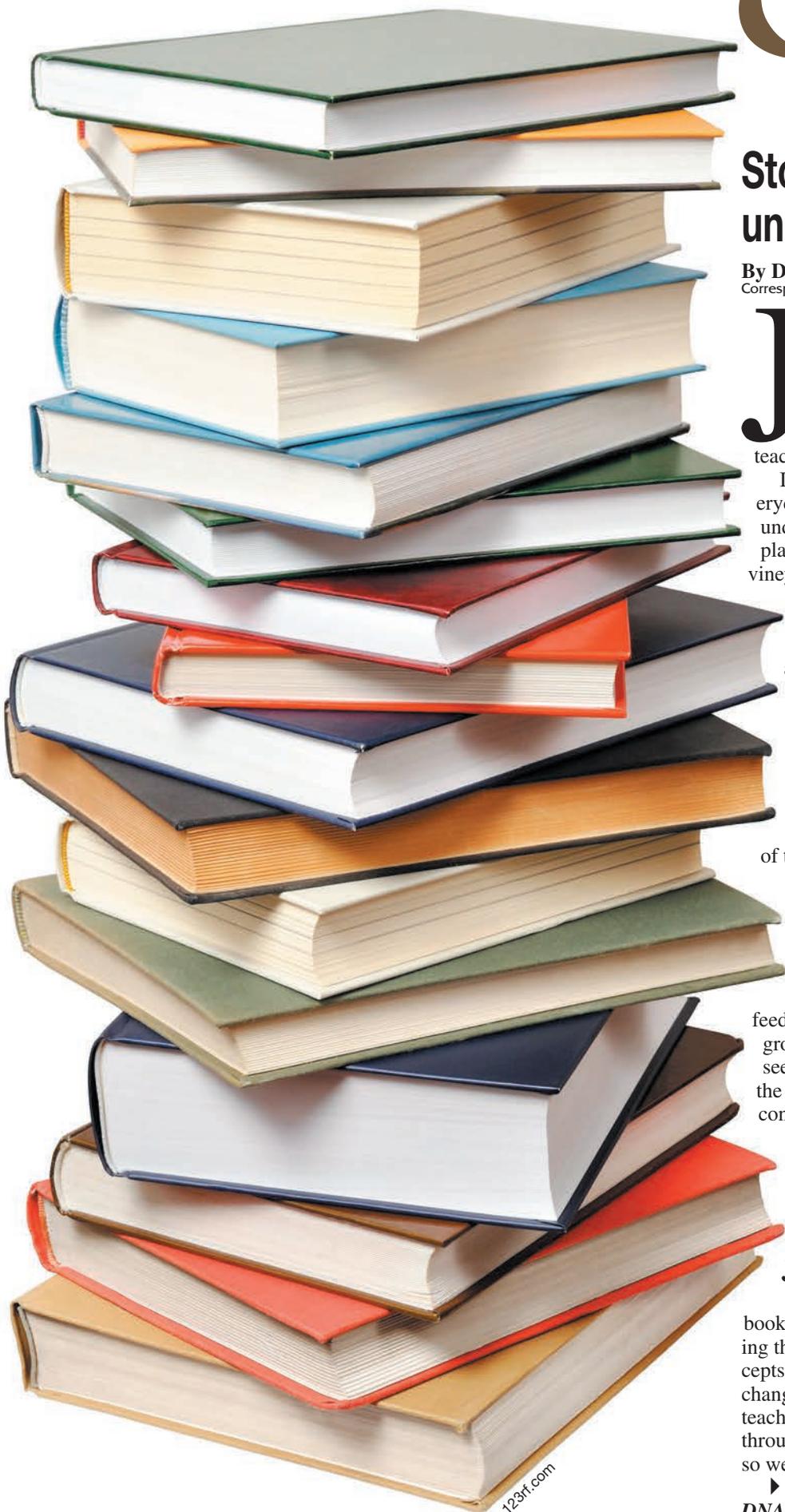
When His disciples asked Jesus, "Why do you tell stories?" He told them, "You've been given insight into God's kingdom. You know how it works. Not everybody has this gift, this insight ... that's why I tell stories: to create readiness, to nudge the people toward receptive insight" (Matt. 13).

Stories gently open the listener's mind and heart, blasting through steel-strong mental and emotional barriers that can cause information to be unheard and rejected. Stories help people make sense out of life and its meaning. Narrative connects with the eternity God has placed in human hearts.

► **Stories communicate to all ages and stages of life.**

Narrative reaches all age groups from young to old. Everyone loves a good story and each person interprets the story's message according to their chronological, developmental and spiritual maturity. For instance: A child reads C.S. Lewis' "The Chronicles of Narnia" series and is captivated by the professor's magical wardrobe and the children's adventures in the make-believe land of Narnia. But a spiritually mature Christian adult reads the same series and immediately understands the intense theological significance of Christ's sacrifice and redemption. Stories meet lis-

"The Bible itself is a story — the story of Christ and redemption — and Scripture contains many stories within this greater story."



through storytelling

teners' ears and they absorb the messages on levels each can understand.

► **People remember stories.**

After a pastor's sermon, people often remember the preacher's stories better than three points of abstract concepts. Stories endure from age to age, told and retold, and are rarely forgotten. The stories Jesus told 2,000 years ago still communicate to us today and continue to teach us significant lessons about God and His plan of loving redemption.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Denise George, author of 30 books, is co-author of the new Penguin Random House book "The Lost Eleven: The Forgotten Story of Black American Soldiers Brutally Massacred in World War II." She is married to Timothy George, founding dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham.

How can Christians share God's story?

1. Know your audience. Use concrete examples your listener will understand. Keep abreast of trends and remember that examples change over the years. Tell stories your listeners will identify with — life happenings they have experienced and values they themselves struggle with. Use stories to show the consequences of both bad and good choices.

2. Draw your listeners in. Begin your story with an object or event that will capture your listener's interest. Jesus sparks undivided attention when He begins the parable of the Good Samaritan. "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of

robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead" (Luke 10:30). We grasp the story and hold on tight, eagerly wanting to know what happened to the man. "Did someone find him?" "Did he die?" Anticipation is built and we wait on tiptoe to find out.

3. Give listeners a dramatic takeaway ending and message. Jesus boggled the minds of His listeners when the dying Jew's rescuer was not a priest or Levite but a Samaritan who "took pity on him" (Luke 10:33). Jews and Samaritans hated each other yet the Samaritan showed compassion that neither priest nor Levite extended. No doubt, the Pharisees who heard Jesus'

story never forgot it. When Jesus asked them the meaning of His story saying, "Who is my neighbor?" they explained the message to Him accurately: "The one who had mercy on him" (Luke 10:37). Their answer gave Jesus the opportunity He had waited for, saying, "Go and do likewise."

4. Study the stories Jesus told in Scripture. Jesus' stories had a captivating beginning, a serious lesson-teaching middle and a surprising (but logical) ending with a deep spiritual takeaway message. We can learn from Him how to creatively tell the gospel of Jesus Christ through story. (Denise George)



Students share gospel, plant seeds in under-churched area

(continued from page 1)
 was really simple, we just made the extra effort to not ignore the person next to us on the bus or the people we interacted with during the day," team member Laurel Tolbert said.

"It's about caring about people and pushing yourself to embrace the awkwardness of talking to a stranger because once that conversation has started it really is fun to talk and meet new people and hear about their life."

Encanto seemed to be made up of people desperate for deep, Christ-centered community, team members determined. Churches are there but a true gospel presence is rare within those buildings, the group said, noting they believed many church leaders withheld the truth of how to access the community they sought through Christ and His Church.

"It was heartbreaking to be in a place that truly doesn't have community," team member Becca Shipman said. "My heart broke for those people because they don't even know what true community looks like, and they are in desperate need of the truth to be preached to them."

Longing for community

Recognizing Encanto's longing for community, GenSend Phoenix set out to begin the process of fostering a place with a sense of belonging.

Through interviewing business owners,

first responders and educators in the area, the team gained valuable knowledge about what it would look like for a future church to actively engage with and reach the community.

Once information had been gathered, the students orchestrated a community event — Party in the Park — to pass out waters, distribute free hot dogs, play a few games of kickball and interact with the park's visitors, one of whom the team had met beforehand and invited to the event.

"We started conversing with our Uber driver," team member Cass McIntyre said.

"It was just small talk at first, but then we got into deeper topics. He basically asked about fighting sin and how a person can keep a smile on their face every day. We got to share about surrender to Jesus and who He is. The gospel was shared and seeds were planted."

The students saw Jesus and His mission in an entirely new light as they witnessed Encanto's yearning for truth and community, experienced differences in the area's churches and noticed their own mindsets on Christian culture expand.

It was not simply an answer to a call to spend a summer on mission in Phoenix — the students allowed their summer on mission to transform the way they view Christ, His Church and the way they interact with the world around them. It was an encounter with an eternal impact, they said.✝

"We just made the extra effort to not ignore the person next to us on the bus or the people we interacted with during the day."

**Laurel Tolbert
 GenSend Phoenix
 team member**



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Doctrine of Sin

Sin's Consequences — Death

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

A prime reason for taking seriously the fact that all of us sin is that sin brings death. Such is the unwavering declaration of Romans 6:23, "The wages of sin is death."

When we think of death as the ultimate result of sin, we must enlarge our understanding of death to match the scope of the Bible's description of death. To do so, we must think of physical, spiritual and eternal death.

The earliest mention of death belongs to God. Before sin entered the picture, God warned Adam against partaking of the fruit of a forbidden tree, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Gen. 2:16-17).

Physical death

Because of sin, Adam experienced physical death. The record of his death is forever recorded in these words, "All the days that Adam lived were 930 years; and he died" (Gen. 5:5).

The same terse obituary attached to Adam's descendants, beginning with his son Seth, "All the days of Seth were 912 years; and he died" (Gen. 5:8).

Throughout the chapter, the phrase "and he died" attached to Enosh (v. 11), Kenan (v. 14), Mahalalel (v. 17), Jared (v. 20), Methuselah (v. 27) and Lamech (v. 31). The only break in the litany of death was Enoch, who bypassed death because God took him (v. 24).

While some Bible students speculate that God's creative intention was from the beginning that humans would die, the usual understanding is that physical death came as a result of the sin of disobedience to God's warning about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Every tombstone in every cemetery stands as a stark reminder that part of the wages of sin is physical death.

Spiritual death

When God pronounced to Adam and Eve concerning fruit from the forbidden tree, "In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die," He must have had in mind a death beyond physical death.

Rather than dying physically on the day they ate fruit from the forbidden tree, Adam and Eve were expelled from Eden to life outside the garden. Hence, God gave humans to understand that distinct from physical death is the reality of spiritual death.

If we think of physical death in terms of the separation of soul from body, so we can think of spiritual death as the separation of a person from God. The sin of Adam and Eve resulted in their separation from God, viewed as life on the outside of the Garden of Eden.

Eternal death

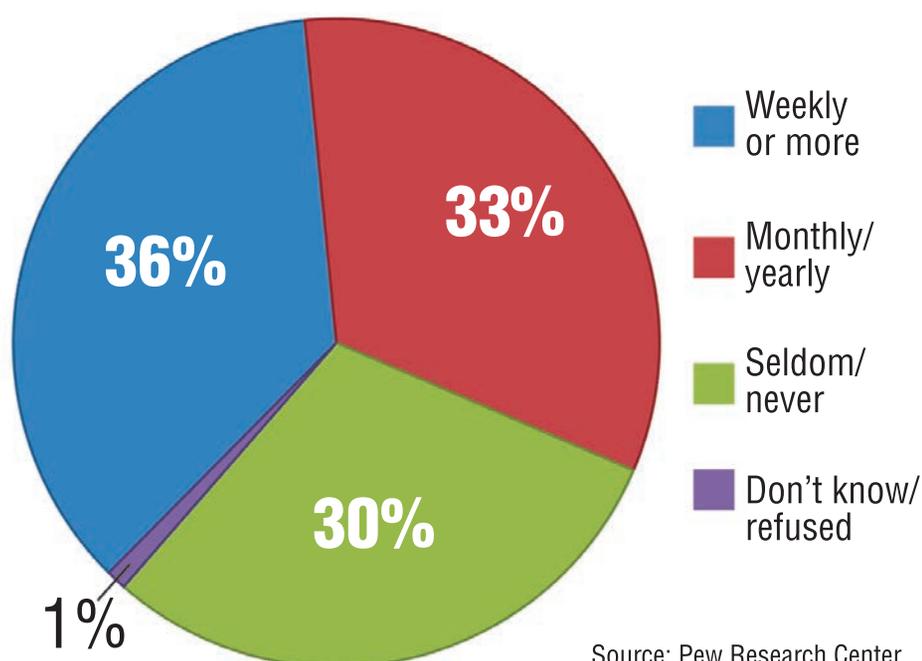
We might say eternal death is the extension forever of spiritual death. Separation from God in this life extended throughout eternity is the essence of spiritual death. Revelation 20:14 speaks of eternal consignment to the "lake of fire" as "the second death." This second death is eternal death.

The first death is physical and one with which every mortal has a divinely set appointment (Heb. 9:27). The second death faces those whose separation from God continues beyond their lifetimes, but for those who come to God through Christ prior to physical death the second death has no power (Rev. 20:6).✝

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.



How often do Americans attend a religious service?



BACK TO CAMPUS

BACK OF CAMPUS



Alabama Baptists can help students by lifting them in prayer

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Chris Mills said he can think of several people he knows who came to faith in Christ in middle school, in high school and in college. And he said he knows that happened because God moved and because a fellow student was bold enough to live out the gospel and share Christ with them.

“We should pray that God would not only open up many avenues for Christian students and youth and college ministry leaders to share with those who don’t know Christ,” said Mills, student missions mobilizer for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. “We should also pray for open receptive hearts. We should pray for boldness among Christian students and leaders.”

Most Christians know they should pray and that it’s extremely important, Mills said.

“But we must not forget that it is a great privilege. As we think about a new school year beginning and the changes that means for students and their families, we are given a unique opportunity to ask God to use this time for His glory,” he said. “Who knows how God may impact the campuses across our state, nation and world through this generation? What a privilege to know God has given us all a unique opportunity to join Him in this work through prayer.”

Ways to pray

It’s a privilege and a necessity, said Greg Davis, executive director of First Priority of Greater Birmingham.

“We all need prayer, we need God’s hand of protection and guidance in our lives, and our students need that just as much or more than any other segment of society,” Davis said.

For the full prayer guide, visit <http://firstpriorityal.com/will-you-pray-for-our-students>.

So to help parents, grandparents and other adults know how to better lift up students, First Priority put together a prayer guide that goes through 24 virtues to pray over them, along with corresponding Scriptures.

Here are 7 of the 24:

- 1. Salvation** — “Lord, let salvation spring up within my children that they may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory” (Isa. 45:8; 2 Tim. 2:10).
- 2. Love for God’s Word** — “May my children grow to find Your Word more precious than much pure gold and sweeter than honey from the comb” (Ps. 19:10).
- 3. Courage** — “May my children always be strong and courageous in their character and in their actions” (Deut. 31:6).
- 4. Kindness** — “Lord, may my children always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else” (1 Thess. 5:15).

5. Compassion — “Lord, please clothe my children with the virtue of compassion” (Col. 3:12).

6. Self-Discipline — “Father, I pray that my children may acquire a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair” (Prov. 1:3).

7. A Heart for Missions — “Lord, please help my children to develop a desire to see Your glory declared among the nations, Your marvelous deeds among the peoples” (Ps. 96:3).

“When we put this guide together, our thought was to see if we can help parents know how to pray for their kids and pray the right kind of virtues into their lives,” Davis said. “Life’s hard for everybody, but especially teenagers. So many come from a home with no parent or single-parent homes.”

Teens are often raising themselves, and the No. 1 influence in their life is their friends, he said.

“It’s important to have good ministry happening in the school system, to reach out to them and pull them in,” Davis said. ✝

“We all need prayer, we need God’s hand of protection and guidance in our lives, and our students need that just as much or more than any other segment of society.”

Greg Davis
executive director, First Priority
of Greater Birmingham



BACK TO CAMPUS

REACHING INTERNATIONALS

Everyday experiences create opportunities for reaching international students in US

By **Carrie Brown McWhorter**
The Alabama Baptist

More than 8,500 international students study on Alabama college and university campuses, providing a remarkable missions opportunity to reach the nations with the gospel, no travel required.

These students come from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds but they have one thing in common — navigating daily life in an unfamiliar country.

“There are so many things that we as Americans do every day that we don’t think about and may not even understand why they’re done the way they are. If that’s true for us, imagine how much more so it is to someone from another country or culture,” said Chris Mills, who serves as student missions mobilizer in the office of collegiate and stu-

dent ministries at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

‘Looking for community’

“International students, like every other student, are looking for community,” Mills said. “They want to learn more about American culture, giving the Church a unique opportunity to engage in life-on-life experiences.”

From providing transportation to assistance with the English language to helping an international student find a doctor or inviting them over for a holiday, everyday experiences are not only what students may need help with but they also are

opportunities for spending time together. Mills said his own experiences abroad prove that.

“Every time I’ve traveled to another country, the greatest experiences have been those where I have gotten to do life with the locals. That is what our interna-

tional friends are looking for,” he said.

Intentional efforts to make these students feel welcome are important, according to Terry Sharp, a former International Mission Board (IMB) missionary who serves as state, association and diaspora network leader at IMB. In a blog post at IMB.org, Sharp notes that 75 percent of international students are never invited into an American home. That fact alone increases the importance of welcoming them into our homes and lives.

Friendship is key

“The opportunity for believers to serve international students through simply welcoming them in and helping them acclimate to their new home and culture is astounding,” Sharp writes. “No international student who wants to have an American friend should ever be lacking.”

Friendship is a first step that can lead to opportunities to share one’s faith, Mills said.

“International students are



Photo courtesy of Chris Mills

A group of Auburn University at Montgomery students participate in the 2015 International Friends Retreat. The annual event is co-sponsored by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and Alabama Woman’s Missionary Union.

looking for meaningful relationships with others,” he said. “Why not seek to be that friend? We find that as in all of our relationships the students will grow to respect us more and want to learn more the things that are most important to us, including our faith, while

we grow to love them more and want to share the hope of Christ with them.”

According to the 2016 Open Doors report by the Institute of International Education, more than half of the international students studying in Alabama come

RESOURCES

“Crossing Cultures with Jesus: Sharing Good News with Sensitivity and Grace” by Katie J. Rawson

“Faces in the Crowd: Reaching Your International Neighbor for Christ” by Donna S. Thomas



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The 2017 International Friends Retreat will be Sept. 29–30 at WorldSong Missions Place in Cook Springs. For details, visit onemissionstudents.org.

The 2016 retreat is pictured below.



Photo courtesy of Chris Mills

from China, India and Saudi Arabia, countries that are home to some 2,000 unreached or unengaged people groups. International students from these regions who hear the gospel may return to their families and people groups as missionaries themselves.

‘Global intersections’

“Not only are these students coming from unreached areas, they are returning to positions of influence,” Mills said. “These students can go back home to not only influence their families and communities with the gospel but potentially their entire nation.”

Christian students play a role in reaching international students

too. In college Stefani Varner, who serves on the IMB church initiatives team, had many Chinese friends. She later served as a missionary in South Asia.

American university campuses serve as “global intersections for education, ideas and interactions with the world’s future leaders,” Varner writes at IMB.org. “God has given evangelical university students in the U.S. unprecedented opportunities to live missionally and intentionally build relationships with people who represent some of the largest unreached people groups in the world.”

Awareness of the missional opportunities among the vast number of unreached peoples

represented on college campuses should lead us to act, Mills said. Prayer is the key.

‘At our back door’

“Pray for ministry efforts, softened hearts and obedience to these unique opportunities that God has provided all across our state,” he said. “The nations are at our back door and they desire to know us — to really know us. Engagement is essential. What a unique opportunity we have to do life and in doing to share eternal life with them. May God find us faithful to opening our eyes, hearts and homes to the nations that He has brought to our communities.”



Kevin Blackwell, assistant to the president for church relations and executive director of the Ministry Training Institute at Samford University in Birmingham, is the new stadium announcer for Samford’s football team.

10 survival tips for teens

1. They should know that just because things get difficult, it’s no reason to believe God is on vacation.

2. They should know how to persevere in the face of disappointment.

3. They should know life isn’t fair. And be grateful for that.

4. They should know to have an active prayer life before a crisis arises.

5. They should know the cure for sitting around feeling miserable and depressed is to go outside and find somebody to serve.

6. They should know life isn’t about avoiding struggles but overcoming them.

7. They should know God has a plan for them. And it is most likely different from their plan.

8. They should know to not dwell on their mistakes. There was only one perfect human being. Move on.

9. They should know to turn over each business meeting, each relationship, each dollar to His care. Each day.

10. They should know to do something wonderful for somebody every day — and not get found out.

Source: “1001 Things Every Teen Should Know Before They Leave Home: (Or Else They’ll Come Back)” © 2007 by Harry H. Harrison Jr. Published by Thomas Nelson Publishers Inc., Nashville, Tennessee



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BACK TO CAMPUS

'One of the greatest MISSIONS FIELDS'

University of South Alabama student shares Christ on campus

Ashley Barkley was sitting outside of the student center at the University of South Alabama when she felt impressed to silently pray. "When I raised my head, a young guy was standing beside me," she said. "He then asked if I was a Christian and if I was just praying."

Barkley said yes. And the young man — Sean — asked if he could ask her some questions.

"The questions contained who is God to me, is my God a good God, where is heaven, who goes to hell and why," Barkley said. "I asked him why he was asking me these questions, and he told me he's searched the world over but he just feels broken."

So she began to share her testimony with him — that she had been broken and had also searched for something to fill the void in her life.

She said the only thing that can fill that void is Jesus. "He then simply asked, 'How?'"

Barkley began to share the gospel with Sean, pulling out her Bible and walking him through Scripture. "After a short conversation of those passages, Sean told me, 'I want what you have. I want Who you have.' And after that, he prayed for Christ to come and cleanse every part of him," she said.

God works in amazing ways, Barkley said. "I didn't do anything. It was Sean and Jesus the whole time. To me, this is a pure testimony that God is in control. Oftentimes we Christians just need to say 'yes' to the conversation God literally places right in front of us."

Beth Gardner, Baptist campus minister at the University of South Alabama, asked for prayer for students like Barkley to have courage to reach out to their peers.

"Because a college campus is one of the greatest missions fields, students need others praying for boldness to step out in faith and share with students who desperately need to know and experience God's love," Gardner said. (Grace Thornton)

"Oftentimes we Christians just need to say 'yes' to the conversation God literally places right in front of us."

Ashley Barkley
University of South Alabama student



Ashley Barkley

Photo courtesy of Ashley Barkley



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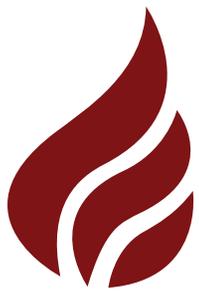
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- Friday, September 22, 2017
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- Friday, November 17, 2017
- Monday, February 26, 2018
- Monday, March 19, 2018

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JUDSON COLLEGE

Judson continues to help young women belong, believe, become

Julia Tarrant Barron was a “mover and shaker” among early Alabama Baptists. A wealthy widow with significant influence in her community of Marion, Barron organized meetings to discuss the founding of both the Judson Female Institute, now Judson College, and Howard College, now Samford University. A dedicated member of Siloam Baptist Church, an early co-owner of *The Alabama Baptist*, and a strong supporter of Baptist missions, Barron lived her life for things that would outlast her.

Barron was among those Alabama Baptists who believed deeply in the ties between personal faith and public good.

During the 1830s and 1840s, Baptist churches and associations in Alabama were divided over the issue of whether missions was a necessary endeavor of the church.

Scathing condemnations of each side were recorded by both missionary and anti-missionary groups. Hosea Holcombe, a champion of missions in central Alabama, criticized the anti-missionary Baptists: “They ... have often boasted that they did no harm. But the ground of their condemnation will be that they did no good.”

Embracing this emphasis on the necessity of “doing good,” Barron and her Baptist contemporaries wanted to educate generations of young women who would make lasting contributions to their communities and to the kingdom of God.

Barron and other Judson College founders also realized the importance of partnership. They learned from experience that their contributions as individuals had far greater effects when applied in a community of believers who sought to accomplish great things for the glory of God and the good of their neighbors.

This legacy shapes and inspires Judson College even in 2017. Judson students learn that they have both the individual and communal responsibility to share Christ’s love and redemptive work in the world, thus “storing up” treasures that will outlast them (Luke 12:22–34). The 2017 student life theme “Belong. Believe. Become.” echoes this idea and will direct the efforts

of Judson’s campus community in the coming year.

Belong.

As a woman who managed property, a business and considerable wealth alone nearly a century before women in the United States gained the right to vote, Barron held a deep conviction that women belonged as active members in society. She believed so strongly in the importance of Christian higher education for women that, though she had no daughters of her own, she generously and sacrificially gave money and land for the founding of the first women’s college in Alabama.

Today students at that college work, serve and learn together on a campus pervaded by

IMPORTANT DATES

Scholarship Days:

- ▶ September 23
- ▶ November 18
- ▶ January 20

Junior Preview Day:

- ▶ May 5



Photo courtesy of Judson College

Judson students celebrate ties to the college’s founders on Rose Sunday.

a strong sense of belonging. Each Judson woman is known and encouraged to use her unique talents as a member of a community that is nationally recognized for its commitment to “the greater good.”

New Student Welcome Week begins August 27 with move-in and continues with a flurry of activity: a team-building campus-wide mega relay race at the Back to School Bash; meeting and serving Marion’s people during Marion Matters; and celebrating ties to Judson’s founders and to other generations of Judson women with Rose Sunday. These activities foster a sense of community at Judson as they help students find ways to connect with each other, with the College, with their neighbors and with Christ.

Believe.

Barron and other Alabama Baptist founders named their first college after Ann Judson, America’s first woman to serve as a foreign missionary. Ann Judson gave her life selflessly to the people of Burma, translating Scripture, befriending and ministering to women and teaching girls while also supporting the work of her husband. The Judson Female Institute’s founders wanted their new college to be a place “of Christ” in which young women could learn to wholeheartedly follow Christ with their lives, as Ann Judson had.

The same vision is present in the Judson College of today. Students have opportunities to deepen their faith through weekly Chapel services, small group Bible studies, and relationships with local church members. Through Judson’s Faith-Based Service and Learning program, students incorporate service into their coursework, applying skills and theories learned in the classroom to service in their communities.

Last year Judson students taught art education classes for elementary and high school students, performed chemical analyses to monitor the purity of Cahaba River

watersheds, visited elderly shut-ins and read to children at the local Head Start center. Students also served on missions teams during semester breaks in Alabama, Tennessee, Arizona, New York, Myanmar, Guatemala and Uganda.

Become.

While Julia Barron and other Judson founders believed in the value of education as an end in itself, their ultimate focus was always on the positive change that educated women could have on families, communities, churches and the world. Education provided young women with the skills they needed to make the best use of the unique talents God had given them. The same is true today.

Through engaging academics and opportunities to practice and grow in their faith, Judson women are prepared to become all that God calls them to be. Over the past 20 years, 96 percent of Judson students have enrolled in graduate school or been employed within a year of their graduation. This year’s graduates included a student who won a national research award, a student who participated in one of

the most significant archaeological digs in recent history and a student who will spend her life strengthening Baptist congregations in Myanmar.

Though they have accomplished much, these Judson women live in service of a greater purpose than personal gain or glory. They follow in the footsteps of alumnae that include the first woman to address a legislative body in the state of Alabama, the woman who opened the first domestic violence shelter in Alabama and countless others who have followed God’s call to missions fields near and far. Judson women, no matter their vocation, stride toward the future with trust in the faithfulness of God and with determination to continue the legacy of Julia Barron. (Judson)



Photo courtesy of Judson College

Judson College students and faculty play games with nursing home residents at a Marion Matters project site.



Photo courtesy of Judson College

Judson students enjoy team-building activities at the annual Back to School Bash.

BACK TO CAMPUS

Brooks joins UA's Baptist campus ministry team

Returning students at the University of Alabama (UA) will be seeing a fresh face in campus ministry this year as Ryan Brooks is the newest Baptist campus minister.

Brooks joins UA Baptist campus minister Kimberly Andrews in ministering to college students in Tuscaloosa. He fills in the shoes of Nate Young, who recently joined the staff of North River Church, Tuscaloosa.

Brooks came to UA from First Baptist Church, Taylors, in Greer, South Carolina, where he served as minister of college and young singles. Prior to that he served as Baptist

collegiate minister for Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina.

"The college campus is the most strategic missions field in America (with) the opportunity for many to come to Christ, train disciples and see future leaders in our churches thrive and be challenged," he said.

Brooks holds a bachelor's degree in religion from Furman and a master of divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

He and his wife, Miriam, have three children. (TAB)



BROOKS

"The college campus is the most strategic missions field in America."

Ryan Brooks, UA Baptist campus minister

How you can pray for STUDENTS

Pray for campuses like they are missions fields

Holly Muncie, who serves with All Things Ministries at Auburn University, offered several ways from her perspective that Alabama Baptists could pray toward this end: **Pray for believing students to have heavy hearts.**

"Pray that believing students would realize the huge number of unbelievers on campus," she said.

At Auburn, in the college ministry of Muncie's church — First Baptist, Opelika — college minister Trace Hamiter reminds students constantly of "the other 19,000," Muncie said.

"This is an estimate of the number of students at Auburn not involved in a ministry or church or walking with Christ," she said. "We pray our students develop a

heavy heart for them and become selfless to minister to them."

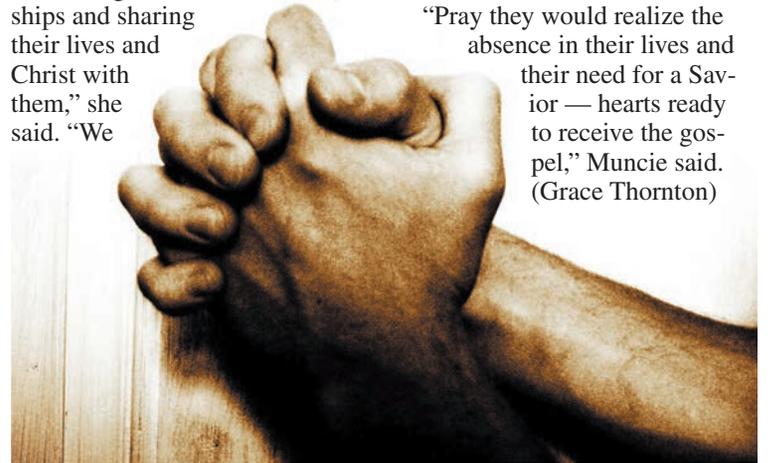
Pray for them to have boldness.

"Pray believing students would be bold with fellow students in building relationships and sharing their lives and Christ with them," she said. "We

pray that nothing would stop them from wanting to share the greatest gift and that they will build real, connected relationships with people unlike them."

Pray for a softening of hearts in nonbelievers.

"Pray they would realize the absence in their lives and their need for a Savior — hearts ready to receive the gospel," Muncie said. (Grace Thornton)



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Samford sees continued progress with new programs, new facilities

Samford University in Birmingham begins its 176th year during some of the most historic progress in university history. The addition of new degree programs, anticipated record enrollments and major campus improvements will greet students as they return to campus in August. Undergraduate classes begin Aug. 28, but many graduate and professional programs begin earlier in the month.

The university continues to be the highest nationally ranked private institution in Alabama and among the best Christian universities in the U.S. Samford also has been ranked for academics, affordability and value by *U.S. News & World Report*, Kiplinger's Personal Finance, The Economist and *The Wall Street Journal*, among others.

As Samford has grown and prospered through the years, it has never wavered from the mission and vision of its Alabama Baptist founders, and the university continues to fulfill that mission in its traditional academic programs as well as in programs that support the work of Alabama Baptist churches and the global community the university now serves.

"We value the relationship we have with Alabama Baptists, and it is a privilege to serve our churches and friends by educating your students and by providing other opportunities that further the kingdom of God," said Samford President Andrew Westmoreland.

Ministry Training Institute

Samford's Ministry Training Institute (MTI) offers educational opportunities in ministry training and biblical studies. Our courses are conveniently delivered both

online or through our vast extension network. Samford is committed to providing the most affordable and accessible education to our students.

The institute provides online certificate programs in pastoral leadership, worship leadership and student ministry. First fall term classes begin Aug. 22 and second fall term classes begin Oct. 24.

On-site extension classes are offered throughout the fall at 26 sites around the state.

"Last year the Ministry Training Institute enjoyed a phenomenal year," said Kevin Blackwell, assistant to the president for church relations and MTI coordinator. "Our final numbers included 1,560 enrollments, five new extension locations and 90 students received diplomas and certificates at our spring commencement. This new year we are adding an advanced diploma and five new courses to our curriculum as well as a new extension site at the Hamilton County Baptist Association in Chattanooga, Tennessee."

Lay Academy of Theology

One of Samford's most popular programs is the Lay Academy of Theology coordinated by Beeson Divinity School. Four non-credit classes taught by Beeson faculty members are being offered during the fall term and are designed for laypersons who want to explore Bible and theology topics.

"Six of Twelve: Nahum to Malachi," taught by Mark Gignilliat, is a study of the Minor Prophets. Six Monday evening class sessions begin Sept. 25 and end Oct. 30.

"Divine Signs: God's Fingerprints in all Reality" explores signs of divine glory in nature, science, law, history, sports and love. Taught by Gerald McDermott, the six



Photo by Caroline Summers

Tuesday evening sessions begin Sept. 26 and end Oct. 31.

"Theology of Hebrews," taught by Sydney Park, will meet for six Thursday evenings beginning Sept. 28 and ending Nov. 2.

"The Household of Faith: What Every Believer Should Know About the Church" will meet from 1–3 p.m. on Thursdays beginning Sept. 28 and ending Nov. 2. The course will be taught by Doug Webster.

More information, including registration, is available at beesondivinity.com/lay-academy.

Community engagement

Giving back to the community always has been a hallmark of Samford University. Last year, Samford students contributed 972,192 hours of service in missions, ministry and other opportunities around the world.

"Community engagement is simply part of the university's DNA," said Drayton Nabers, director of Samford's Frances Marlin Mann Center for Ethics and Leadership. "The experiences of students when engaged in community work will stay with them for a lifetime."

With more than 295 courses that integrated community engagement as an academic component, the university worked with hundreds of community partners and other nongovernment organizations around the world that span initiatives in the arts, ministry, athletics, youth services, education and legal fields, environmental justice, and the health care industry, to name a few.

One of the newest partnerships is with New Rising Star Baptist Church, Birmingham, led by Pastor Thomas Beavers, a Samford alumnus.

The eight-week New Rising Star Aca-

demic Enrichment Camp in July involved more than 100 children in an academic enrichment program developed by the American Baseball Foundation that utilizes sports to engage students in an effort to limit summer learning loss.

The camp included a field trip to Samford's campus for 85 pre-K through eighth-grade campers. Campers enjoyed a fun-filled field day on the university's quad with activities, lunch in the cafeteria and a show in Christenberry Planetarium. Rising sixth through eighth graders also participated in a campus tour from two Samford student guides.

"This field trip was a great way to open Samford's gates to one of our community partners and we hope to provide more opportunities like this," said Allison Nanni, director of community engagement for the Mann Center.

More improvements coming

Samford welcomes 19 new faculty members for the 2017–18 academic year. New academic programs are being added in law, health sciences and divinity, including several cross-discipline joint degree programs.

The university also has begun implementing a multiyear campus master plan that represents the first major update to the plan since relocation to the current campus 60 years ago. Renovations are underway in several academic buildings and iconic Reid Chapel, and a new residence facility will open for the fall semester.

Part of the master plan includes infrastructure updates that will save the university an estimated \$1.65 million annually in energy savings over the next several years. New energy-efficient windows and lighting already have been installed in many buildings, and others will be completed in the months ahead. (Samford)

Key fall events at Samford

- ▶ **Aug. 29** — Opening Convocation of the 176th anniversary academic session, 10 a.m., Wright Center
- ▶ **Sept. 6** — An Evening of Worship with Ragan Courtney and Cynthia Clawson, 6 p.m., First Baptist Church, Birmingham
- ▶ **Sept. 8** — Tonight at the Wright presents the Gaither Vocal Band, 7 p.m.
- ▶ **Sept. 28–Oct. 1** — Family Weekend
- ▶ **Oct. 1** — Samford Hymn Sing, 2 p.m., First Baptist Church, Birmingham
- ▶ **Nov. 2** — Davis Lecture featuring Pulitzer Prize-winning author Dan Fagin, 7 p.m., Wright Center
- ▶ **Nov. 10–12** — Homecoming
- ▶ **Dec. 7** — Choral Vespers: Lessons and Carols, 5:30 p.m., Hodges Chapel

For more information on these and all events at Samford, visit samford.edu/events.

BACK TO CAMPUS

CAMPUS News



JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Judson College holds 179th commencement:** Judson College held its 179th commencement June 24, 2017. Graduates and guests filled the College's Alumnae Auditorium in Marion to recognize the hard work and achievements of the Class of 2017.

Alabama Supreme Court Justice Kelli Wise gave the commencement address, encouraging graduates to embrace both the excitement and "twinge of fear" as they enter potentially "messy" and "complicated" lives after college.

► **Judson College holds Preview Day on Sept. 23:** Judson College's Preview and Scholarship Day on Sept. 23 is an opportunity for students to live like a college student and participate in student activities from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Prospective students who have

applied to Judson may take a general aptitude academic scholarship test to compete for institutional academic scholarships. Performing arts and athletic scholarships also are available. For more information, visit www.judson.edu/event/september-preview-day/.

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **University of Mobile Names Entrepreneur Todd Greer as Dean of UM School of Business:**

Todd Greer, chief catalyst and CEO of Exchange202, a shared workspace community in the heart of downtown Mobile, has



GREER

been named dean of the School of Business at University of Mobile (UM).

Greer will lead expansion and program development for UM and he will continue his work with Exchange202 and other business incubator programs, giving UM students expanded opportunities for real-world experience and internships in business development, entrepreneurship and community engagement.

► **University of Mobile Names Worship Pioneer Steve Bowersox to Head Worship Program:**

University of Mobile (UM) has named a pioneer in worship leadership with expertise in technology and training in the church, Steve Bowersox, to lead the worship program for the Alabama School of the Arts. Bowersox joined the UM faculty Aug. 1.

Since 2013 he has served as executive pastor of worship at

First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Florida. He also is the founding executive director of Integrity Music's Worship International and Seminars for Worship.



BOWERSOX

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Samford University to Host Environmental Journalist Dan Fagin on Nov. 2:**

Pulitzer Prize-winning science and environmental journalist Dan Fagin will present the 2017 J. Roderick Davis Lecture at Samford University on Nov. 2 at 7 p.m. in Wright Center Concert Hall. The university's Howard College of Arts and Sciences (HCAS) and The Frances

Marlin Mann Center for Ethics and Leadership are partnering to host the free public lecture.

Fagin is a professor of journalism at New York University's (NYU) Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute, and director of the NYU Science, Health and Environmental Reporting Program. He also wrote "Toms River," a true story of childhood cancers caused by industrial pollution in the town of Toms River, New Jersey.

► **Samford Student Magazine Honored in National Competition:**

Samford University's *The Local* student magazine earned honorable mention in the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication's annual competition in July.

This year the competition attracted 222 entries from 22 universities. *The Local* was honored for its overall look and quality of the magazine and cover, along with the quality of stories and designs.

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'A New Day, A New Journey'

If there is one word that describes what is happening at University of Mobile (UM), it is "new." Throw in a few more words like "innovative" and "academic," plus creative ideas like "Focus Friday" and "Concierge Model." Add a Great Commission mindset, create academic programs, raise academic standards, build cutting-edge health care labs and seek out opportunities for collaboration and partnership in the community and across the state.

As UM's new president said when he arrived at the Baptist university just a little over one year ago, it's "A New Day, A New Journey" at University of Mobile.

"Our responsibility as a higher education institution, and especially with our mission of imago Dei that we be the servants of Christ, is to stay at the forefront of marketplace needs so that graduates can go out and serve the community. Because of our nimbleness and innovative mindset, we have the ability to develop programs efficiently," said Dr. Timothy L. Smith.

Fall semester

It's not too late to enroll for fall semester classes that begin Aug. 21. For information about the university and to apply for admission, visit umobile.edu/apply or call the Office for Admissions at 251-442-2222.

As the 2017-2018 academic year begins, students are looking forward to the addition of a disc golf course on campus, plus more opportunities for activities, academic experiences and service on Focus Fridays.

The university is expanding opportunities

for post-traditional adult students, with programs offered in flexible formats online, on-campus and blended. More graduate degrees, bachelor's degrees and certificate programs in youth ministry and college readiness are available.

The university is growing rapidly. Since fall 2016, UM has:

- ▶ Rebranded using the phrases "Higher Education for a Higher Purpose" and "Know and Be Known" to communicate the university's mission.

- ▶ Opened the Center for Excellence in Healthcare Practice with state-of-the-art simulators.

- ▶ Expanded graduate programs with Master of Science in Nursing — Family Nurse Practitioner, Master of Education in Higher Education Leadership and Policy, Master

of Music in Performance — Piano, Master of Music in Performance — Voice.

- ▶ Required weekly chapel attendance.

- ▶ Launched "Focus Fridays," an innovative four-day academic week.

- ▶ Created the Office for Global Engagement to expand study, service and research abroad programs.

- ▶ Initiated a "Concierge Model" to enhance the university emphasis on personal attention to students.

- ▶ Restructured to expand academic programs, creating the Alabama School of the Arts with Roger Breland Center for Performing Arts; the College of Health Professions umbrella for the School of Nursing, new School of Health and Sports Science, and new School of Allied Health; and the Alabama College for Online Studies

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Photo courtesy of University of Mobile

The graduating Class of 2017 was the first to start a new tradition when each graduate touched the globe as he or she recessed out from the graduation ceremony, held for the first time in 41 years on the lawn in front of Weaver Hall. New students this fall semester will begin their college journey by touching the globe. The action is a public declaration of their intent to prepare for their Great Commission calling and their willingness upon graduation to use their knowledge and talents to respond, 'Send Me.'

with expanded degree programs for adult students.

- ▶ Became an internationally recognized All-Steinway School.

- ▶ Dedicated the Dr. Fred and Sue Lackey Great Commission Tradition Lawn with a Great Commission Globe fountain as a central point for campus and new freshman and graduation traditions.

- ▶ Returned graduation ceremonies to campus for the first time in 41 years.

- ▶ Added a bachelor of arts degree in classics and an accelerated bachelor of science degree in nursing, with more academic programs planned. (UM)

Visit UM

University of Mobile (UM) was named No. 8 Best Regional Liberal Arts Colleges in the South and No. 3 Best Regional Colleges in the South for Veterans by 2017 *U.S. News & World Report*, and America's Best Christian Colleges and America's 100 Best College Buys by 2017 Institutional Research & Evaluation Inc.

Preview Days and private tours give prospective students and their families the opportunity to discover UM in person. A \$2,000 scholarship is available to new traditional undergraduate students who schedule a campus visit, apply for admission and enroll.

Register online for a Preview Day or private tour at umobile.edu/preview. Preview Days are:

- ▶ Friday, Sept. 22, 2017
- ▶ Monday, Oct. 9, 2017
- ▶ Friday, Nov. 17, 2017
- ▶ Monday, Feb. 26, 2018
- ▶ Monday, March 19, 2018 (UM)



Photo courtesy of University of Mobile

The Dr. and Mrs. Fred Lackey Great Commission Tradition Lawn and Great Commission Globe is a new central feature of the University of Mobile campus and a visible symbol of the Great Commission purpose of Christian higher education.

My UM story

Gabriella Loiacano is a junior and member of the University of Mobile Ambassadors student leader organization. As a sophomore in April, she was named state winner in the highly competitive lower college division of the 2017 Alabama Music Teachers Association piano competition. This is her story.

"I am so grateful to be at a university that creates an environment where I can truly thrive in my art and in my faith.

"I believe the greatest factor that builds my confidence and enables me to be competitive at such a high level is my faith in Jesus Christ and the fact that I go to a university that not only does

not question, criticize or persecute my beliefs, but exhorts me to make my faith my own and to grow in my Christian walk.

"There is big Kingdom work going on at UM, and I believe God is the One empowering us to excel and bestowing us with favor so that we can glorify Him with our achievements.

"When I compete and my fingers meet the keys of my instrument, I always whisper 'Soli Deo Gloria' ('to God be the glory') and rest in my

confidence in the Giver of my gift and in the training and experience He is graciously providing me." (UM)

Read more UM stories at umobile.edu/stories.



LOIACANO

BACK TO CAMPUS

LOVE AND SERVICE



Photo courtesy of Quest Kids Club

Quest Kids Club participants serve ice cream at the Veteran's Home in Pell City and two other nursing homes in the area. The organization offers a place for children to have access to community service, character development, education assistance and more.

Quest Kids child-care ministry emphasizes community service, character building

By Anna Keller
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Since 2014 the Quest Kids Club — a non-profit organization based in Riverside — has offered a place for children kindergarten through sixth grade to have year-round access to community service, character development, education assistance and more.

“This summer, we averaged 60

kids each week,” said Kari Callahan, founder and director of the Quest Kids Club. “Some kids come all summer and others may only attend for one or two weeks. We were able to minister to 98 kids in total throughout the summer.”

Callahan grew up the daughter of a children’s minister and always pictured herself involved in some form of ministry. She volunteered at an afterschool program as a col-

lege student but observed a lack of mentoring and teaching. She started thinking of ways to use those afterschool hours for something more productive and the Quest Kids Club began in June of 2014.

Highlight of the week

For children like Steelie Chance Jr., who will be a first grader this fall, Quest Kids Club is a highlight of his week. He has made so many memories and

shared so many milestones with his fellow Quest kids, said his mother, Sacha Themelis Chance. Another plus for Sacha Chance is that Quest reinforces the parenting approach she’s taking at home.

“Kari teaches these kids core values and morals that I instill at home,” Sacha Chance said. “She teaches them to be kind and generous and to help the less fortunate. They’ve done collections for

the needy and seen it through to the end — all while having fun.”

Two programs

Quest offers two separate programs: the After School Club, which runs during the school year, and Summer Day Camp.

In both programs, Quest divides kids into squads based on their ages. Kids participate in fun games and events, a devotion rotation and a worship service

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<p>98% of undergraduate alumni are employed or in graduate school within six months of graduation</p>	<p>50,000 alumni worldwide</p>	<p>Best Value top college for employment of graduates <small>—Educate to Career</small></p>	

Samford University is an Equal Opportunity Educational Institution/Employer.

(called Celebration). They also learn Bible stories, participate in service projects and much more.

“We are trying to teach them to love and serve others and to

be good citizens in their community,” Callahan said. “This summer they served ice cream at the Veteran’s Home in Pell City and two other nursing homes in our area. They loved getting to play bingo with the folks at Village East. Some of the boys helped unload and organize items in the food pantry. They also handed out waters at Lakeside Park with little notes to brighten people’s day.”

Lindsey Eades, a 10-year-old Quest Kids Club participant, sees the importance in serving.

“I think it’s important to serve others because God had a plan for us to do this and He wants us to go serve people and to put a smile on their face and make them

happy,” she said. “It also helps us to not be selfish and to love others how God has loved us.”

Any child in the community can attend Quest Kids Club, but the organization relies on support from outside donations. Scholarship support allows students to attend Quest at half the regular monthly program fee. Westwood

Baptist Church, Alabaster, supports the organization by donating to their scholarship fund each week and First Baptist Church, Pell City, also is a contributor. 🇺🇸



Photo courtesy of Quest Kids Club Children at Quest Kids Club participate in a devotion rotation and a worship service called Celebration.

For more information about Quest Kids Club and how to enroll your child or help support the ministry, visit questkidsclub.org or their Facebook page (facebook.com/questkidsclub/).



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“[God] wants us to go serve people and to put a smile on their face and make them happy.”

Lindsey Eades
10-year-old Quest Kids Club participant

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Internet addiction

Parents can help teenagers struggling with 'ever-present need to be connected'

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

The last week of July, Scooter Kellum and other youth leaders from Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery, drove a group of teenagers away from the Ocoee River and back into the reach of a cellphone signal.

And the whole carload of teens' phones lit up.

"It's amazing how dependent we get on the internet," said Kellum, youth ministry strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, talking about himself.

But Kellum didn't grow up with that kind of connectedness. "It's so accessible to them," he said. "It's a means of communication, a means of living life together."

That in and of itself isn't necessarily bad, he said.

But there are so many things for teens to guard against, from pornography all the way to just making sure they leave plenty of time to establish real relationships, Kellum said. He asked the teens in his car — leaders in the youth

group — what's the worst thing they've seen happen in their own lives or the lives of their friends as a result of the internet?

Their answers — Suicide. Pornography. The fact that it takes so much time away from their family. The fact that it takes so much effort not to fall into temptation because it's right at your fingertips.

It can become an addiction, according to Lisa Keane, clinical director of marriage and family for Pathways Professional Counseling, a ministry of Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries (ABCH).

"It's a huge problem plaguing many teens and their families," she said. "There is a growing and

ever-present need to be connected and be in the know."

Looking for validation

They can be drawn to the more sinister issues, sure — like online gambling or bullying — but they can also get to a point where they simply struggle to unplug.

"They struggle to be alone or to be OK without the validation that the internet and social media offer," Keane said. "The larger issue

with that is their self esteem, self worth and identity become entangled with the validation of others through likes and comments."

It also crowds out a relationship with God, she said, and disrupts the opportunity to see "our worth and value ultimately come from Him."

It's a topic that the Church — parents and teens alike — can't afford to stick their heads in the sand about and think it will all be OK, she said. "We need to be taking proactive stances on making sure we teach healthy, safe consumption of the internet."

It's OK to be informed — that's important, Keane said. But parents and leaders need to model healthy technology behavior, she said. "It's hard to help a teen make good, healthy tech choices when they tell me their parent is constantly on their phone or checking Facebook too."

Another way to help teens take a breath from technology and learn how to disconnect is to offer opportunities to go device-free — much like Kellum's group did on their rafting trip.

Keane said she worked at an all-girls summer camp, and the high school campers — who were there for five weeks without technology — reported feeling more connected to friends, having better

conversations and having a great deal more space in their lives to hear from the Lord when they left.

'Focus on relationships'

"Offer times that teens can unplug and focus on relationships with others as well as their relationships with God," she said.

Kellum agreed. "Our students realized how refreshing it can be not to have the internet," he said. "It was refreshing to be able to sit around a circle this weekend and

talk with each other without distractions."

Technology can offer so many ways to share the gospel but it also can take over your life if you don't guard against that, for yourself and your teenagers, Kellum said.

"We need to put structure and guidelines in place," he said. "The kids are going to fight you on it a lot of the time but we are the parents. We need to have access to and control over what is going on with the devices we pay for." ☞



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Scottsboro church celebrates senior adult ladies



Photo courtesy of Center Point Baptist Church

Center Point Baptist Church, Scottsboro, celebrates the senior adult ladies class with a Golden Girls Party. The group calls itself 'The Last Stop' Sunday School class. David Moorman is pastor.

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A Certain Trumpet

Sermons by Alabama Baptists

The Beatitudes series — Matthew 5:3-12

'Blessed are the Peacemakers' (v. 9)

The seventh beatitude is a verse for believers. It isn't addressing world leaders or delegates to the United Nations so much as everyday Christians. Retired pastor John Legg comments, "Peace begins with the reconciliation of sinners to God, peace with God, leading to peace of conscience, heart and mind and the peace of the united Church" (Welwyn Commentary Series: The King and His Kingdom).

As we reflect on this beatitude, there are three questions we need to answer. What does Jesus mean by "peace"? What does Jesus mean by "peacemaker"? And what does Jesus mean when He says they will be called the "sons of God"?

The unbelieving world around us regards peace as being undisturbed — nobody knocks on their door except to deliver pizza. To many, peace is not being challenged and never having to think. The Bible has a different take on it.

Peace with God

First there is peace with God. The Bible speaks of being made right with God, no longer living in rebellion against God and no longer being under the wrath of God. We are at peace with God; the war is over (Rom. 5:1).

Then there is a peace from God. In John 14:27, Jesus would tell His disciples: "My peace I leave with you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." This experience of peace surpasses our ability to understand (Phil. 4:7). It is more than the absence of conflict. In fact it could sometimes mean inner peace in the presence of conflict, persecution and trial. New Testament scholar Craig Blomberg describes this peace as "wholeness and harmony rather than strife and discord" (The New American Commentary, Vol. 22). As we reflect next on peacemaking, this is the kind of peace Jesus wants us to help people to find, the kind that makes us whole.

Theologian John Calvin writes, "By peacemakers He means those who not only seek peace and avoid quarrels, as far as lies in their power, but who also labor to settle differences among others, who advise all men to live at peace and take away every occasion of hatred and strife."

By Derek Gentle

Derek Gentle has served as pastor of First Baptist Church, Tallahassee, for 21 years. He is a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He and his wife, Sheila, have adult two children.



This is something Scripture commands in more than one place:

▶ "Turn away from evil and do what is good; seek peace and pursue it" (Ps. 34:14).

▶ "If possible, on your part, live at peace with everyone" (Rom. 12:18).

▶ "Be at peace among yourselves" (1 Thess. 5:13).

▶ "Salt is good but if the salt should lose its flavor, how can you make it salty? Have salt among yourselves and be at peace with one another" (Mark 9:50).

There are two spheres where we have great opportunities to apply this beatitude — within the Church and in the workplace.

Of all the places on planet earth the local church should be the one place where peace abounds. With the Bible to guide us, the Holy Spirit to empower us and the Lord's people around us, we have all the resources we need for unity. The truth is there are still plenty of people looking to join a church but few looking to join a fight.

People who are at peace with God — and who experience the peace that comes from God — exude a peaceful presence. Many workplaces are cesspools of resentment or poisoned by bitterness. However, the presence of believers in a workplace, at peace with God and with others, sets a different kind of tone. They make the workplace a calmer, happier place.

As believers go about their lives, they bear the presence of God. The Holy Spirit does a work within them and they have influence with those around them. They set the tone. "Finally, brothers, rejoice. Become mature, be encouraged, be of the same mind, be at peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you" (2 Cor. 13:11).

Finally, in personal evangelism, we intro-

duce our friends to the Prince of Peace. This is most definitely peacemaking.

Through faith in Christ, we have been adopted into our Heavenly Father's eternal family. We are children with a new standing before God and a new relationship with one another as brothers and sisters. This is certainly a wonderful truth. However, words are used with varying nuances of meaning in the New Testament. Here, Jesus has in mind a figure of speech used by the Jewish people of His day. Jesus would call James and John the "sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17). He didn't mean thunder had adopted them but that they had stormy personalities. In Acts, Barnabas is referred to as the "son of encouragement." Today we might refer to him as "Mr. Encouragement." Paul told the Thessalonians, "You are all sons of light and sons of the day" (1 Thess. 5:5). In each case the figure of speech describes the personality and the character of the person being described. We know this is the sense in which Jesus means "sons of God" because He says, "You shall be called sons of God." In other words, when you are peacemakers, this will be the reputation you will have — bearing the presence of God, you will be noted for being an instrument of God's reconciling work.

'Instrument of Your peace'

The 13th-century Italian Saint Francis of Assisi wrote a prayer which reflected a desire to be the very kind of person to which this beatitude calls on us to aspire to be.

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace:

where there is hatred, let me sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

to be consoled as to console,

to be understood as to understand,

to be loved as to love.

*For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,*

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.✠

Ala. taxpayers urged to beware of phone scams

The Alabama Department of Revenue (ADOR) is urging taxpayers to beware of phone scams that impersonate the Internal Revenue Service or ADOR and demand immediate payment via debit card information given over the phone.

"Taxpayers are reminded that if [ADOR] has a legitimate reason to make contact with them regarding taxes owed, then the department will do so by letter through the mail," an ADOR press release stated Aug. 3.

The criminal callers also may impersonate other government agencies, often threatening arrest or court action to prompt taxpayers into making payments. And don't be fooled by the line, "We have sent letters that were returned 'undeliverable,'" ADOR said. That is part of the scam.

Typical tactics

ADOR will never, according to the press release, do any of the following:

▶ Call to demand immediate payment or call about taxes owed without making multiple attempts to contact by mail.

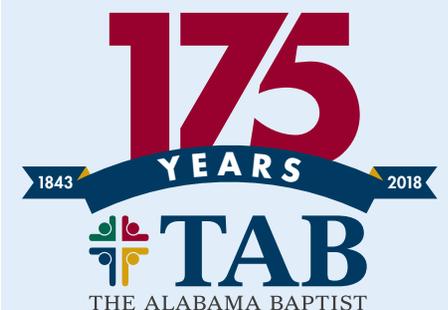
▶ Demand that someone pay taxes without offering the opportunity to question or appeal the amount claimed to be owed.

▶ Require taxpayers to use a specific payment method for taxes, such as a pre-paid debit card.

▶ Ask for credit or debit card numbers over the phone.

▶ Threaten immediate arrest over the phone of taxpayers for not paying.

If a taxpayer ever does receive a call that includes any of the tactics mentioned above, ADOR recommends hanging up immediately without giving out any information and calling ADOR at 251-334-4737. (TAB)



According to the May 24, 1845, issue of *The Alabama Baptist*:

Readers of *The Alabama Baptist* were furnished a detailed account of the meeting in Augusta when the paper reprinted stories from the *Augusta Chronicle* about the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention and its constitution. Jesse Hartwell, president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, was elected secretary. The Home Mission Board of the new convention was located in Marion with Basil Manley, president of the University of Alabama, serving as president of the board of directors. (TAB)

"And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle?" 1 Cor. 14:8

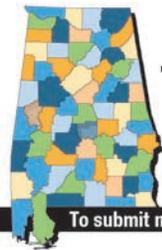
Study links happiness levels with generosity

Looking out for the needs of others can make you happier than looking out for yourself, a new study out of Switzerland shows.

Researchers working with the University of Zurich had participants describe their levels of happiness after helping other people, according to The Christian Post. The study's subjects were given a small allotment of money. Half were instructed to spend it on other people, and the other half were told to spend it on themselves.

"Doing something nice for another person gives many people a pleasant feeling that behavioral economists call 'a warm glow,'" the university said in a statement.

Participants consistently said being generous made them happy. MRI brain scans confirmed their input. (TAB)



Across ALABAMA'S Associations

To submit news items, email news@thealabamabaptist.org or call 205-870-4720, ext. 112, at least three weeks prior to the event.

BESSEMER

► **Grace Life Church, Bessemer**, will host the Bessemer Association Senior Adult Revival on Aug. 17, 10 a.m. Ben Corley, pastor of Schultz Creek Church, West Blocton, will speak. Grace Life's choir will perform special music. Grace Life also will hold a Back to School Bash on Aug. 16, 6:30 p.m. The event will be open to children from preschool to those entering sixth grade. Joel Frederick is pastor. Barry Cosper is director of missions. ► **Integrity Church, Hueytown**, will host a Solemn Assembly Service on Sept. 10, 4 p.m. The service is "a gathering of God's people seeking the heart of God through prayer." Morris Jackson is pastor.

DEKALB

► **New Harmony Church, Albertville**, will host Triumphant Quartet from Pigeon Forge in

concert Aug. 13, 10 a.m. Lynn Darnell is pastor.

PLEASANT GROVE

► **Antioch Church, Brookwood**, will start Wednesday night Bible study at 5:30 nightly with fellowship afterward. They also will hold special services on the second Sunday of each month at 5 nightly with singing, prayer and testimonies, followed by dinner.

Dwight Kizziah is pastor.

TUSKEGEE LEE

► **Concord Church, Notasulga**, will celebrate its 178th homecoming service Aug. 20. The first service will be from 10:30 to noon and will be followed by a covered dish lunch. A 1 p.m. service will feature Anointed Harmony as special music. Chuck Vincent is pastor. ✝

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CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

Big Level Baptist Church in Wiggins, Mississippi, is seeking a full-time pastor. Resumes may be emailed to: samuel@albrittonaccounting.com or mailed to: Big Level Baptist Church, Attn: Search Committee, 1346 City Bridge Rd., Wiggins, MS 39577.

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We seek a born-again believer who will lead all ages in a blended style of worship to facilitate the spiritual growth of our church. Part time. \$20,000 negotiable. Please send resumes to: P.O. Box 326 Double Springs, AL 35553, or email at: fbcds.office@gmail.com.

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Calera Baptist Church, Alabama, is seeking a part-time minister of worship to lead a blended style of worship. See www.calerabaptist.org/worship for details. Email resumes to: info@calerabaptist.org.

MINISTER OF MUSIC

First Baptist Church, Talladega, Alabama, is seeking a part-time minister of music to lead blended worship services (20 hours/

week). Send resumes to: First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 696, Talladega, AL 35161. Attn: Music Search Committee or email to: fbcpublishments@bellsouth.net.

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Join Advance Operations Training (AOT) this Aug. 17–Dec. 17, 2017. This mission/discipleship program is connecting Southern Baptist students (ages 18–29) to IMB strategies and North American church planters. For more information: www.ntp52aot.com.

MISCELLANEOUS

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- 5 Hold your device over a page or image in *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB) marked as augmented reality and watch the paper come to life.
- 6 If the image is slow to load at any point, then it may be your data speed or Wi-Fi strength. Change locations and try again.
- 7 Each week when TAB arrives, open the app and hold your device over the augmented reality articles.

Baptist NEWS BRIEFS

COMPILED FROM WIRE SERVICES

National CP giving 5 percent above projection

NASHVILLE — Year-to-date contributions to Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) national and international missions and ministries received by the SBC Executive Committee are 5.08 percent above the year-to-date SBC Cooperative Program (CP) Allocation Budget projection, and are 1.15 percent above contributions received during the same time frame in 2016, according to a news release from SBC Executive Committee President and CEO Frank S. Page.

As of July 31 gifts received through the first nine months of the convention's fiscal year (October to September) totaled \$165,503,652.87. This total is \$8,003,652.87 above the \$157,500,000 year-to-date budgeted projection to support Southern Baptist ministries globally and across North America, and is \$1,886,387.68 more than the \$163,617,265.19 received through the end of July 2016.

July's CP allocation receipts for SBC work totaled \$15,309,979.82. Designated gifts received in July amounted to \$9,645,268.57. (BP)

Diversity effort growing among Southern Baptists

WAKE FOREST, N.C. — Walter Strickland represents the latest step in attempts to increase diversity among those serving in top positions in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

Strickland, who was elected as first vice president of the SBC in June, also has been named associate vice president of Kingdom Diversity Initiatives at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. He formerly served as special adviser to the president for diversity. He also is being promoted to assistant professor of systematic theology.

Southeastern's focused diversity efforts began in 2013 to increase the diversity of underrepresented races and of women among the faculty, staff and students. (BP)



STRICKLAND

'Feeling' God's love

North Shelby Baptist youth help visually impaired kids

By Anna Keller
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The youth at North Shelby Baptist Church, Birmingham, participated in a Local Missions Week this summer, providing them with an opportunity to serve in different areas right within their community.

"We treated it like any missions team that would travel across the world," said Alex Lovorn, student pastor at North Shelby Baptist.

In looking for projects to connect the youth with, Lovorn began speaking with church member David Hyche, whose daughter, Rachel, is visually impaired.

Building frames

Hyche immediately suggested that Lovorn check with the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind (AIDB) to see if there was any need the youth could help meet there. The school said they were in need of extra frames for infants and toddlers who are visually impaired, and that the youth would be able to help build those.

"Children with visual impairments move and explore less because they do not have the visual feedback," explained Ellen Davis, an outside contractor occupational therapist partnering with AIDB Early Intervention.

"These frames are placed so that

even random movements by the child cause some type of reaction.

The objects remain within their reach to encourage the cycle of movement and exploration. As this cycle continues, babies learn more about their body, where things are in relation to their body, and how to use their movements to impact the world around them. This can make the difference between becoming an active participant in life events or remaining passive."

Occupational therapists educate the family members of infants who are visually impaired on how to incorporate the frames into daily activities. The objects on the frame can be changed out as the child matures to create new learning experiences.

"The youth, as well as some volunteers of the church, had a great time building the frames," said Lovorn. "They sanded down the pipe, put the frames together and drilled holes to hang the sensory items. They wrote letters to

each family to encourage them and share the love of Jesus with them."

Danielle Nunley is the parent of a current Early Intervention participant, Hazael, and knows firsthand how influential these simple frames can be.

"Hazael uses the frame to help her feel different objects and also to play with different objects for things she'll use, like a spoon," Nunley said. "We also use the frame to put things in her face to teach her to roll over or push things out of her face. It has helped Hazael in

many ways and is one of my favorite things to use to help her." Like Hazael, Hyche's 12-year-old daughter, Rachel, was served by the center as an Early Intervention client when she was a baby (until she was three years old), which was what gave him the idea to suggest AIDB to Lovorn. Hyche also has developed a beeping Easter egg, allowing for a visually impaired egg hunt that grows more popular each year.

Lovorn was thrilled by the outcome of this partnership, and wants to look into ways the youth at North Shelby can develop a deeper relationship with AIDB.

"We also want to look for opportunities to meet some of the students at the school and get to know them," he said. "We are trying to teach our students that when they hear of needs around them to do what they can to meet those needs. They took a lot of joy in being able to serve others in this particular way."

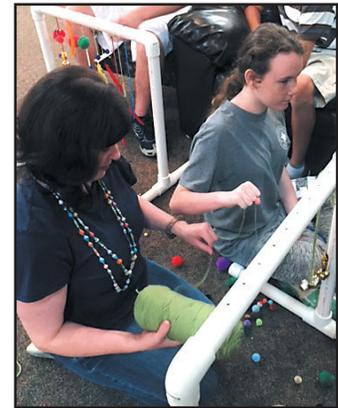


Photo courtesy of David Hyche
North Shelby Baptist Church youth and volunteers construct frames for visually impaired children.

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For August 13

Explore the Bible By Douglas K. Wilson, Ph.D.
Dean, Office for Global Engagement, University of Mobile

Bible Studies for Life By Kenneth B.E. Roxburgh, Ph.D.
Professor of Religion, Samford University

THE CLEANSING
Psalm 32:1-11

In our previous lesson, we surveyed David's humble confession of sin before God, recorded in Psalm 51. He called upon the Lord to create a clean heart in him and God granted his request. The earlier psalm records David's understanding that God values brokenness and humility. The current psalm addresses the blessing of that knowledge.

Contrast (1-4)

Joy characterizes the believer in fellowship with God who has been cleansed from transgression, sin, iniquity and deceit. David had experienced crossing the line in his relationship with Bathsheba which included his disobedience to God's Word not to covet, commit adultery or murder. He knew the paralyzing fear that comes with deception. "Oh, what a tangled web we weave, when first we purpose to deceive."

David contrasted his joy that came from repentance and forgiveness with the brittleness and exhaustion previously experienced when he hid his wicked acts. God sent Nathan the prophet to David to confront him, knowing the king was gripped by his sin. In grace, Nathan called out David's sin and announced God's sentence (2 Sam. 12). This led to David's very public confession (Ps. 51).

Confession (5)

Verse five is but a glimpse of the brokenness we see in David's life once he acknowledged his sin and repented of it. Review Psalm 51 to see the depth of confession before God, the self-humiliation in the presence of holy God. In many ways, it reminds us of Isaiah when he had a glimpse of the holiness of God, leading him to confess of his uncleanness, like a leper before the Lord (Isa. 6).

The apostle John instructs us that if we

are unwilling to acknowledge our sin, we deceive ourselves and call God a liar. When we agree with God and honestly forsake our sin, God is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Counsel (6-9)

David acknowledged that God was his hiding place, his protector and his deliverer. He knew God was under no obligation to forgive him but that He forgives those who trust in Him. Not only did he recognize this truth for himself, but he also gave this counsel to others. Here David is fulfilling what he promised to God in Psalm 51: "Restore the joy of your salvation to me and sustain me by giving me a willing spirit. Then I will teach the rebellious your ways and sinners will return to you" (vv. 12-13).

We too have the opportunity to offer counsel to others. Often our children are as hard-headed as we were and our counsel goes unheeded until they pass the 30-year mark. Sometimes the scars of our past are too deep and others may feel we are disqualified from offering spiritual counsel. To those who will listen, however, God gives ears to hear — even from us who are the chiefs of sinners.

Conclusion (10-11)

Our psalm concludes much like it began: with a contrast. Those who forget and forsake God will come to the end of their life's journey with no rescue and no hope. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23a). Those who acknowledge God's deliverance from sin and offer Him thankful hearts in worship experience God's salvation. "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23b).

Thank God for the glorious truth that "we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7b).

A CHANNEL OF COMFORT
2 Corinthians 1:2-7

When we use the word "comfort," we tend to think of a warm feeling that makes us feel good. We give a "comforter" to a baby who is teething. We like to sit in our favorite "comfortable" chair where we feel safe and secure.

Paul opens us to a different understanding of the word and a different window through which we can learn about God's means of blessing His people.

God is the source of all comfort. (2-3)

The comfort of God does not inoculate us from all the difficulties of life. It is more like a gift God gives to us as a way of dealing with affliction, transforming our attitude and actions so that we might be a means of help and comfort to other people.

Another misunderstanding which many people have is to think that prosperity is a sign of God's love toward us and adversity, suffering and affliction are an indication that God is angry with us and is judging us. Paul rejects this idea, as did Jesus in John 9:1-3.

To Paul, experiences of suffering enable us to draw upon the resources of God — grace, peace, mercy and comfort. Paul uses all four words in the first two verses.

Rather than disadvantage the believer, suffering can be used to draw us closer to God and discover the resources of His love for our lives.

We are called to be channels of God's comfort. (4-5)

Not only are we blessed by God as we depend upon Him, but He also begins to use us to be a means of blessing to others. God's comfort for our lives is our model and our inspiration. Our consolation is so

abundant that we cannot contain it within our own lives.

If we have truly discovered the grace and mercy and peace of God, then we will want to share that with others. It becomes infectious.

Sometimes we find ourselves in the presence of someone who is in deep distress, yet the person's spirit is buoyant. That buoyancy of spirituality cannot be contained; it spills over.

We can use our difficulties to comfort others. (6-7)

God's providence in overseeing our lives enables us to trust Him and to use all our encounters — whether pleasant or otherwise — to mold us into the people He wants us to be.

The key to such an attitude is patiently to endure the experience of suffering. That is easier said than done. It means to keep on going, day by day, week by week, even when there is little to make us think that times will get better.

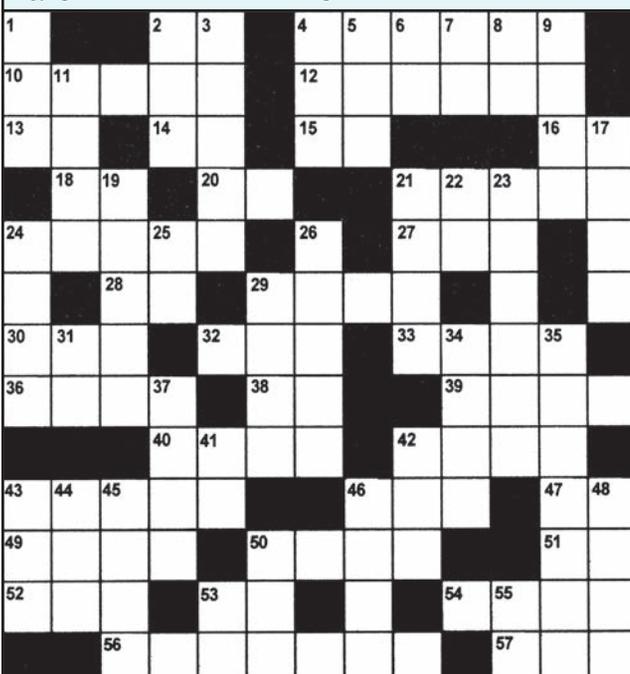
We patiently endure because that is what our Savior Himself did when He "endured the cross" because He was looking forward to the "joy that was set before Him."

Winston Churchill, the great leader of Great Britain during the Second World War, returned to his old school at Harrow to give a commencement speech at a period of great difficulty in the 1940s. He stood before the young men who were gathered and finished his speech by challenging them: "Never give up, never, never, never give up!"

Paul is near the end of his rope, perhaps facing death. Despite innumerable hardships, he believes that distress should not have the last word. He even found joy in the midst of his pain. In that way, he could bring comfort to other people in similar circumstances. The same is true for us.

Christian Crossword

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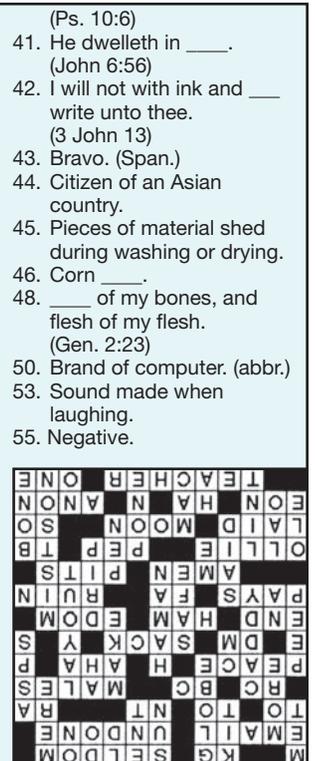


Across

2. Kilogram. (abbr.)
4. Not very often.
10. Computer communication.
12. Joshua ... left nothing _____. (Josh. 11:15)
13. _____ each his own.
14. Their cry came up unto _____ God. (Ex. 2:23)
15. New Testament. (abbr.)
16. Egyptian sun god.
18. Royal Canadian. (abbr.)
20. Not A.D.
21. The ... _____ that came out of Egypt ... died. (Josh. 5:4)
24. Live in _____. (2 Cor. 13:11)
27. _____ our eye hath seen it. (Ps. 32:51)
28. Deutsche mark. (abbr.)
29. The cup was found in Benjamin's _____.
30. Our _____ is near. (Lam. 4:18)
32. Shem, _____ and Japheth. (Gen. 5:32)
33. Saul ... fought against ... Moab and ... _____. (1 Sam. 14:47)
36. Takes care of a bill.
38. _____ la la la la.

Down

1. Cornelius _____ him, and fell down. (Acts 10:25)
2. Baby fox.
3. The earth is a _____.
4. I saw an angel standing in the _____. (Rev. 19:17)
5. Inner, within. (prefix)
6. 450 in Roman numerals.
7. Who rejoice to _____ evil. (Prov. 2:14)
8. Cherubims stretch wings _____ high. (Ex. 25:20)
9. Being nothing more than.
11. Jacob loved Rachel _____ than Leah. (Gen. 29:30)
17. The cruel venom of _____. (Deut. 32:33)
19. A person who carries another's clubs.
21. _____ straight the way of the Lord. (John 1:23)
22. _____, thou that destroyest the temple. (Mark 15:29)
23. The arrangement of items.
24. Wizards that _____, and that mutter. (Isa. 8:19)
25. 900 in Roman numerals.
26. _____ sought to destroy all the Jews. (Esther 3:6)
29. Is the young man Absalom _____? (2 Sam. 18:29)
31. North America. (abbr.)
34. One drop of water.
35. Sprinkles lightly on something.
37. He hath _____ in his heart. (Ps. 10:6)



My JESUS Story

By Jenni Ingram

Member, First Baptist Church, Gantt

Here I am on the church bus traveling up I-65 North headed to Oscoda, Michigan, with members of my church family. We are about three hours into the trip and the bus is mostly quiet. As I stare out my window the doubts began to creep in. Doubts such as, "Wow, I am so ill-equipped to do this." My actual thought was, "This must be how Moses felt." In Exodus 3:11, Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

Who am I to think I could take this broken body and serve the Lord? I understand I won't be able to walk around and witness to folks, but I'm going to be working with the kids and in the office of the church. I don't know what all I will be doing but I know Jesus will be with me every step of the way. I cling to Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things in Christ which strengthens me."

I also cling to something I was taught a long time ago — God does not call the equipped; He equips the called. Just imagine what we could do if we cling to those two statements. What lives could we change? What pains could be healed? What fears and worries could be overcome?

So missions field, here we come. For better or for worse, God called us 10 to go and we are charging forward. May God guide our steps and bless those we come in contact with. God is "large and in charge" in every way. We just have to cling to Him. †



The Andrew Alford Band

Photo courtesy of The Andrew Alford Band

Uplifting message

Alabama-based band sees God's hand, provision through music

By Anna Keller

Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Andrew Alford has had a lifelong interest in music and had several attempts at a band under his belt when he was asked to lead worship for a chapel service

for Legacy Christian University at Whitesburg Baptist Church, Hunstville, (Alford's alma mater) a couple of years ago. He told the dean he'd retired from his musical career.

"However, he told me it was too late to back out," Alford recalled. "I had one month to get prepared and had a slight problem: I didn't have a band."

So Alford reached out to Hunter Johnson, whom he'd met just a few weeks earlier but he knew they shared an interest in music. He then contacted former classmates Britt Meeks and Ben Hipps to see if they could help out.

"We only intended to play one gig. However, God had other plans for us as a band," Alford said. "Through the worship service at Legacy, God revealed to me that He still had a plan for me in music and as an artist."

And with that The Andrew Alford Band was born.

These days, the band is made up of five

members: Alford, who plays acoustic guitar and sings lead vocals; Troy Campbell on drums; Ben Hipps on keyboard and vocals; Hunter Johnson on electric guitar and vocals; and Chris Short on bass. The band describes its genre and sound as "an Indie/Alternative Christian rock band that seamlessly fuses a

classic alternative pop-rock edge with an uplifting, inspirational message. We draw heavy influence from the 80s with heavy percussion, vocal harmony and U2-esque guitar."

Keyboardist Hipps says his favorite part about being

in the band is the opportunity it gives him to share the gospel and what's on their hearts with the people they're performing for. The best feedback he's heard from audience members is that they were touched by the message the band shared.

Christian brotherhood

For Johnson being part of the Christian brotherhood that the band provides is one of the best components.

"We've become like family over the years, and it's always a great feeling knowing you have friends like these guys," said Johnson. "I hope that our focus stays on what God wants

us to do and accomplish, and that no matter what we stay true to who we are and what we represent."

The band has played at more than 100 churches and events including Morgan County's Disciple Now event at Decatur Baptist Church this past spring. They primarily play in the Tennessee Valley but are open to booking gigs anywhere. The band is currently working on their first full-length album together. †

"I hope that our focus stays on what God wants us to do and accomplish, and that no matter what we stay true to who we are and what we represent."

Hunter Johnson
electric guitar and vocals
The Andrew Alford Band

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Travis Denker

Photo by Cody Cunningham/Jackson Generals

Better than home runs

Generals infielder refocuses, points others to Christ

By **Bill Sorrell**
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Blinded — that's how Travis Denker said he felt when his major league baseball experience ended and his career began a downward spiral.

In his 15 seasons in professional baseball, he was signed and released, then signed and released again, over and over until he had played on 20 teams. In 2015 he ended up in the Mexican League, a move he said was rock bottom.

"I thought God was taking the big leagues away from me," he said. "I was very mad at Him. I was like, 'God why haven't you given me any success? I thought you loved me.'"

And he started drinking.

"I felt like I was in a downhill spiral. I had no way of getting out of it," he said. "I started using something else besides God to cope with my problems."

When Denker finally hit the point of repentance, he remembers hearing a word from God. "He said, 'This isn't who I called you to be and you need to pick a side,'" Denker said. "That is the day I became a follower of Christ."

Changed by Christ

Since that day, his life has been different. God began to change him, he said. His approach to the game has changed too. Hitting a major league home run was once his biggest thrill. Now it is watching players who are wrapped up in baseball see the bigger picture of what Christ has for their lives instead of only what baseball has to offer.

"Once you get God involved it becomes so much bigger," Denker said. "The thrill for me is seeing people's lives change."

In June 2016 he signed with the Arizona Diamondbacks.

He played in Mobile for the BayBears in 2016 before relocating to Jackson, Mississippi, for the Generals' 2017 season. The 32-year-old infielder is batting .277 this season with three home runs and 20 RBIs, including four in a 5-1 victory over Mobile on July 26.

Wealth of experience

J.R. House, manager of the Jackson Generals, said Denker brings a wealth of experience on and off the field.

"He really enjoys helping younger guys," he said. "He has been a pleasure to have."

Denker has become a mentor to the other players, both in baseball skills and also in life, House said. "He goes around and talks to the guys and makes sure that everything is OK in their lives on and off the field."

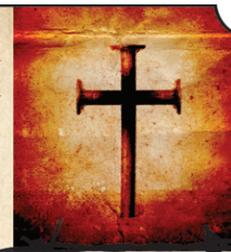
Evan Marzilli, Generals center fielder who was recently traded to the Reno Aces in Nevada, led the team's baseball chapel with Denker. He said Denker is "very influential with the other guys on the team. He speaks the Word well. He is not a forceful person. He is laid-back and everybody gravitates to him."

Denker said he wants to use that position to influence other players for Christ.

"If God wants to use this platform of baseball, then I am going to give it everything I can," he said. "Whatever He wants to use, I want to be used here. We are called to tell people about Christ and His love. That is the plan. I have been so fulfilled in my life. When people ask questions about something, I can share that and that is better than hitting a home run." ✝

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Christian prisoners go on hunger strikes

TEHRAN, Iran — Two Christian prisoners in Iran recently went on hunger strikes to protest increasingly harsh treatment of those arrested for house-church activities.

Since June 2016 courts in Iran have given 11 Christians prison sentences of at least 10 years, mostly on charges related to house-church activities for converts from Islam, according to advocacy group Middle East Concern (MEC). The hunger strikes are meant to draw attention to the severity of the sentences, as well as the poor treatment these prisoners often receive once they are in custody, according to human rights advocates.

The abuse includes being held without charges, detained for long periods without trial and prolonged isolation and interrogation. Amin Afshar Naderi lost 22 pounds and suffered low blood pressure after a 21-day hunger strike in Evin Prison that ended when he was released on \$80,000 bail July 25. Inspired by Naderi, prisoner Ebrahim Firoozi declared a 10-day hunger strike on July 17.

Among those sentenced to 10-year sentences in the past year are Pastor Victor Bet Tamraz, Hadi Asgari, Yousef Nadarkhani, Mohammad Reza Omidi, Yasser Mossayebzadeh, Saheb Fadaie, Naser Navard Goltapeh, Bahram Nasibov, Yusif Farhadov and Eldar Gurbanov, according to MEC. (MS)

Sudanese officials regard Sunday as workday

KHARTOUM, Sudan — In an ongoing campaign to rid the country of Christianity, officials in Sudan have ordered all Christian schools in the capital to regard Sunday as a workday, sources said.

Sunday is considered a working day in Sudan but traditionally Christian schools have not operated on their day of worship and rest. Fridays and Saturdays are public days off in Sudan, which has a sizeable Muslim majority.

"In order not to affect the educational process and the ongoing plan, we ask you not to observe Sunday holiday," wrote Awadia El-Sheikh Saleh Omer of the Ministry of General Education of Khartoum State in a July 26 letter.

The move prompted widespread outrage and led many Christians in Sudan and around the world to view it as another means of harassment and discrimination against Sudanese Christians.

"The government's decision to abolish Sundays for Christian schools is discrimination against Christians in Sudan," a Sudanese church leader said.

Sudanese Christians are calling on rights groups and the Vatican to intervene. Other voices are calling for national prayer and fasting. The move comes at a time of increased government pressure on ethnic and religious minorities in Sudan. (MS)

Pastor killed in front of his church in India

HYDERABAD, India — A pastor in northern India's Punjab state was shot dead in front of his church two months after Hindu extremists took offense at a gospel event, sources said.

Pastor Sultan Masih, 50, of Temple of God was talking on the phone outside the church when assailants on a motorbike shot and killed him July 15. Family members believe it was a premeditated attack, that the assailants called him and told him to go outside.

Pastor Vishnu Dev, a close friend of Masih, said that until recently there was no major opposition to the slain pastor but that in May he "took a bold step" and led gospel meetings commemorating the 25th anniversary of his church's founding. Representatives of Hindu extremist umbrella group Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh reportedly objected to the event and accused Masih of forced conversions.

"He and his family are serving Christ for decades and they are at peace with everyone," Dev said. "But four days before he was shot, I met him, and he told me, 'Please pray for us as we continue standing for Christ; many enemies are standing up against us. Please pray for us.'" (MS)