



INSIDE



Alabama's first Stork Bus hits the road to serve Cullman County, North Alabama

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Men's ministry statewide seeing cultural shift as hundreds gather for discipleship events

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123rf.com

Harvest Evangelism celebrates year of sobriety for 17 graduates

By Carrie Brown McWhorter  
The Alabama Baptist

As teenagers, sisters Becky and Ladonna Sanders were placed into foster care at the Tallapoosa County Girls Ranch where Rick and Kim Hagans, or "Mom" and "Pop" as they called them, were their houseparents — a relationship that would be Ladonna's lifeline almost 30 years later.

Ladonna Sanders was one of 17 graduates at a ceremony held Aug. 4 at Purpose Baptist Church, Opelika, in Tuskegee Lee Baptist Association, by Harvest Evangelism, a Christ-centered Bible-based Christian recovery ministry for men and women with life-controlling problems located in Opelika.

The graduation celebrated a year of sobriety for each of the graduates — an important milestone in the long and difficult process of overcoming addiction.

Becky Sanders McGhee was there to celebrate with her sister and honor what God has done in her life.

"God worked a miracle in her. I got my sister back and her kids got their mother back," Becky said.

Prior to coming to Hosanna Home, the women's residential recovery program of Harvest Evangelism, Ladonna used drugs and alcohol to cope with anxiety and depression stemming from childhood neglect and abuse.

Becky, the older sister, took a different path, finishing college and always trying to be a good influence on her younger siblings because, as Becky put it, "there were not a lot of people to be a good influence."

needed help," Becky said. A week later, Ladonna moved into Hosanna Home and her life began to change.

All agree that the love and prayers that began three decades ago made all the difference.

**"God worked a miracle in [Ladonna]. I got my sister back and her kids got their mother back."**

Becky Sanders McGhee

"I used to wonder why we went through so many things, but the day my sister graduated, it changed me," Becky said. "The love they had for us as kids, we came back to as adults. When I really needed them to be there for my sister, they were the first people I called. I don't know if that would have happened if all the other stuff hadn't happened."

Now Ladonna is an intern at Hosanna Home, continuing to get her life back on track. She said she has a different outlook on life and is excited about her future.

So does Amanda, another recent graduate who is seeing God opening doors for her as she follows His plan for her life. Previous attempts to deal with her troubled past failed

(See 'Saved,' page 3)

Overdose deaths in U.S. continue to rise

In his more than 30 years of working with addicts in recovery, Rick Hagans has seen a lot of drug trends come and go. None have been as insidious as the opioid addiction ravaging Alabama and the nation.

"Meth (methamphetamines) and alcohol will pull you into prison and eventually into death," Hagans said. "Opioids are killing people."

Hagans said he has seen more heroin use and overdoses in the past three years than in the previous 30 years combined.

It's a fast-growing epidemic because "lots of people start with pain pills" legally prescribed by a doctor — drugs like oxycodone (brand name Percoset), hydrocodone (brand name Lortab), codeine and morphine.

These opioid medications are generally safe when taken for a short time as prescribed, according to information published by the Alabama Department of Public Health, though all opioids affect a person's heart rate, sleeping and breathing, slowing bodily functions to the point of death in overdose incidents.

Misusing medication

In addition, the euphoria opioid medications produce can lead to their misuse. Research suggests the misuse of prescription opioid pain medicine is a risk factor for the use of heroin, an illegal and highly dangerous street drug made from morphine, that enters the brain rapidly when snorted, smoked or injected.

Heroin use is increasing in the United States. According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, the number of Americans who report using heroin in the past year has been on the rise since

(See '2017,' page 3)

To watch the videos from this week's issue, visit our YouTube channel or use the HP Reveal app on your phone or tablet and hover over the segments marked "AR."

# COMMENT

## Looking Under the Hood at *TAB*

**L**ike a shiny new car, every issue of *The Alabama Baptist* (*TAB*) invites readers to spend a few minutes in an enjoyable experience that will leave them feeling good about the time invested.

Each week the pages of the paper are filled with inspiring stories about what God is doing through His people in Alabama and around the world. Articles strengthen families by providing insights into dealing with real-world problems. Moral and ethical issues are examined from a biblical perspective.

What Baptists believe, Bible studies and information about how Baptists work together are regular parts of each issue.

But all that transpires to produce this award-winning publication — what goes on “under the hood” so to speak — is seldom noticed. It is the “under the hood” workings that help determine the rewards of time spent with *TAB*.

The past decade has been transformative in communications. Print communications have suffered drastically. Circulation declines of major newspapers in Birmingham, Mobile and Huntsville led to editions only three days a week. *TAB*'s circulation has declined too, but the weekly circulation of *TAB* is still larger than the weekday circulation of any of the newspapers in those cities.

### Widespread reach

Today *TAB*'s total reach is as widespread as ever. When one combines the print circulation with the circulation of *TAB*'s electronic version, the weekly sessions on *TAB*'s website, the shares of stories promoted on Facebook, Twitter, the blog and other electronic media outreaches, *TAB* continues to touch the lives of many, many people.

Unfortunately *TAB*'s financial support has been based on the print edition. For decades subscription prices have been set primarily to cover the costs of printing and mailing the paper. This was done to keep the cost low and affordable for the churches so Baptist news and information could have the widest circulation.



### THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

In broad-brush terms, Cooperative Program (CP) support covered most of the staff-related costs. That meant the paper operated on what it generated from advertising.

As print circulation declined, circulation income declined. Smaller circulation meant less income from advertising. At the same time CP support went down.

In the past decade, *TAB*'s budget has declined 26 percent and CP support has declined 30 percent. Subscription costs still cover the expense of printing and mailing the paper but the ministry struggles with the costs of preparing the stories, articles, Bible studies and all the rest for publication.

The old model no longer works, and *TAB* has yet to find a way to financially undergird its growing digital outlets even though they are the ones growing most rapidly.

*TAB* is not alone in this struggle. In what is called the “old line states,” Florida, Georgia and Texas no longer have printed versions of their state Southern Baptist papers. Virginia and South Carolina offer a monthly magazine.

### Weekly paper

*TAB* is one of only four state Baptist papers still publishing 50 times a year. This ministry is able to do this because of talented and committed Baptists who partner with *TAB* as freelance writers, contractors and temporary workers. These special people allow the ministry to continue providing readers with award-winning resources for Christian disciples despite a dwindling number of full-time ministry workers.

Using the analogy of the shiny new car, *TAB* continues to provide an enjoyable and valuable “ride” week in and week out, but the strains on the essential parts are becoming noticeable. Unless proper maintenance is performed soon something could go awry.

As *TAB* addresses issues related to what exists, the publication must also address issues related to what should be. For example, visually impaired Alabama Baptists no longer have access to an audio copy of *TAB*. For decades this was provided by a ministry partner but no longer.

*TAB* needs to provide a podcast featuring highlights of the weekly publication for the visually impaired and for anyone who might want to access this important resource for Christian discipleship as they travel or work out or at other times in busy schedules.

In Alabama some of God's most faithful servants depend on monthly contributions from GuideStone Financial Services' Mission:Dignity fund to make financial ends meet each month. Wouldn't it be wonderful if these men and women could be provided a weekly copy of their state Baptist paper?

Young people need a trustworthy forum where faith questions can be discussed and moral and ethical issues examined from a biblical perspective. *TAB* is about providing such resources for young people and Christian believers of all ages.

### Ongoing challenges

And there are the ongoing challenges of rising postal rates, salaries and benefits for employees, increased cost of newsprint because of pending tariffs and items related to all the other parts of directing a Christian ministry.

One hundred years ago the paper was shackled from fulfilling its possibilities because of financial problems. That is why the Alabama Baptist State Convention made *TAB* a convention entity at that time. But a century later, the ministry again faces major financial challenges. We have come so far to be back where we started.

Some might be discouraged by this glimpse under *TAB*'s hood. We are not. God called this ministry into existence and its value has been proven for more than 175 years. It is essential for Christian discipleship. It helps provide the common vision for Alabama Baptists to work together in missions and ministry. It promotes all that Baptists do together.

We trust God and we trust God's people.

Please pray for *TAB*, its mission and its staff. After you have read your copy of *TAB*, share it with someone who doesn't receive the paper. Encourage them to subscribe to either the print or digital version.

Ideally churches will provide the publication to their active resident families. That used to be a requirement for the “Standard of Excellence” awarded to churches by the denomination. The paper is still that important.

And consider supporting *TAB* financially, perhaps with a tax-deductible gift to the ministry, or perhaps by including *TAB* in your estate planning like I have done.

*TAB* should always be like a shiny new car. It should be inviting. It should be enjoyable. It should provide value for the investment. *TAB* does that today, and with your help it always will.✝

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"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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# 'SAVED, sober and sanctified'

## Gospel, salvation also priorities for those in addiction recovery

(continued from page 1)

because she was "doing it all in my own strength." Being part of Hosanna Home has given her a new start physically, emotionally and spiritually, and her message to new women coming in is simple: "If I can do it, you can do it."

Rick Hagans said the message at Harvest Evangelism, which also runs His Place, a residential recovery center for men, is that a person can go to hell sober.

"We want to see them saved, sober and sanctified," Hagans said. "In Christianity, we believe in new creation but the enemy always knows our weaknesses. Jacob wrestled with an angel. He got a new name and a future, but he had a limp. He wasn't the same. We believe in deliverance, but the enemy will always tell addicts that drugs are the solution."

Stories like Ladonna's and Amanda's motivate Hagans to persevere in addiction recovery ministry. But so do the stories of those who don't make it. Not too long ago, a 24-year-old former resident at Hosanna Home who had been clean for a while overdosed on heroin at a party and died.

"When you see some of them make it, you say 'Praise the Lord,' but the battle is not over. Those who don't make it give you courage and drive to keep moving forward because there are still a lot of hurting men and women out there," Hagans said. ✠

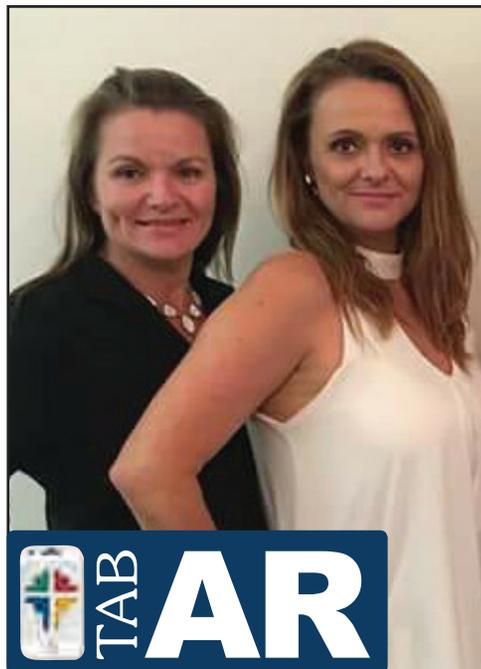


Photo courtesy of Becky Sanders McGhee

Ladonna Sanders (right) was one of 17 graduates at a ceremony held Aug. 4 at Purpose Baptist Church, Opelika, by Harvest Evangelism, a Christ-centered Bible-based Christian recovery ministry for men and women with life-controlling problems. Her sister, Becky Sanders McGhee (left), was there to celebrate with her.

## 2017 sees record number of overdoses

(continued from page 1)

2007. In 2016, the number of people who reported using heroin for the first time was 170,000 people, nearly double the number of people in 2006 (90,000).

### Deadlier drugs

The drugs on the street also are deadlier, as increasingly authorities are seeing strong synthetic opioids like fentanyl mixed with other illegal drugs — a deadly combination for users who don't know what they are putting into their bodies.

The rise in illegal opioid use led to a record number of drug overdose deaths in the U.S. in 2017 — 72,000, according to preliminary estimates by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC estimates approximately 800 people died because of drug overdose in Alabama in 2017 and a similar number will die in 2018. (Carrie Brown McWhorter)

## 2019 CP budget proposal up \$500,000 from current year

A \$37.5 million Cooperative Program (CP) budget recommendation for 2019 has been approved by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) trustees.

The proposed budget recommendation was approved during the State Board's Aug. 17 meeting in Prattville. The amount is a \$500,000 increase over the 2018 CP budget of \$37 million and a step back toward the previous CP budgets of \$40 million and more.

All CP funds flowing through Alabama's convention office are allocated equally between the missions and ministry efforts of the state convention and the Southern Baptist Convention.

Of the \$18,750,000 allocated for Alabama's missions and ministry efforts, \$12,133,782 will support the work of the

SBOM. The work includes evangelism and discipleship efforts, Sunday School, leadership development, church health, worship leadership, missions, collegiate ministries, church planting, church revitalization, the church retirement plan, disaster relief and more.

### Convention entities

The remaining \$6,616,219 will be divided among state convention entities, auxiliaries and other ministries.

University of Mobile and Judson College in Marion will receive more than half of that amount with \$3,715,430. The amount for the A. Earl Potts Scholarship and the Board of Aid to Students is set at \$472,166.

The remaining entities, along with Alabama Woman's Missionary Union and Alabama Citizens Action Program, receive allotments based on the traditional

percentage for each organization.

Also approved during the Aug. 17 meeting were five special offering goals for 2019:

▶ Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions — \$12 million

▶ Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions — \$6 million

▶ Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries — \$2,800,000

▶ Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering — \$1,200,000

▶ World Hunger Offering — \$800,000.

The total for the special offering goals is \$22,800,000, making the grand total of the proposed CP and special offering goals for Alabama Baptists for 2019 \$60.3 million.

The 2019 CP budget recommendation and special offering goals will be presented to messengers at the Alabama Baptist

State Convention (ABSC) annual meeting in November for final approval. The annual meeting will be held at First Baptist Church, Trussville, on Nov. 13-14.

Also going before messengers will be a recommendation that the 2018 Annual of the ABSC be dedicated to David Potts, the late former president of Judson College, and Mike McLemore, the late former executive director of Birmingham Baptist Association. Potts and McLemore both died in 2018 while still leading in their areas of ministry.

SBOM officials also noted the upcoming Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering promotion and urged all Alabama Baptist churches to participate. The Week of Prayer for State Missions is Sept. 9-16. For more information, visit myers-mallory.org. (TAB)

# Rolling BILLBOARD

## Alabama's first Stork Bus hits the road to serve Cullman County, North Alabama

By **Carrie Brown McWhorter**  
The Alabama Baptist

**A**labama's first Stork Bus is on the road in North Alabama, and already unborn lives are being saved and celebrated onboard the mobile pregnancy resource center.

The Stork Bus is a Mercedes-Benz Sprinter van outfitted with an ultrasound machine so expectant mothers can see an image of their unborn baby and hear the child's heartbeat. The mobile unit can go just about anywhere to provide the service, an answer to prayer for staff and volunteers at First Source for Women (FSFW) in Hanceville who said God planted the seed of the idea in their hearts and minds.

"Our passion and vision for getting the mobile unit was so that we could intersect with clients who might not be looking for us," said Allison Reid, the center's nurse manager and manager of the mobile unit.

FSFW staff and volunteers feared many women were going straight to abortion clinics, like the one in Huntsville, rather than seeking counseling. The Stork Bus changes the equation.

"Clients are going to the abortion clinic not expecting to see us parked on the corner before they get there," Reid said. "We believe God can orchestrate it so the people who need us see us."

Though Alabama has several mobile pregnancy resource centers, including Life on Wheels in Montgomery and a mobile unit affiliated with Women's Resource Center in Mobile, Hanceville has Alabama's first Stork Bus.

The Stork Bus was made possible by generous donations from local churches, business leaders, civic and community groups and a grant from Save the Storks, which

designs and builds the buses.

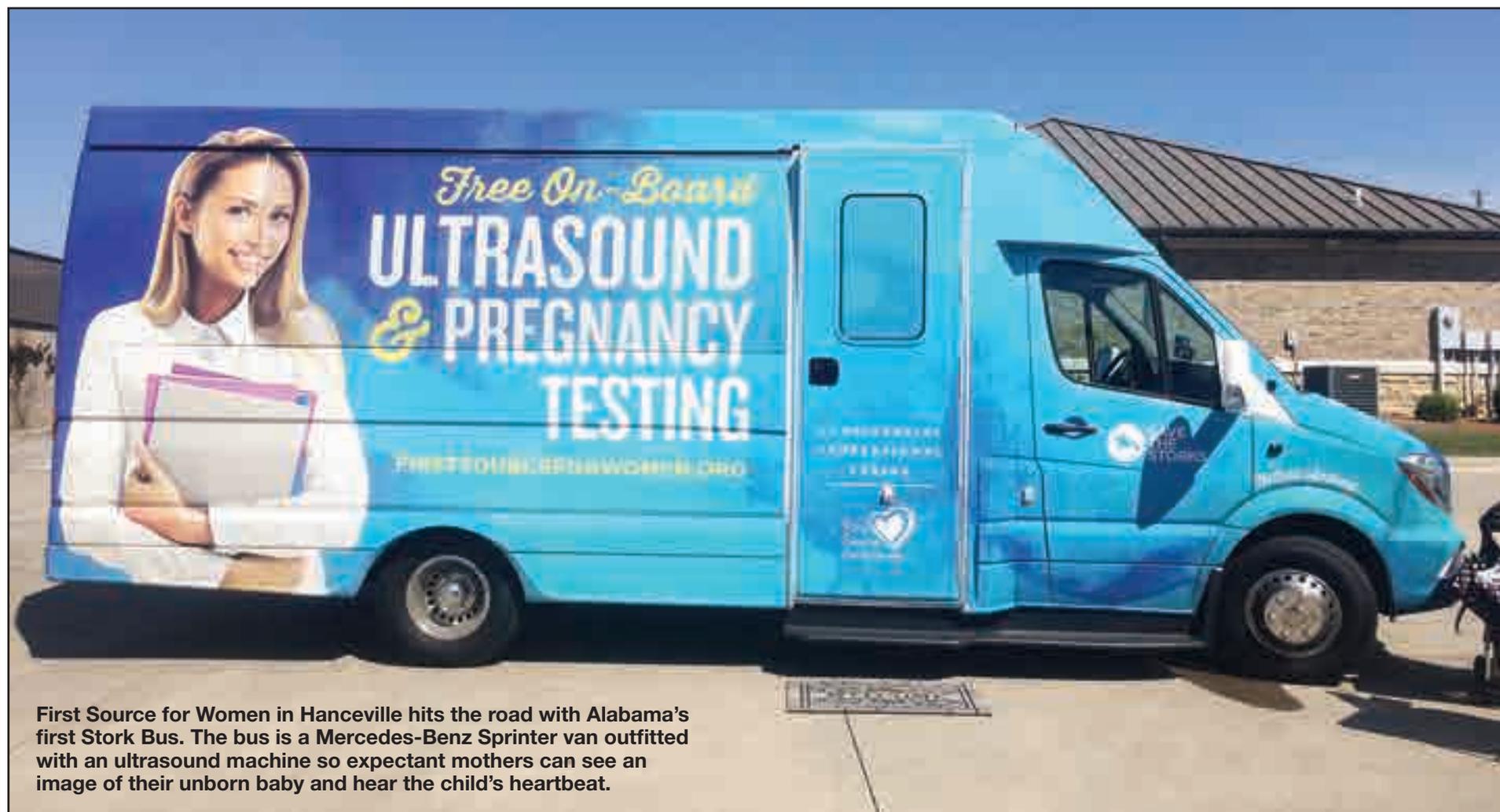
Save the Storks officially began in 2012 when founders Joe and Ann Baker dreamed of helping pregnancy resource centers better connect with women in their

communities who were considering abortion. The Bakers believed mobile units and "a generous, compassionate and loving" approach would help. Since then, the organization has funded 42 buses, 35 on the road and another seven in production, and saved more than 4,000 babies, according to its website.

### Reaching the community

Since the Hanceville bus, named Nathan Andrew in honor of a donor, was delivered Sept. 22, 2017, it has been a new way to introduce community members to the services provided by FSFW, which include free pregnancy tests and ultrasounds, referrals for medical care, clothing, mentoring for mothers and fathers, and post-

**For more information on Save the Storks and the Stork Bus, go to [savesthestorks.com](http://savesthestorks.com).**



First Source for Women in Hanceville hits the road with Alabama's first Stork Bus. The bus is a Mercedes-Benz Sprinter van outfitted with an ultrasound machine so expectant mothers can see an image of their unborn baby and hear the child's heartbeat.

abortion recovery.

Reid has driven the Stork Bus to speaking events at churches, which support FSFW through fundraising efforts. She has driven the bus to Huntsville and parked near the abortion clinic, praying women seeking an abortion will stop at the Stork Bus instead. And she has taken the bus to local schools, where teens have gotten on the bus to take a look around and ask questions.

### Unique opportunities

Each situation offers unique opportunities. At church events, supporters can see the results of their financial gifts and hear the stories of lives changed by the ministry.

Pregnant women who board the bus for an ultrasound are amazed by the luxurious interior space and the special treatment they receive. Reid hopes the message, “You’re worth this. You’re valuable,” sinks in with clients.

“Many times their self-worth may be low, and we want to let them see they’re worth extravagance,” she said. “Hopefully that can lead to conversations about how they are priceless in God’s eyes.”

The teens who hear Reid speak on human development and healthy relationships hopefully will not need the services of FSFW, but she wants them to know the center is there if they do.

“We want them to know it’s a judgment-free environment, a loving environment, but also a place where we speak truth and life,” Reid said.

A current client of FSFW is one of the teens who heard that message at school and now takes parenting classes at the center.

“We’ve been able to walk with her and she knows that somebody’s there for her,” Reid said.

The Stork Bus is one more way FSFW can share its message of hope in Hanceville, Cullman County and North Alabama, said director Catherine Bethell. It’s a rolling billboard and a first point of contact for women who need help.

“We can refer the mobile clients here (to the center) where they can receive ongoing love, education and support throughout their pregnancy,” Bethell said.

Reid believes many women choose abortion because they are afraid they have no other choice. She and others at FSFW want to change that mindset.

“We want to be that presence to let them know there is help and there is hope.” ✠

**“We want them to know it’s a judgment-free environment, a loving environment, but also a place where we speak truth and life.”**

**Allison Reid**

**nurse manager and manager of the mobile unit, First Source for Women**

# Protecting LIFE

## Pregnancy resource centers need prayer for women, staff

By **Carrie Brown McWhorter**  
The Alabama Baptist

**A**pproximately 70 pregnancy resource centers in Alabama provide a variety of services, including free pregnancy tests and ultrasounds, medical referrals, counseling and mentoring programs for mothers and fathers and post-abortion counseling for those who seek healing.

Staff members and volunteers at these centers know that they can’t change a woman’s mind, but they do all they can to persuade clients to choose life instead of abortion for their unborn children.

“We hope they choose life, but we pray for them whatever they choose,” said Marty Carrell, CEO of Women’s Resource Center, a pregnancy resource center with three locations in Mobile.

She gave a recent example of a high school student who had sought help but still chose to have an abortion. Staff members reached out to the girl to offer post-abortion counseling.

“We know from other cases what she’s going to have to walk through,” Carrell said. “We do everything we can to keep them from making that choice, but regardless we seek to extend grace and mercy to these women.”

### Declining rates

Statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggest that abortion rates in Alabama have been steadily declining since 2008. Alabama law requires women to receive state-directed counseling and wait 48 hours before an abortion is provided, and a woman must undergo an ultrasound before obtaining an abortion. Most of Alabama’s pregnancy resource centers offer these services, but Women’s Resource Center also offers ongoing support for mothers, fathers and even other family members. It’s about nurturing a culture of life, Carrell said.

“Our mission is about the unborn, but it’s also about protecting and promoting life, valuing others and honoring people across the city,” she said.

Pregnancy resource center personnel across the state frequently speak in schools and community groups to share a message of sexual integrity, healthy relationships and making positive choices.

Allison Reid, nurse manager for First Source for Women, a pregnancy resource center in Hanceville, said she hopes a woman never needs their services. Prevention education plays a role in that but so does letting people know that pregnancy resource centers exist, something Reid mentions when she talks to high school kids.

“We tell them there is a place if you know anybody who might need services — if you or your friends find yourselves in that situation,” Reid said.

Lisa Hogan, executive director of Sav-A-Life Birmingham, said the center’s education programs are “flourishing as we seek to help them understand what it means to have an abundant life and to understand what God desires family to be.”

Churches need to talk about options too, Carrell believes. Statistically it’s likely that most if not all churches have someone in the congregation who has been or will be affected by abortion. A post-abortive woman, a man whose child has been aborted, the mother of a teenager who is sexually active — they all need to know that there is hope when a crisis pregnancy happens and grace and healing for those who have made abortion decisions in the past, Carrell said.

She also noted that while financial support for pregnancy resource centers is always needed, prayer support is also critical. “It’s a battle,” she said, noting the “passion and burden and the weight of what the staff carries for these women.”

Volunteers carry the women to church



**“We hope they choose life, but we pray for them whatever they choose.”**

**Marty Carrell**  
CEO, Women’s Resource Center

**To find your local pregnancy resource center, go to [www.heartbeatinternational.org/worldwide-directory](http://www.heartbeatinternational.org/worldwide-directory) and use the search tool.**

with them and have baby showers for them. They try to be supportive in every way possible. But spiritual attacks come because of that stand, Carrell said.

“That’s why we tell pastors, we need you standing with us, praying for us,” she said. “These women don’t just come in and get a pregnancy test. We do life with them.”

### Urgent prayer need

Hogan said news that Planned Parenthood has purchased land in downtown Birmingham to build a new abortion center is an urgent prayer need as well. Currently the organization’s locations in Mobile and Birmingham are not providing abortions, making Birmingham the nation’s largest metropolitan city without

an abortion clinic, Hogan said. Abortion clinics continue to operate in Huntsville, Montgomery and Tuscaloosa.

A new Planned Parenthood location could drastically change the abortion landscape in Birmingham and central Alabama, Hogan said.

Hogan expects several local events in the coming months to unite pro-life supporters in the fight against the new clinic, which told Alabama Media Group that it expects to break ground sometime this year.

“It’s going to take all of the pro-life organizations and churches working together to keep this from coming to fruition,” she said. ✠



## Across ALABAMA'S Associations

### AUTAUGA

▶ **Travis Coleman** recently announced his plans to retire from **First Church, Prattville**, in 2019. He has served as pastor of First, Prattville, for 29 years. Coleman will remain pastor until the church calls a new pastor. He and his wife, Arlinda, will remain in Prattville.

### BESSEMER

▶ **Canaan Church, Bessemer**, will hold its bicentennial celebration Sept. 9 with services at 8:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. Dennis Swanberg will be the guest speaker and Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, will share. Morgan Bailey is pastor.

### MONTGOMERY

▶ **Catoma Church, Montgomery**, will hold a homecoming service to celebrate its 55-year anniversary Sept. 9, 10:15 a.m. Mike Stephens will be the guest speaker and Cliff Huckabee will lead the music. A covered-dish lunch will follow the service. Donnie Dickens is pastor.

### SHELBY

▶ **Tim Cox** recently celebrated 20 years as pastor of **Liberty Church, Chelsea**. He holds a bachelor's degree from University of Mobile, and master of divinity and doctor of ministry degrees from New Orleans Seminary. Cox previously served at Pleasant Grove Church, Atmore; Ridge Road Church, Brewton; and Linden Church. He currently serves as first vice president of the



COX

Alabama Baptist State Convention. He and his wife, Dawn, have four children.

### TENNESSEE RIVER

▶ **First Church, Scottsboro**, will celebrate 150 years during the month of September. Each Sunday at 11 a.m. the church will hold a worship service featuring former pastors and ministers of music. Shandy Dill is pastor. ✠

## Massive fire destroys Warrior Creek Baptist Church buildings

A massive fire Aug. 21 destroyed all the buildings of Warrior Creek Baptist Church, Holly Pond, after church members and firefighters did their best to control it.

James Carson said he could see the glow coming through the pine trees that separate his yard from the church property.

"We jumped in the car and ran over there, and we had fire extinguishers to do what we could, but it was already too late," he said.

### 'A shocker'

The church burned to the ground sometime around 8:30 p.m.

"It's a shocker," said Carson, who along

with his wife, Dot, has been an active church member for 22 years. "It's sad, and we're all torn up about it. But I imagine it's a test."

The Blount Baptist Association church — founded in 1857 — had recently added six new classrooms in a connector building between the sanctuary and fellowship hall.

"We've been growing a lot and needed more space, and we had just signed off on it two weeks ago," Carson said.

The church hasn't decided yet where it will meet temporarily, but two area churches have offered the use of their space, Carson said.

He said they don't know for sure, but based on where the fire appears to have started, he believes wiring could be at fault.

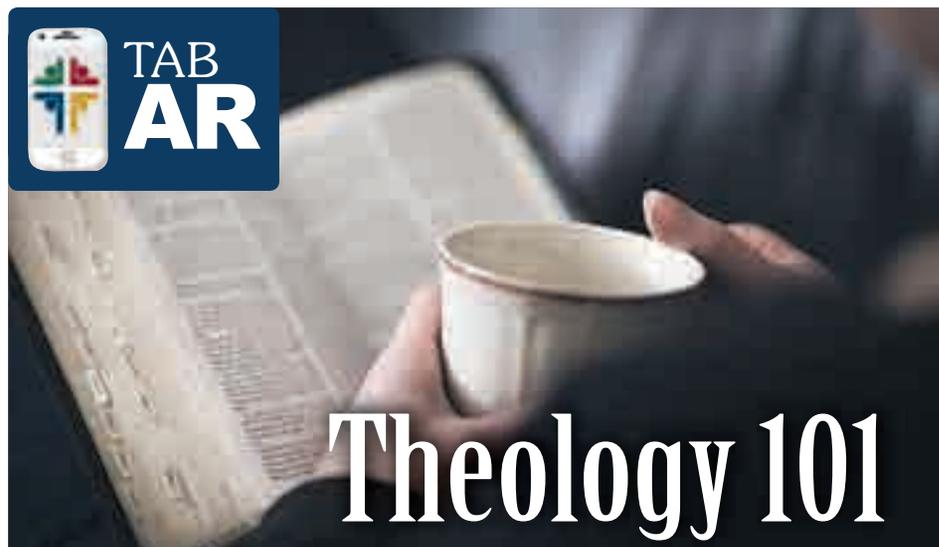
Local officials are working to determine a cause.

Pastor Darryl Ross said it's a mess, but he knows God will take care of them.

"The Lord's got a plan, we've just got to get through it," he said. "With His help, we will be back, and we will overcome." (Grace Thornton)



Photo by Christy Perry/The Cullman Tribune



## Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

### The Scriptures

## Divine Authority

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

Historically, Baptists have looked upon the Bible as the final authority in matters of faith and practice. The Baptist Faith and Message statement puts that authority in these words, naming the Scriptures as "the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds and religious opinions should be tried." The divine authority of the Scriptures rests on its origin and content. As to origin, the Bible is divine disclosure. As to content, it came by divine inspiration. As revelation from God and inspired by God, the Bible is an authoritative word from God.

Christians believe that God is the ultimate and final authority — no greater than Him exists. In setting human governing authority alongside God's authority, Romans 13:1 declares, "There is no authority except from God." Since Christians also understand that God exists as a trinity of persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, divine authority is a shared authority among the members of the Holy Trinity.

### Power of God

During His earthly ministry Christ often exercised the authority that belongs only to God. He overpowered demons, healed diseases, raised the dead and forgave sins. At the conclusion of His famous Sermon on the Mount, Christ's authority is noted in the conclusion, "He taught them as One having authority, and not as their scribes" (Matt. 7:29). Following the resurrection Christ staked His claim to authority in His famous declaration, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18). The early followers of Christ confessed the authority that resided in Him with the declaration, "In Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily ... who is the head of all rule and authority" (Col. 2:9-10).

By virtue of membership in the divine Trinity, the Holy Spirit also shares in the divine authority that belongs only

to God. At the heart of the doctrine of the Bible as the Spirit-inspired word of God, the Bible possesses a derived authority as the written expression of the will, work and word of God. Divine authority is exercised through the Scriptures inasmuch as they declare authoritative truth, issue authoritative commands and serve as the authoritative norm by which all other claims to authority are to be weighed, challenged and, if needed, corrected.

### Solid ground

Christians stand on solid ground when able to respond to all truth claims with "but the Bible says." Given its authoritative role in the life of a believer, the Bible tells us whence we came, why we are here and where we are headed. The sacred Scriptures constitute the touchstone by which all religious instruction must be tested. Our obedience to God rests on the underlying conviction that what the Bible commands, God commands and what the Bible condemns, God condemns.

In summary, we might think of the Bible as revealed truth from God (its ultimate source) and about God (its primary subject). Hence, it is inspired truth vouchsafed to us by the influence of the Holy Spirit working through its inspired human authors. As a consequence of its nature as revealed and inspired truth, the Bible is our final authority for faith and practice as the Holy Spirit illumines our understanding of it and enables our obedience to it. ✠

*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.*



# 'Tangible reminder'

## WMU encourages everyone to honor their missions heroes through bricks on Walk of Faith

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

It's been about 40 years since Sandy Wisdom-Martin got to know Ruth King in the small town of Marissa, Illinois.

But she'll never lose the mental image of the small lady protecting her from snarling dogs as they walked around town inviting people to church.

"I was afraid of dogs," said Wisdom-Martin, who was a teenager then.

But even though that memory stuck, something else stuck with her even more.

"As we walked around town, she taught me how to witness," said Wisdom-Martin, now executive director/treasurer of national Woman's Missionary Union (WMU). "She became a role model for me. She taught me about missions, and as a teenager, my worldview changed completely because of her. She showed me that there was a world beyond my tiny rural community."

Because of that impact, Wisdom-Martin honored King with a brick that will be placed in WMU's new Walk of Faith garden. The Walk of Faith, to be built on New Hope Mountain in Birmingham where the WMU headquarters is located, will honor missions heroes past and present.

"I am who I am today because faithful Christ followers poured their lives into mine. One of those people was Ruth King," Wisdom-Martin said. "She invested countless hours nurturing and discipling me. The brick is a simple way to express appreciation to her."

### Supporting ministry

One-hundred percent of the funds from the bricks will go to the Wanda Lee Joy Fund to meet WMU's operational needs.

David George, president of WMU Foundation, said the walk will support the ministry of WMU into the future and honor the unsung missions heroes and mentors that have impacted so many.

"It's in the DNA of people within WMU to want to honor the people who got them involved," he said. "Talk to people who are involved in WMU and they will all point to someone who saw something in them

when they were little girls and young women and got them involved. What a great way to honor that tradition."

George bought the first brick himself, in honor of his mother, Jackie George; wife, Allyson; and daughter, Katelyn.

His mother roped him into being a Girls in Action Scepter Bearer for coronation

*"I am who I am today because faithful Christ followers poured their lives into mine."*

**Sandy Wisdom-Martin  
executive director/  
treasurer, national Woman's  
Missionary Union**



Photo courtesy of WMU Foundation

Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) Foundation is building a Walk of Faith at the headquarters of National WMU in Birmingham. People are invited to purchase bricks, like the one pictured above, to honor the missions heroes in their lives.

ceremonies when he was a young boy. Through her leadership, he got his first exposure to missions. His wife's love of children prompted her to go on missions trips and encourage him to do more. And his daughter has encouraged him toward sacrificial generosity to help others.

### Missions heroes

"All three have influenced me and shaped my life," he said.

Anyone interested in honoring missions heroes in their lives can order bricks through the WMU Foundation. The bricks come in a large and small size and will be part of the walkway in the garden.

And for churches or associational groups who would like to promote the bricks at larger gatherings, boxes are available for use as an informational display about the bricks.

So far, WMU Foundation has sold 101 bricks, raising nearly \$33,000 for WMU. There's no end date to the project — as long as people would like to buy them, WMU Foundation will continue to lay them in the Walk of Faith.

Wisdom-Martin said the bricks are a "tangible reminder" for her of the difference one person can make in the life of another.

"If you are grateful for what someone else did for you, take time to honor them," she said.

Claudia Johnson, leadership consultant for WMU's Christian Women's Leadership Center, said that for her, that person is her grandmother, Susie Mae Towry.

For years, Towry's Bible stayed mostly in the bathroom, lying open to that day's reading, pages held in place by a list of missionary names. Johnson never forgot that sight.

"She was a preacher's wife and prayed daily for missionaries," Johnson said. "She loved the work of WMU and loved God's word. I know that it was her prayers that really got me through all my high school years. She was just a real woman of God."

And because of her active influence on her granddaughter — and her inherent influence through the way she raised Johnson's mother, Nancy Towry Wall — Johnson became one

of those missionaries on that prayer list. After Johnson finished school, she went first to Africa as a journeyman, then to Thailand with her husband, serving a total of 28 years with the International Mission Board.

### Family legacy

"I know my grandmother's prayers and influence made a difference in my life," she said. "You couldn't find a sweeter person, and the gift of having a family legacy of being in church and being in the Word — I recognize what a gift that is."✠

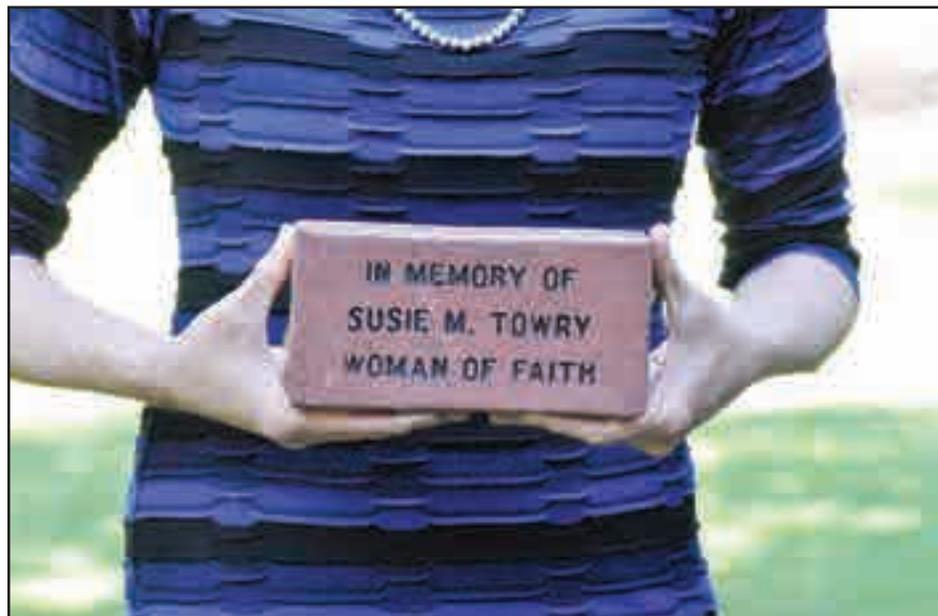


Photo courtesy of WMU Foundation

Claudia Johnson holds the brick she purchased in memory of her grandmother, Susie Mae Towry, who poured into her as she was growing up. The brick and others that will line the WMU Walk of Faith will help to honor missions heroes past and present and fund WMU's operational costs.

**For more information or to purchase a brick, visit [wmufoundation.com/walkoffaith](http://wmufoundation.com/walkoffaith).**

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# Myers-Mallory

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**State Goal:**  
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## Bible Lens app creates custom shareable images

The creators of the YouVersion Bible app have released a new app that will allow users to match their personal images with relevant Bible verses to create shareable artwork.

The free Bible Lens app analyzes content in a photo like objects, backgrounds and colors and identifies themes. Then the app searches the YouVersion database for the most relevant Bible verse to suggest to the user. The software balances design elements like font choice and white space with a person's photos and automatically and artistically renders the verse on top of the image, creating visually appealing, shareable artwork.

"If I take a picture of my left hand, Bible Lens would identify my wedding band and likely create an image that highlights marriage. If the app identified a source of light in my photo, it might suggest a Bible verse about how Jesus is the light of the world," said Bobby Gruenewald, Life Church Pastor and YouVersion founder. "It's incredible technology that affords us the unique opportunity to help people see their world with a different perspective."

Bible Lens will offer the option to create images from photos saved in a user's camera roll. The app will draw connections between the Bible and photographed moments like birthday parties, lunch dates, holidays and sporting events.

"As technologies emerge and

create new possibilities, it's important to us that the Bible be at the forefront of innovation," Gruenewald said. "We believe Bible Lens will make it easier for people to see connections between the Bible and their everyday lives, and we're encouraged by the number of people who have shown an interest in engaging with the Bible in this way."

The app also will recognize when the photo is a selfie.

"The selfie is often used as a way for a person to gain approval from others," said Gruenewald. "When the app comes across a selfie, it will offer Bible verses to encourage them by suggesting what God may say about them.

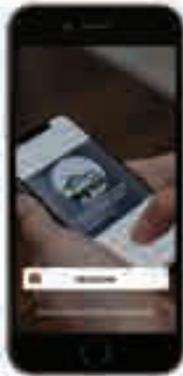
In that way we hope Bible Lens actually redeems the selfie."

Bible Lens launched Aug. 4. Within the first weekend, the app reached more than 265,000 installs, earning it the number one ranking in the App Store's Lifestyle category and number two of all free apps.

### Third app

Bible Lens is the third app from YouVersion, which was created by Life.Church to help people engage with the Bible. It follows the Bible App for Kids, which launched in 2013, and the YouVersion Bible App, which launched on the first day of Apple's App Store in 2008, and has since been downloaded on 330 million devices and in every country in the world.

(TAB)



## UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **Guy Joins UM's Alabama School of Arts Faculty:** Lori Guy has been named a visiting assistant professor of music in University of Mobile's (UM) Alabama School of the Arts. Guy holds a doctor of musical arts in vocal performance and pedagogy, both from the University of Southern Mississippi. She has been an adjunct instructor at UM since 2015.

"I am so thankful to have the opportunity to work full-time with the students and faculty at UM," Guy said. "I believe deeply in the mission and vision of the school and I find such joy in working with the talented and dedicated students of the Alabama School of the Arts."

► **University of Mobile Hosts "Uninhabited" Exhibit by Painter Nathan Perry:** The Alabama School of the Arts at University of Mobile (UM) is hosting the work of painter Nathan Perry in an exhibit called "Uninhabited." Perry, who teaches drawing at Western Carolina University, paints invented landscapes that are inspired by his childhood in Salt Lake Valley, the basin of a prehistoric lake.

The exhibit will be on display through Sept. 27 in UM's Martin

Hall Gallery. Perry will give an Artist Talk on Sept. 27 at 11 a.m. with a reception following. Both the exhibit and Artist Talk are free and open to the public.

Martin Hall Gallery is open Mondays through Fridays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

## SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Samford's Preministerial Scholars Program Celebrates Decade of Success:** Samford University's Preministerial Scholars program in Howard College of Arts and Sciences is celebrating 10 years of helping students answer their calling. The pre-professional scholarship program combines the Religion Department's curriculum with the practical experience of church-related Christian ministry.

An impressive 94 percent of program alumni are currently in ministry-related graduate programs, Christian ministry positions or both. They are worship pastors, youth ministers, overseas missionaries, college campus ministers, hospital chaplains and ministry leaders for nonprofit organizations.

► **Journalism Professor Earns National Book Honor:** Samford University journalism

professor Clay Carey's 2017 book, "The News Untold," has earned the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication's Tankard Book Award.

"The News Untold" focuses on how small-town reporters and editors in some of Appalachia's poorest communities decide what aspects of poverty are news, how their audiences interpret those decisions and how those two related processes help shape broader understandings of economic need and local social responsibility.

The annual Tankard Award, presented at the organization's annual conference Aug. 6-9, recognizes the best research-based book about journalism published each year.

## JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Judson Social Work Program Receives Reaffirmation of Accreditation:** The Judson College Social Work program has received a reaffirmation of its accreditation for its Bachelor of Social Work program by the Council on Social Work Education until 2026. In June the Judson social work program graduated its largest cohort of students since classes began in 2010.✠

# UNTIL THEN

## SENIOR ADULT REVIVAL

September 24 - 26, 2018 | South Campus Chapel  
10:30 - Noon



**HAROLD FANNING**  
Evangelist



**RICK STONE**  
Worship Pastor



**BECCA GILLIAM**  
Pianist & Soloist

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Your faithfulness to all generations with my mouth, Psalm 117

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

# ALABAMA

## UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

### Bethlehem/Pine Barren director of missions retires

He spent two years serving in Louisiana while he was studying at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, and he served just a little while at a church in Florida while he was in high school.

But other than that, John Marks has spent all of his 54 years in ministry serving in his home state of Alabama.

He will retire Aug. 31 from his role as director of missions (DOM) for Bethlehem and Pine Barren Baptist associations.

"It's been a really, really good experience here for me," said Marks, who has served in that role for more than 11 years. "It has been a joy to serve here."

Before coming to Bethlehem and Pine Barren associations, Marks served eight years as DOM for Central Baptist Association. Before that, he served a number of churches as pastor and minister of music, youth and education.

"The Lord has really blessed to give me opportunities to serve not only in the pastorate but music and youth too," he said.

Bethlehem and Pine Barren associations honored Marks and his wife, Maarah, at a



MARKS

reception Aug. 19 at First Baptist Church, Monroeville. After he retires, the couple will move to Cut Off, Louisiana, to continue their ministry. (Grace Thornton)

### Lillian's Bayside Church dedicates new sanctuary

Bayside Baptist Church, Lillian, in Baldwin Baptist Association, recently dedicated its new sanctuary, one year after having broken ground. The first service was held in the new worship center in the spring. A week later Pastor Tom Harris, along with church members and community members, gathered for the dedication ceremony.

Speakers included former pastor Donnie Dickens and Rick Barnhart with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. Laurie Elmore, member of First Baptist Church, Foley, sang "How Great Thou Art." After the ceremony the congregation enjoyed a fellowship luncheon followed by an afternoon of praise music. (TAB)

### Marshall retires after 53 years of dedicated gospel ministry

Lynn Graham Marshall was saved at nine years old and dedicated his life to full-time Christian service at 13, but at the time he didn't know exactly what God would call him to do.

The answer came during his senior year of high school. While raking leaves at his house in

Chattanooga, Tennessee, God called Marshall to preach the gospel.

Fifty-three years after being ordained as a minister, Marshall retired Aug. 12 as pastor of Concord Baptist Church, Toney.

Marshall also served at Piney Grove Baptist Church, Ardmore; Vestavia Hills Baptist Church, Decatur; and churches in Tennessee and Mississippi.

He served his communities well. While at Piney Grove Baptist and First Baptist Church, Benton, Tennessee, he was a volunteer chaplain for the local high school football teams. He also volunteered for the Limestone Correctional Facility prison ministry.

Even before becoming an ordained minister, Marshall dedicated his time to sharing the gospel. While in the Navy he preached to a men's Bible study group. He also preached at a rescue mission in New Orleans and volunteered as an associate pastor.

"Always trusting in the Lord and always depending on Him is what has sustained me during my 53 years of ministry," Marshall said. "The God we read about in the Bible is real, absolutely real."

Marshall and his wife, Faye, have three children. (Jessica Ingram)



MARSHALL



(augmented reality)

- 1** Download the **HP Reveal app** from your app store.
- 2** Tap the  icon at the bottom of the screen.
- 3** You will see **pulsating dots**, which indicate the app is searching for a target. Once it finds a target the dots will turn to a bull's-eye. The bull's-eye will remain until the augmented reality image loads.
- 4** Look for **The Alabama Baptist (TAB) augmented reality logo** (example shown above). Hold your device over the logo and watch the paper come to life.
- 5** Each week when **TAB arrives**, look for the AR logo to watch the video extras through the app.

## TAB CLASSIFIEDS

For information on placing a classified ad, contact the advertising department of The Alabama Baptist at 205-870-4720, ext. 102, or [ads@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:ads@thealabamabaptist.org). Copy deadline is two weeks before publication.

### CHURCH POSITIONS

#### PASTOR

York Terrace Baptist Church is seeking a full-time pastor who will lead the church under God's direction to be a lighthouse in the Shoals area. An energetic, tireless worker who inspires the church to serve in the same way. Relevant ministerial experience is preferred. Send resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, York Terrace Baptist Church, 1401 E. 30th Street, Sheffield, AL 35660.

#### ASSOCIATE PASTOR/SENIOR ADULT MINISTER

First Baptist Church, Guntersville, is seeking a part-time associate pastor/senior adult minister. Send resumé to: First Baptist Church, ATTN: Joel Samuels, 1000 Gunter Ave., Guntersville, AL 35976, or email: [jsamuels@gvillefbc.org](mailto:jsamuels@gvillefbc.org).

#### BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER

Hopewell Baptist Church, Hanceville, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational music minister. Send your resumé to: Hopewell Baptist Church, ATTN: Ed Hart, P.O.

Box 423, Hanceville, AL 35077. [eedhart@yahoo.com](mailto:eedhart@yahoo.com).

#### BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER

Elam Baptist Church is seeking a bivocational music minister. To apply, send resumé by email to: [elambaptistch@elmore.rr.com](mailto:elambaptistch@elmore.rr.com) or by mail to: 4686 Notasulga Road, Tallassee, AL 36078.

#### MINISTER OF MUSIC & YOUTH

Sisters Baptist Church is seeking to fill the full-time staff vacancy of minister of music and youth. We are a conservative Southern Baptist church. Serious applicants may send their resumé with a cover letter to: [office@sistersbaptist.org](mailto:office@sistersbaptist.org) or to: 1807 E McCarty St., Sandersville, GA 31082.

#### STUDENT MINISTER

Eastside Baptist Church student minister K4-12th grade, 20 hours. Must affirm the 2000 BF&M; emphasis on organization, planning biblical based programs, activities, events. Please send resumé to: Bessie Branyon at [sleepingbees@bellsouth.net](mailto:sleepingbees@bellsouth.net).

#### YOUTH/STUDENT MINISTER

Calvary Baptist in Russellville, Alabama, is seeking a full-time youth/student minister. Inquiries send resumé to: [Wade4Calvary@icloud.com](mailto:Wade4Calvary@icloud.com).

#### STUDENT MINISTER

FBC Silverhill is presently searching for a part-time student minister to lead 7th grade-college. [Info@Silverhill.org](mailto:Info@Silverhill.org) or P.O. Box 246 Silverhill, AL. 36576. 251-945-5182.

### OTHER POSITIONS

#### ASSOCIATIONAL MISSION STRATEGIST

The Northshore Baptist Association (Southeast Louisiana) is seeking resumé for an associational mission strategist (DOM). Interested persons should visit [www.northshorebaptists.net/search](http://www.northshorebaptists.net/search).

#### CHURCH SECRETARY

Eastside, Birmingham. Proficiency in Microsoft Office, publication design, office administration and good communication skills required. Bookkeeping a plus. Monday-Thursday, 30 hours/week.

Send resumé to: [bfmurphy@bham.rr.com](mailto:bfmurphy@bham.rr.com).

#### KEYBOARD PLAYER

New Beginnings (Graysville) is looking for an experienced keyboard player. Needed for Sunday AM, Sunday PM and Wednesday PM services. Please send resumé to: [secretary@nbccbaptist.com](mailto:secretary@nbccbaptist.com).

### BUSINESS

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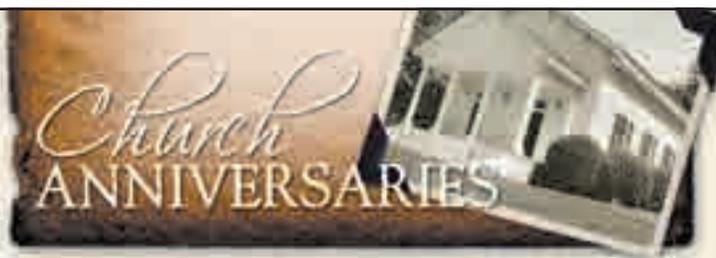
### TRAVEL/VACATION

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### Patton Chapel Baptist celebrates 75 years

On July 15 past and present members of Patton Chapel Baptist Church, Lincoln, gathered together to celebrate the church's 75th anniversary.

Special music was brought by Matthew Mitchell, Pastor Calvin Brooks, Paula and Gary Haynes and the gospel trio Surrendered. Randy Hagan, director of missions for Coosa River Baptist Association, also spoke briefly.

Printed copies of the church history were available to everyone at the service. The church displayed photo albums documenting the history of the church, and children at the church's Vacation Bible School made fans as mementos for those in attendance.

"It was a great day," church member Doris Ringo said. "I loved seeing former members and all those who grew up in the church."

During the fellowship lunch that followed the service, photos from members of the church were part of a presentation for everyone to view. (Jessica Ingram)



Photo courtesy of Patton Chapel Baptist

### Mount Hebron celebrates 175th anniversary

Mount Hebron Baptist Church, Akron, had a packed house as it celebrated its 175th anniversary July 22.

Former pastor Herman Parker preached from 1 John 3:1-3. His sermon, "When it is all in the family," rang true to the family of current and former members gathered in the sanctuary.

Special music was provided by Brooks Baker III and his daughter Anne Baker Jolley.

Photos and other historical materials were on display in the fellowship hall.

Anna Speir, from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented Mount Hebron Baptist with a framed certificate honoring the anniversary. Hale



Photo courtesy of Mount Hebron Baptist

Baptist Association director of missions Bobby Hopper also presented a certificate to the church.

"It was a wonderful day and everyone was blessed," said church member George Weeks. Cliff Patterson is the pastor of Mount Hebron. (Jessica Ingram)

### Lyeffion Baptist holds centennial celebration

More than 100 people gathered at Lyeffion Baptist Church, Evergreen, on July 29 to celebrate its centennial.

Michael Holcombe, who grew up in the Evergreen community, spoke during the service. Gracie Johnson and Lisa Smith sang "Reckless Love," and Conecuh Baptist Association director of missions Joey Rodgers sang "The Old Country Church" and "Days of Elijah" with his wife Jeri and daughter Emily. The congregation sang a song also sung at the 75-year celebration, "Glad Reunion Day."

A historical booklet was given to everyone at the service.

Dalton Campbell presented the church with a framed certificate from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission.

"It was a great time with the Lord and each other," said church member Ollie Burt.

Larry Johnson is pastor of Lyeffion Baptist. (TAB)

Compiled by the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and TAB



Photo courtesy of Larry Hyche

Kevin Ward, Limestone Association DOM, opens the Aug. 6 follow-up to their Aug. 3 men's conference. The group gathered that Monday to hear from Larry Hyche of the SBOM about how to cultivate a culture of disciple making in their men's ministry.

## Men's ministry statewide seeing cultural shift as hundreds gather for discipleship events

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

It wasn't a pep rally and they didn't swap gravy recipes for brotherhood breakfasts.

But Larry Hyche, who leads men's spiritual development for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said what happened recently in Limestone Baptist Association is the kind of thing that's changing the climate of men's ministry in the state.

About 750 men gathered Aug. 3 at First Baptist Church, Athens, for an associational men's conference called "How to Be a Man" led by radio personality Rick Burgess. Preaching from Acts 4, Burgess challenged the men to live on the right side of Pentecost — to be bold, unwavering disciple makers.

The Friday night gathering drew a crowd not for a comedy show but for a serious look at how men can become disciplers of other men, said Kevin Ward, director of missions for Limestone Association.

"There was a very genuine feeling in the building," Ward said. "It was about how Jesus has called us to be more than just a good guy — He's called us to be faithful disciples who make other disciples."

The event built a lot of momentum with men wanting to take what they learned and do something about it, and two men were baptized, he said.

"There's a stir right now that we need a culture change — we're not producing disciples, that we're not producing people who have victory over sin and are surrendered to the work of the ministry," Ward said. "Something's got to give and that's what we talked about that

night. It was a really good experience."

Hyche said he's seeing more and more churches wanting to implement a stronger focus on discipleship and evangelism in the men's ministry.

"There are a lot of churches that are seeing that the kind of men's ministry we've 'always done' isn't as effective now as it used to be," Hyche said. "It says a lot when you have 750 men get together to hear about how to be a disciple maker."

The same weekend, another group of several hundred men also

gathered for a similar men's conference in Andalusia.

"Men's ministry is so important, but it has to have a strategy," Hyche said. "More and more men are showing they're hungry for that kind of focus."

Churches need a way to cultivate an atmosphere conducive to growing mature disciples who make other disciples, he said — that's how they're going to win new men and younger men to Christ.

The Monday after the event with Burgess, about 30 men gathered for some practical training with Hyche on how to strengthen their men's ministry and return to biblical discipleship.

"We talked about the big picture," Hyche said. "I didn't have a three-step plan for them to make their men's events better. We talked about the atmosphere of making disciples in their church. We want to make healthy disciples who make healthy disciples."✠

For more information about men's ministry, contact Larry Hyche at 334-613-2268 or [lhyche@alsbom.org](mailto:lhyche@alsbom.org).



Photo by David Green

Andy Blanks (left) and Rick Burgess (right) talk about their devotional book, 'How to Be a Man,' with Kevin Ward, Limestone Association director of missions, during the men's conference by the same name Aug. 3 at FBC Athens.

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### **Evelyn Pemberton**

#### *Retired IMB missionary Pemberton dies at 76*

**E**velyn Pemberton of Headland died Aug. 15. She was 76. Pemberton served with the International Mission Board (IMB) as a missionary in Mexico until retirement. She also served alongside her husband in Baptist churches in Alabama, Texas and Oklahoma.



**PEMBERTON**

Pemberton was born in Wetumpka and moved to Tallassee as a teenager. She received an associate degree from Wallace College in Selma, attending on a voice scholarship.

Pemberton was a member of Bethlehem Baptist Church, Headland. She is survived by her husband, Bob; daughter, Janet; sons, Randy and Joshua; eight grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren. (Jessica Ingram)

### **Tim Rittenberry**

#### *Former Calcedonia Baptist pastor dies at 60*

**T**im Rittenberry, former pastor of Calcedonia Baptist Church, Centre, died Aug. 10. He was 60.

Rittenberry was an avid fisherman and loved spending time on Lake Weiss. He served as interim pastor of Calcedonia Baptist, then was called as pastor in 2016. He left in early 2018 just before beginning a battle with cancer.

He is survived by his wife of 42 years, Lynn; son, David; daughter, Rebecca; and two grandchildren. (Grace Thornton)

## **McGregor's family continues effort to expand gambling**

**T**he general manager of the Birmingham Race Course says the family of long-time gambling advocate Milton McGregor intends to continue operating the dog tracks he owned.

Alabama Media Group reported that Joe O'Neill, the general manager of Birmingham Race Course, said the McGregor family's plans were relayed to him by McGregor's son-in-law and chief operations officer of the track, Lewis Benefield.

"The family sat down after the funeral and got their situation together and decided to continue the operation in the same form that

he envisioned," O'Neill told the Birmingham Racing Commission. "The family's wishes are to continue doing what he envisioned, and that's finding other forms of gaming to bring to the facility."

McGregor died March 25, 2018. His efforts to expand his dog racing operations into electronic bingo casinos led to several Alabama State Supreme Court rulings declaring the machines illegal slot machines under Alabama law.

O'Neill called McGregor the "political right arm of the company" but said the operations of the business had continued as usual after his death. (TAB)

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# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For September 2

## Explore the Bible By Kyle Beshears Associate Dean and Assistant Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

### TRUE GOSPEL Galatians 1:1-10

Like ancient Galatia, our world is filled with different gospels. We are bombarded by empty promises of control, godhood or material wealth. The different gospel of works-righteousness lures us with the empty promise that we can somehow contribute to and control our destiny through active obedience. The different gospel of Mormonism, ostensibly heralded by an angel named Moroni, arouses a desire within us to ascend to the status of a god. The different gospel of the prosperity movement foolishly equates the level of our faith with material gain and earthly comfort.

The true gospel pleases God; a different gospel pleases people. Paul warned his beloved brothers and sisters in Christ to disregard any gospel contrary to the one preached by the apostles. What exactly was this different gospel that agitated Paul? We will learn this through the course of our study of Galatians.

#### Appointed by God (1-2)

The gospel is, in its most elegant form, a straightforward message: Christ died for our sins, was buried and raised on the third day, all according to Scripture (1 Cor. 15:3-4). Yet the more we consider this simple truth, the farther its boundaries of meaning and significance expand.

#### Through His Grace (3-5)

The gospel (meaning “good news”) is the message of God’s work of reconciliation through His Son by faith through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. It is the glory of Christ (2 Cor. 4:4), a message with which God has entrusted believers so that it might be powerfully displayed, in word and deed, to push back the kingdom of darkness (John 12:46). Indeed, the gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (Rom. 1:16).

### Distorted by Some (6-10)

It is no surprise, then, that the enemy — whose greatest desire is self-worship through the distortion of truth and dominance of death — stops at nothing to persuade us to believe anything other than the true gospel of Jesus. If the enemy cannot convince us to reject the gospel outright, his next preference is to deceive us.

This deception is precisely what impaired the faith of believers throughout ancient Galatia. At first, the true gospel preached by the apostles took root in the people’s hearts, but through their inability to discern truth, their spiritual growth was choked by the introduction of a “different gospel.” The different gospel seemed like the real thing but was different in significant ways. It was counterfeit, having much the same feel but lacking the power and quality of the good news.

Different gospels are not dangerous because they are dissimilar from the true gospel; instead, they are dangerous precisely because they are similar to the real thing. No one is fooled by a dollar bill that is made of cardboard, shaped like an oval and colored pink. The most successful counterfeiters can reproduce a dollar bill with only one or two variations. They trick you into believing that in your hands rests valuable currency when in reality all you hold is a valueless, crafty lie.

How, then, can we discern the true gospel? Paul gives us a hint when he rhetorically asks, “Am I now trying to persuade people, or God?” (v. 10).

When presented with a gospel that does not seem right, ask yourself, “Who would be pleased by this message, people or God?” Are you drawn to the message for selfish reasons, or does the gospel demand that you crucify selfishness? Does the gospel glorify creation or Creator, people or God? †

## Bible Studies for Life By Jeffery M. Leonard, Ph.D. Assistant Professor of Religion, Samford University

### REALITY CHECK Titus 3:3-11

One of the ways an older generation passes on its collective wisdom to a younger one is by distilling that wisdom into proverbs. A watched pot never boils. A penny saved is a penny earned. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. Statements like these endure because they represent the agreed upon wisdom of the community as a whole. And while some proverbs may be worded in a way that initially seems opaque — my sons have literally no idea what “A stitch in time saves nine” might mean — once explained, the truth of a proverb seems almost inarguable.

Two proverbs that present opposite sides of the same coin are “Absence makes the heart grow fonder” and “Familiarity breeds contempt.” Surely all of us know the experience of taking something for granted only to miss it terribly once we no longer have it. It might be that certain restaurant that we rarely visit but miss a great deal once it has gone out of business. It might be a relative we didn’t visit as often as we should have but whom we would give anything to see once they have died. It might be the experience of only realizing how much we miss the use of one hand once we’ve managed to sprain a wrist or break an arm.

Unfortunately, we can experience the same sort of “take-it-for-granted” attitude when it comes to our spiritual lives. As time passes, the excitement we felt after becoming a Christian or enjoying a profound spiritual experience can fade. The experience of our faith can become something we are still committed to but that we don’t really treasure the way we once did. A faith that we take for granted is hardly the kind of faith that will draw others to want what we have.

### Ministry is grounded in the gospel of Christ. (3-8a)

The New Testament letter to Titus outlines one of the keys to rekindling the passion of our faith and restoring the joy of our relationship with God. Put simply, this letter encourages us to remember where we came from (v. 3). Perhaps not every sin listed in this verse dominated our lives, but we all know the dark places our hearts used to inhabit. And it was in that dark place that the light of God broke in and rescued us. As the following verses remind us, the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, and in His mercy He saved us.

### Ministry is a response to the gospel of Christ. (8b)

Remembering where we came from is key to having a vibrant and passionate faith. That same remembrance should also spur us on to living out our faith in everyday life. Verse 8 of this same chapter encourages us that our belief in God should lead us to devotion and to good works.

### Ministry has no room for personal preferences or self-centeredness. (9-11)

In the same way that renewed appreciation of our own salvation should spur us on to good works, it also should close the door on certain bad works. Our commitment to God should be sufficient motivation for seeking to get along with others. We are commanded to love one another, not to vanquish them on the field of theological argument. And while we are called to defend the faith, major arguments over minor things only serve to create dissension. We can hardly expect a person who has not embraced the love of God to receive it from our hands when those hands are tightened into fists raised at fellow disciples of Christ. †

## Christian Crossword

By Connie Holman Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



### Across

1. Thou shalt plant \_\_\_\_\_. (Deut. 28:39)
8. Standeth in \_\_\_\_\_ of thy word. (Ps. 119:161)
11. House \_\_\_\_\_ God. (Gen. 28:17)
12. More recent.
13. Once more; in a different way.
14. Scottish language.
16. Let your communication \_\_\_\_\_, Yea, yea. (Matt. 5:37)
17. Opposite of over.
19. Bays or coves.
22. Have \_\_\_\_\_ other gods before me. (Ex. 20:3)
23. Give to him that \_\_\_\_\_. (Matt. 5:42)
24. Characteristic.
27. Thou are \_\_\_\_\_ great. (Ps. 104:1)
28. Nothing more than.
30. Gather the \_\_\_\_\_ of Israel. (Ex. 3:16)
33. Stubborn.

34. More uncommon.
35. \_\_\_\_\_ lib.
36. Heavenly.
39. A time to rend, and a time to \_\_\_\_\_. (Eccles. 3:7)
40. Nay.
41. My days \_\_\_\_\_ fulfilled. (Gen. 29:21)
43. Courtyard.
45. Trodden under foot of \_\_\_\_\_. (Matt. 5:13)
46. In the middle of.
47. The hearts of the people \_\_\_\_\_. (Josh. 7:5)

### Down

1. One who works freely.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ my people, which are called by my name. (2 Chron. 7:14)
3. In the wilderness of \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Sam. 24:1)
4. \_\_\_\_\_ of jubilee. (Lev. 27:17)
5. Stand in \_\_\_\_\_, and sin not. (Ps. 4:4)
6. Take pleasure in.

7. Neither eat nor \_\_\_\_\_. (Esther 4:16)
8. \_\_\_\_\_ angel of the Lord. (Luke 1:11)
9. Spider homes.
10. Save one little \_\_\_\_\_ lamb. (2 Sam. 12:3)
15. Cunning.
18. Thou, \_\_\_\_\_, thy son. (Ex. 20:10)
20. But the righteous into life \_\_\_\_\_. (Matt. 25:46)
21. Number of Noah’s sons. (Gen. 6:10)
25. Brother of Simon Peter.
26. Raging floods.
28. Small amount.
29. Breach for breach, \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_. (Lev. 24:20)
31. Put it on a blue \_\_\_\_\_. (Ex. 28:37)
32. Snakelike fish.
35. \_\_\_\_\_ home in the body. (2 Cor. 5:6)
37. Every bird of every \_\_\_\_\_. (Gen. 7:14)
38. Eat of the \_\_\_\_\_ of life. (Rev. 2:7)





# Media reviews

**MOVIES**

## 'The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring' leads August streaming entries

By **Michael Foust**  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

It is a trilogy so elaborate that it took one out of every 160 New Zealanders to make it. And the first part in the series is coming to Netflix this month.

"The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring," the film based on the novel by J.R.R. Tolkien, is streaming on Netflix — roughly 17 years after it grossed more than \$300 million in the U.S. to become the No. 2 film at the box office for 2001. It was followed by "The Two Towers" (2002) and "The Return of the King" (2003), movies that were even more financially successful.

Netflix hasn't announced if those other movies are coming to the service in the coming months, although if this film series follows the pattern of previous ones on Netflix, they just might. For now, "The Fellowship of the Ring" (PG-13) will have to do.

The film series and novels are popular worldwide among Chris-

tians, who point to the battle of good versus evil and the story's spiritual undertones, including its teaching on the lure of evil. Many books have been written about the symbolism and worldview within the story. Tolkien himself was Catholic and a good friend of C.S. Lewis, the author of "The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe."

The story takes place in Middle Earth and follows a young man named Frodo, who comes into possession of a ring that has the power to enslave the world. Frodo's mission is to destroy it — which must be done by tossing it in the fire on a mountain — although the evil

Lord Sauron is trying to get it first. A band of companions known as the "fellowship" protects Frodo on his quest.

It took filmmakers about eight years to make the three movies across New Zealand. Not only did locals help out, the New Zealand Army assisted by helping build Hobbiton months before filming began so the plants could really grow.



Photo courtesy of New Line Cinema



**TAB AR**

"The Fellowship of the Ring" contains no coarse language or sexuality but is rated PG-13 for "epic battle sequences and some scary images."

Take the rating seriously if you have young children. "The Fellowship of the Ring" has more than its share of creepy-looking creatures. My 6-year-olds won't be watching it. Still, I might check it out with my tween-aged son. Pass the popcorn.

**Also streaming this month:**

### Netflix

► **"Batman Begins" (PG-13)** — This 2005 movie rebooted the Batman films series and tells the story of the origins of the caped crusader. Contains some language (including a GD). Rated PG-13 for intense action violence, disturbing images and some thematic elements.

► **"Secretariat" (PG)** — The winner of the 1973 Triple Crown remains the most well-known rac-

ing horse of all time. This is the story of Secretariat, its owner, Penny Chenery, and her struggle

to spend time with both her family and her horse. Rated PG for brief mild language (two instances of "h-ll," two misuses of "God").

► **"The Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement" (G)** — The story of Mia Thermopolis, the quirky girl turned princess, continues in this comical Disney film, which is a favorite among

girls. Don't miss the first film in the series, "The Princess Diaries," which released on Netflix in July.

► **"Nut Job" (PG)** — A purple squirrel named Surly and his friends must fight to survive after their source of winter food is destroyed. Animated. Rated PG for mild action and rude humor.

### Amazon Prime

► **"Hoosiers" (PG)** — A small-town Indiana basketball team makes it to the state championship. This classic 1986 film is marred a

## Meet the reviewer

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

bit by some language (among it: s—t and misuse of "Jesus"). If this version isn't for you, then find a cleaner version (using VidAngel or ClearPlay, for example) and show your children. It's incredibly inspirational. Rated PG.

► **"Spy Kids 2: The Island of Lost Dreams" (PG)** — Our favorite children espionage agents go on another journey, this time to a mysterious island. Rated PG for action sequences and brief rude humor.

### Hulu

► **"Babe" (G)** — A timid young farm pig tries to find his place in the world. Live-action.

► **"Hoosiers" (PG)** — See above. †

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Photo courtesy of Jose Rondon's Facebook page

Soldiers gather for a chapel service at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri on July 29. U.S. Army Chaplain Capt. Jose Rondon serves as a chaplain at the facility. He has seen more than 1,400 soldiers come to faith since he started serving at Fort Leonard Wood.

# Hungry for truth

## Army base sees 1,459 salvations since March

**U**.S. Army Chaplain Capt. Jose Rondon believes “there is nothing more exhilarating in life than seeing people come to Christ.” This year Rondon has experienced that exhilaration with more than 1,400 professions of faith — something one could describe as a spiritual awakening — at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, his place of ministry.

Rondon summarizes his part in the effort with one word: intentionality.

It’s about being intentional with words and with how he treats his fellow soldiers. So when a staff sergeant first approached Rondon and asked to speak with him, the chaplain knew the sergeant wasn’t asking for words of wisdom but for listening ears.

Rondon listened to the staff sergeant, and then he prayed with him to receive Christ. Rondon did the same thing when another senior non-commissioned officer asked for the chance to talk to him about spiritual matters. This soldier-leader also asked Jesus Christ into his heart.

### In need of Christ

“My two soldiers and friends from our current battalion at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri came to Christ because their lives were in need of the Savior,” he said. “Instead of asking them whether or not they knew they were going to heaven if they died today, I simply said, ‘I see that you need Christ in your life. He can not only help you to deal with the challenges of daily living, but He can also save you from an eternal death because of your sins.’”

Because of Rondon’s reputation for being intentional in his ministry, many men and women have

come to hear him share the gospel on Sundays.

“We have seen 1,459 soldiers come to Christ since March of this year,” Rondon said. “God is doing great things at Fort Leonard Wood among the hundreds of soldiers who have come to know Christ personally.”

### Finding faith

Retired Maj. Gen. Doug Carver, executive director of chaplaincy for the North American Mission Board, says what is happening at Fort Leonard Wood is not an exception. Right now there are reportedly 1,348 military chaplains in the Southern Baptist Convention at work.

“Our troops, who are increasingly hungry for truth and relevancy in their lives, are finding a faith that works through a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ,” Carver said. “The current spiritual awakening at Fort Leonard Wood is indicative of a great move of God taking place within the Armed Services today.”

He noted that Army chaplains are currently baptizing an average of 70 soldiers every basic combat training cycle at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. The military has built more chapels since 9/11 than any other period of American history except for World War II. And tens of thousands of professions of faith and thousands of baptisms have been reported by Southern Baptist chaplains in the past two years.

“Historically, God has often used the military as a catalyst for revival,” Carver said. “Many attribute the spread of Christianity in the first century to Roman soldiers deployed throughout the Roman Empire. The Lord is answering our prayers for revival within our military communities.” (BP)

## RELIGION in America

Compiled from Wire Services

### Colorado cake baker sues state again

DENVER — The Colorado baker whose refusal to make a wedding cake for a gay couple led to a U.S. Supreme Court decision is suing the state again for opposing his refusal to bake a cake celebrating a gender transition.

Lawyers for Masterpiece Cakeshop owner Jack Phillips filed a federal lawsuit Aug. 14. They are challenging a June 28 finding by Colorado’s Civil Rights Division that Phillips discriminated against a Denver-area attorney when he refused to bake a cake to celebrate the attorney’s gender transition from male to female. Phillips’ complaint says Colorado is on a “crusade to crush” him because of his religious beliefs.

In 2012, Phillips refused to bake a wedding cake for a gay couple. The state said Phillips violated the civil rights of the two men. Phillips sued, and the case went to the U.S. Supreme Court, who ruled June 4 that some commission members displayed anti-religion bias in their decision against Phillips. The court did not address whether people can avoid providing services to same-sex weddings because of religious beliefs.

Phillips’ attorneys contend his First Amendment right to practice his faith is again being violated. (TAB)

### Pennsylvania officials allege widespread abuse

PITTSBURGH — On Aug. 14 Pennsylvania officials unveiled a report detailing accusations that Catholic priests sexually abused more than 1,000 children since the 1940s and that church officials shielded the abusers.

The 884-page state grand jury report took two years to complete and goes back seven decades. It cites allegations against 301 priests, clergy and lay teachers, 99 of whom served in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, and suggests a consistent pattern of higher ranking church officials having knowledge of the abuse and covering it up.

Some of the priests included in the report already have been convicted of sexual assault, according to Pittsburgh’s CBS affiliate KDKA.

In a press conference, the leader of the Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh, Bishop David Zubik, denied any cover up. He said 90 percent of the cases cited in the report occurred before 1990 and that the church has since made changes to protect children. He said no priest or deacon with a credible allegation against them is in active ministry today. (TAB)

### Harvard sorority disbands over new rules

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — A sorority at Harvard University has chosen to disband rather than go co-ed.

In May the local chapter of the national Delta Gamma organization voted to disband rather than change its single-gender makeup. Two years ago Harvard told recognized campus single-gender organizations that they must go co-ed or forfeit members’ opportunities to hold leadership positions on campus and to be endorsed for postgraduate fellowships.

The university’s sanctions came after a university report on sexual assault prevention found “deeply misogynistic attitudes” in all-male clubs and a high rate of sexual assaults during college at events sponsored by single-gender clubs. (TAB)

### Marijuana use highest in young adults

WASHINGTON — Approximately one in four American adults 18–29 report regularly or occasionally using marijuana, according to a recent Gallup poll.

The data collected July 1–11 found that the rate of marijuana use among the wider population is about 13 percent. The rate also is higher in the West than in other regions of the country. One in five adults (20 percent) living in the West, where all coastal states have legalized recreational marijuana, use the drug regularly or occasionally.

In the South, 11 percent of adults said they used marijuana regularly or occasionally. (TAB)