

Together

AUGUST 2023

AT DAWSON

Scenes of
SUMMER
2023!

The Blessing of Wales

CHAPEL CHOIR MISSION TOUR

MISSION
OF MY LIFE
FOLLOWING GOD'S WILL

Meet
COLE GRIFFITH
DAWSON'S NEW MINISTER
TO COLLEGE STUDENTS

AROUND THE
TABLE
A WOMEN'S MINISTRY



Life's Better Together

There's a Life Group for you!

PRESCHOOL
KIDS
STUDENTS
COLLEGE
YOUNG ADULTS
ADULTS

dawsonchurch.org/lifegroups

Together

AT DAWSON

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WATCH LIVE
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JOIN US

Sunday Morning Worship:
8:30 a.m., 9:45 a.m. & 11:00 a.m., Sanctuary
Hispanic Worship: 11:00 a.m., Chapel

From



Dr. David Eldridge
Senior Pastor

Pastor David

Dear Church Family,

Where did the summer go? With my boys' sports schedules, Dawson camps, a mission trip, and a few days to get away as a family, this has been a busy and memorable couple of months for the Eldridge family. Although your details, I'm sure, are different, I have a feeling that many of you can relate to the feeling of the summer flying by.

This edition of the *Together at Dawson* magazine helps us to slow down and look back over these summer months and celebrate God's work in and through our Dawson Family of Faith. This has been a great summer for our church, filled with opportunities for us to be found faithful as God's people. Join me in thanking God for His work through KidLife, Chapel Choir Mission Tour, Breakaway, CentriKid, Dawson summer camps, and several teams serving with our mission partners.

Now, with the end of summer, the beginning of the new school (and church) year is here. This is a time of fresh starts and new beginnings. Every new school year is a great reminder that it's never too late to learn. What's more is recognizing the gift of learning from one another—whether it be about evangelism, mission work, or just around the table as you'll read in the stories that follow. In that spirit, we welcome our newest minister to our Dawson staff team—Cole Griffith, Minister to College Students, who shares his story on the best lesson of all—learning to trust God.

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Eldridge".

Pastor David

Life Group Stories

By Frances Owens

CAN ANYTHING GOOD COME FROM A PANDEMIC? **YES! A NEWLY REVITALIZED LIFE GROUP!**



Left to Right: (Front) Pat Street, Joyce Hackworth, Rebecca Kirkpatrick, Sheila Bancroft, Mayda Hindman, Carolyn Locascio, and Judy Jones. (Back) Sandra Young, Alice Harris, JoLyn Stricklin, Fran Duncan, Jean Towry, Cheryl Acton, Joy Hughes, Mary Kate Clemons, Bess Hatcher and Frances Owens.

At some point during the COVID outbreak when our church group activities had to be minimized for safety reasons, two members of the Sara Finley Life Group decided to meet at the back entrance to the North Building with a lawn chair and a lunch for some much needed fellowship, which just happened to be on a Tuesday. We had a really good time and agreed to meet the following week at the same time and place. On that Tuesday, there were three of us.

And by the next Tuesday, there were too many lawn chairs for the space we had been using, so we moved to the shaded area next to the parking lot on Evergreen Street. It was not long before the group had grown to eight or nine regular members—all social distancing and enjoying good Christian fellowship over a picnic lunch.

Once in-person Life Groups started back, the church offered our Tuesday group the use of the Fellowship Hall, and Amy Turnbow and her staff offered to make us box lunches for a nominal fee. After very little discussion, the group decided to accept both. The Fellowship Hall would still afford us plenty of room to distance ourselves from one another, but instead of just meeting for fellowship, the group decided it was time to become a real Life Group with Bible study.

GOD ALSO
BLESSED
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NEW
MEMBERS.

We had only one problem—both of our teachers had very soft voices. Since we would be scattered all over Fellowship Hall, some members would not be able to hear. So, the microphone was introduced to our class for the first time, which we still use today.

God also blessed us with new members. Before we knew it, we were able to move back into our old classroom in the West Building, which had been renovated to accommodate

more than just our current 17 regular class members. This West Wing classroom is on the ground floor of the building, whereas many of our Life Groups require climbing stairs.

Our Life Group, with ages ranging between mid 70s to mid 90s, meets every Tuesday at 10:30 a.m. in Room 100 West, and there is no definite ending time. We enjoy a fellowship lunch together after our lesson and leave at our own leisure.

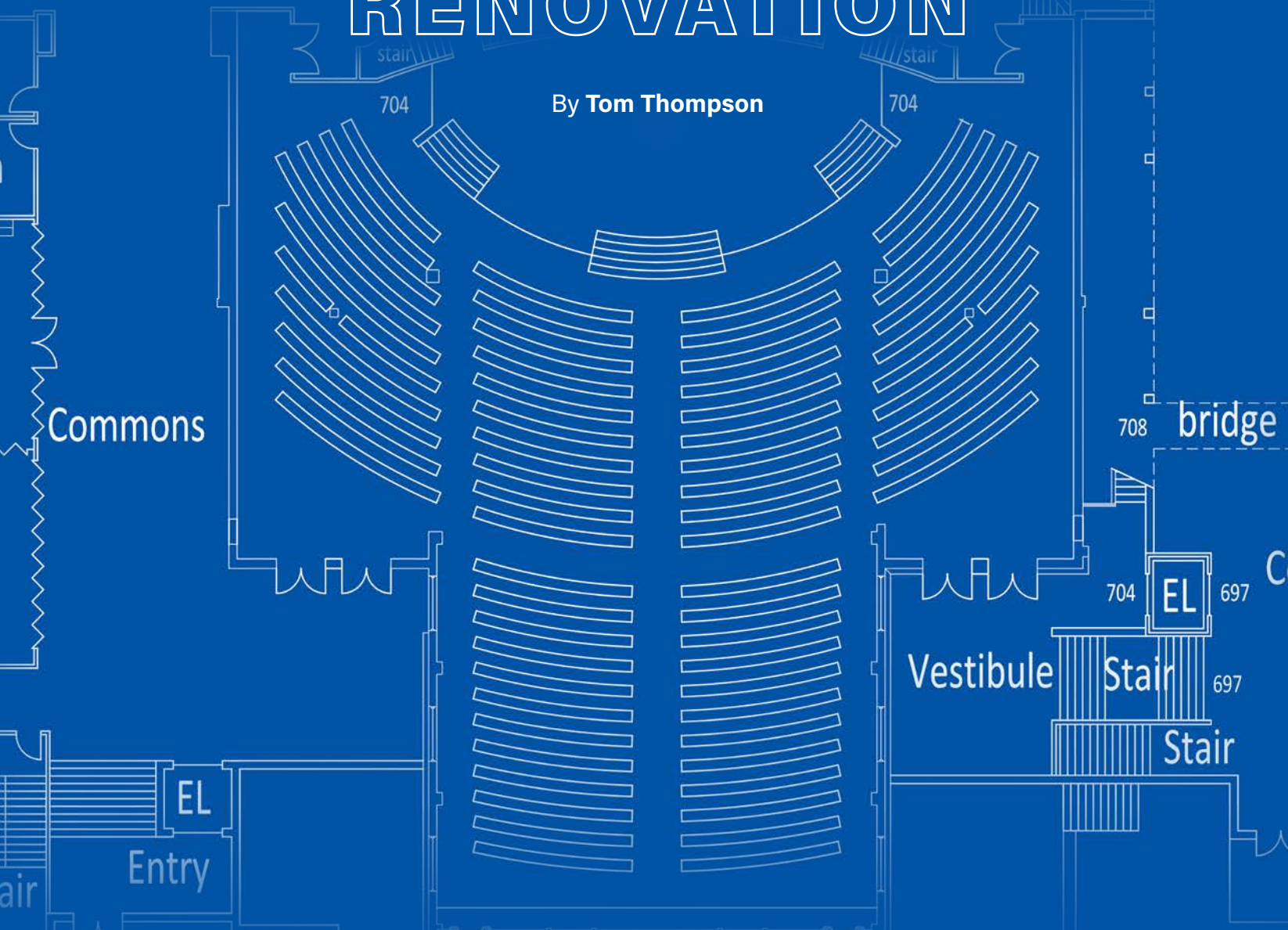


Frances Owens is a native of Montgomery and grew up in the First Baptist Church. She and her husband joined Dawson in 1959 and raised their two daughters here. A former teacher in Samford's English Department, Frances taught at M-Power after retirement. She now enjoys teaching Life Group lessons alongside Fran Duncan and helping with special class events.

SANCTUARY

RENOVATION

By Tom Thompson



MOREOVER, IT IS REQUIRED
OF STEWARDS THAT THEY
BE FOUND FAITHFUL.

1 Corinthians 4:2

IN 1920, as the Birmingham area gradually moved a little southward and came “over the mountain,” a group of committed believers realized that a Baptist Church was needed in the Edgewood Community.

Starting in a living room, this group continued to meet informally hoping to organize as a church. During that time, women from that same group who had faith that God had a plan for that church started a Woman's Missions Society. The women collected money on a regular basis and bought two lots on Oxmoor Road for the site of the future church building. In 1925, the original group was able to be reorganized, and the church was constituted as Edgewood Baptist Church. The Woman's Missions Society gave the two lots that they had purchased to the church, along with \$3500 they had raised to put toward the cost of a building for worship and study. That is \$60,000 in today's dollars! Edgewood Baptist Church was later renamed in memory of its first pastor, Dr. L.O. Dawson. Today, when you enter the Arendall Children's Building, you are walking across those original two lots. The faithfulness of the women in responding to God's call is the foundation on which Dawson is built.

In 1951, under the leadership of Dr. Edgar Arendall, the church took another bold step of faith and built the Sanctuary in which we now worship—even though the seating capacity far exceeded the average attendance at the time. The Sanctuary was expanded, and other educational buildings were added over the years as God continued to send more people to Dawson.

During the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century, several major building projects were undertaken to provide new educational space, fellowship space, outreach space, and parking. The Sanctuary has not had major renovations throughout that time.

Throughout its history, the members of Dawson have repeatedly answered God's call to provide the physical space needed so that more people can come to know Christ as Savior and believers can grow toward spiritual maturity. God has blessed that response and now we stand ready for the next step.

Recognizing the need for renovation, in 2020, the church began a process of developing a Master Plan for the Sanctuary and adjacent spaces. That Master Plan was approved by the church on May 15, 2022.

The Sanctuary will be completely modernized, but at the same time it will retain the same character that was created in 1951. With pews, organ, expanded choir loft, and the same architecture, we will retain the Dawson feel. Our sound, lighting, video, and technology will be state of the art. Egress and ingress will be greatly improved. An expanded platform will accommodate today's worship style and provide access to those with mobility issues. More gathering areas outside of the Sanctuary will allow for greater fellowship before and after worship. The new Sanctuary will greatly enhance our worship experience while also better accommodating other events, such as KidLife, DNow, weddings, Candlelight, and more.

This fall, the church will have an opportunity to approve the detailed construction plans and the cost for the first phase of accomplishing the Master Plan. The next steps will include a building campaign commencing in January of 2024. During the campaign, every Dawson member will be asked to make a commitment to give over and above their tithes and offerings for the next five years to help pay for the cost of the renovations. The savings in our Building Fund will be used, and we expect to borrow as well. However, we will need every Dawson member to make a commitment if this campaign is to be successful.

The goal is that construction will begin in April 2024 and is estimated to last about a year. During construction, we will not be able to use the Sanctuary, and so we will worship together in the Family Recreation Center. Temporary enhancements will be made in the FRC to make those accommodations as we look forward to having a brand new space for worship.

Now it is our turn to respond boldly and faithfully together and commit to make these plans for Dawson a reality. In the same way that a small, faithful group of women responded in the 1920s, we can each do our part to build for future generations. Will you answer that call and be found faithful?



Tom Thompson has been a member of Dawson for more than 27 years. He served on staff as Minister of Stewardship during the campaigns for the Arendall Building and the Go Love Tell missions initiative.



WHY MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

By **Liz Cuenin**,
Minister of Outreach & Assimilation

Each week at Dawson, Pastor David concludes our Sunday morning worship services by introducing our newest church members and extending an invitation for guests to take their next step in getting involved with the life of our church. It is exciting to see so many people taking him up on this offer by choosing to unite with Dawson through membership!

Joining a church has nothing to do with our salvation. Faith in Jesus, and faith alone, saves us from our sin. However, throughout the New Testament, we see a beautiful picture of God setting up local gatherings of believers to worship, pray, and hear the preaching of God's Word together (Acts 2:42). The local church helps us grow in our spiritual walk as week-by-week we listen, learn, pray, and serve together.

The Christian life was never meant to be done alone. We are called to live this life with one another in order to help build up the body of Christ. In fact, the New Testament is full of "one another" language that calls us to "build up," "honor," "bear with," "comfort," "encourage," and "care for" one another (just to name some of them). And the local church is the best example of how we are to do this. When you unite with Dawson through church membership, you are gaining brothers and sisters in the faith to walk through life with—and life is all the richer for it!

This past winter, our new *Membership Matters* classes began. These two-hour classes, taking the place of our previous Discover Dawson classes, occur on Sundays, either in the mornings from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. or in the evenings from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. These membership classes are designed specifically to help ensure that each person joining Dawson receives the same information upon uniting through church membership. Each *Membership Matters* class takes place in a small setting with fewer than 30 people in attendance and allows time for Dawson staff members to come speak and answer questions. The class covers highlights from Dawson's almost 100-year history, interesting background context on our Vision and Mission Statements, and an overview of the many ministry areas that

make up our church. We also take extended time to discuss both our Theological Vision and our Doctrinal Foundation. We look closely at the essential Christian truths we stand on that unite us with other Christian churches, and some Baptist distinctives.

At the heart of *Membership Matters* is an offer to all new and prospective church members to understand that church membership is an invitation into a family. Unlike a club or other group organization, where one receives a membership in order to simply enjoy the benefits offered and full access to the facility, church membership more closely resembles joining a big family. Within a family, there are expectations placed on each member to joyfully participate and use their God-given abilities and gifts to serve their fellow family members. We are better together! We truly believe that God has brought each new member to Dawson for a specific reason. So, yes, we will always say please take time to settle into Dawson by attending worship and finding a "home base" through joining a Life Group. Ultimately, we want every member of our congregation to also find ways they can utilize their gifts to serve—whether that's inside the walls of the church, in our community, or around the world.

If you are thinking about taking the next step in joining Dawson through church membership, I pray that you will consider it. We are so glad you are here! And we would love to have you join our family of faith. If you are ready to start the membership process, please let us know! You can email Liz Cuenin at lcuenin@dawsonchurch.org or fill out the online membership form at dawsonchurch.org/join. And please join us for an upcoming *Membership Matters* class by registering at dawsonchurch.org/membershipmatters.



Liz Cuenin serves as Dawson's Minister of Outreach & Assimilation, where she gets to connect to both visitors and new members of the church. She loves teaching the Bible and has been a Women's Life Group leader since 2017. Liz is currently finishing up her seminary degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.



SCENES OF SUMMER





EV ANGEL ISM / FOR THE REST OF US

By **Ben Hale**
Evangelism & Missions Pastor

Over the years, I have read numerous books on evangelism. I was reminded of this when I began writing this article, and I pulled 19 books off my shelves to review. Some of the titles might be familiar to you: *Becoming a Contagious Christian*, *Share Jesus Without Fear*, *Faith Made Easy*, *Permission Evangelism*, *Concentric Circles of Concern*, and more. All of these are good books. Each gives a slightly different perspective on how followers of Christ can best share the Gospel with friends, neighbors, and those that have never heard of Jesus.

I have no doubt that these books, and others like them, positively contributed to my understanding of personal evangelism. However, one of them regularly comes to mind and always impacts my thinking about personal evangelism. *Ordinary Attempts: Evangelism For the Rest of Us*, by Jim Henderson, is a booklet I came across over a decade ago. In the introduction, he asks several "What if..." questions that were intriguing to me:

- **What if...** it was normal for Christians to evangelize?
- **What if...** it wasn't a program, didn't cost any money, didn't take much time, and could be done by ordinary people?
- **What if...** evangelism was just another spiritual practice like reading the Bible or praying?
- **What if...** you did not have to be brave to evangelize?
- **What if...** ordinary Christians could evangelize without becoming "evangelistic?"
- **What if...** a major part of evangelism was simply making a connection with another person and trusting God to open the door to share the Gospel?

These questions directed my thinking, not to the content of a Gospel presentation that I needed to memorize, but to the pre-evangelistic process that would result in a natural and normal opportunity to share. I realized I did not need help on knowing and explaining the Gospel, but I did need help, and have always needed help, in intentionally seeking out opportunities to share. The questions Jim Henderson asked helped change my thinking about personal evangelism and my responsibility to share what Jesus has done in my life.

In his booklet, Henderson defined “ordinary attempts” as, “relational acts of kindness—free attention giveaways.” These kind acts will hopefully pave the way for opportunities to share and explain the Gospel verbally. I remember the title of the booklet catching my attention because I knew I had very ordinary struggles in my efforts to share the Gospel with others. Some of these struggles were rooted in a misunderstanding of how to relationally share the Gospel. Another reason I struggled was that evangelism is one of the most preached about spiritual disciplines in the church today. At the same time, it is one of the least practiced disciplines outside the walls of the church.

The main reason for this disconnect is that most followers of Christ think evangelism is something difficult, unnatural, and possibly even offensive. They see evangelism as something only the most mature and bold Christians can do. Most of us do not think of ourselves as mature or bold. That being the case, what can all of us ordinary followers of Christ do to rethink personal evangelism so that it becomes more natural and doable? What are some ordinary actions that you can do as you seek opportunities to share the Gospel?

Here are some suggestions:

- Intentionally perform relational acts of kindness for others.
- Pay attention to someone. In Matthew 10:42, Jesus said, “if you give a cup of cold water to a little child because you are my disciple you won’t lose your reward.” Today our culture’s equivalent of a cup of cold water is “attention.”
- Ask someone, “How are you?” and listen to their response. They will notice and appreciate your attention.
- Ask a restaurant server about his or her life outside of work.
- Pray for someone without them knowing and tell them later.

As you begin to perform these and other acts of kindness, be looking for natural opportunities to verbally share the Gospel. You may simply explain John 3:16 and talk about how it has intersected your life. You might share a 2–3-minute testimony about what Jesus means to you, or a brief Gospel presentation. Regardless of how you share the Gospel, remember to:

LOOK TO JESUS AS YOUR MODEL

In Matthew 9:35–38, Jesus was busy traveling through the cities and villages of His day. As He traveled, He did three things: First, He saw people and comprehended their lostness. Second, He responded to their lostness with compassion. Third, He asked the Father to send workers (you and me) into the harvest fields. We must see people as Jesus saw them, respond to them as He responded, and pray for them as He prayed.

STRIVE TO BE INTENTIONAL

Seldom have I ever shared the Gospel with someone unless it was an intentional act. Every day you see people who have never heard the Gospel in a culturally appropriate way they can comprehend. They have never been in a church and never heard a Bible story. Ask the Lord to open your eyes to the specific people that need to hear the Gospel from you.

PONDER THE TRUTH THAT JESUS LOVES LOST PEOPLE AND YOU SHOULD TOO

Jesus came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). You have never looked into the eyes of a person that Jesus does not love and died for.

These core ideas have helped me in my journey to become a more obedient and natural communicator of the Gospel with others. I share them here in hopes they will also help you.



Ben Hale, Dawson's Evangelism & Missions Pastor since 2000, has been married to Lindy for 36 years. They are parents to three adult children and grandparents to three grandchildren. Ben is passionate about providing people opportunities to serve beyond the walls of our church buildings.

Come to the Table

Community & Conversation



By **Kristen Torres** / Minister of Spiritual Development & Women's Ministry

Some of our most meaningful and memorable moments happen around a table, both ordinary and extraordinary. It may be a holiday gathering, a special event or celebration, dinner on the go, or simply grabbing coffee with a friend.

Something special happens when we gather around a table. That is especially true of Christ-centered table gatherings. It seems self-explanatory and obvious: people sit at a table when it is time to eat, a tradition that connects cultures across the world. Yet Jesus brings a certain element to the table that we often miss in the monotony of ordinary life—His Gospel. He encouraged people to meet Him at a table, and He met broken people



at their tables, some of whom He intentionally disciplined. We long for the community found around a table, and as Christians we recognize Christ's fingerprints all over the table. At Dawson, we have monthly opportunities for women to do just that called Table.

The invitation: Come to the table, engage in meaningful fellowship, and experience the love of God through the love of others. Women take time away from the hard and hectic schedules of daily life to gather in homes, restaurants, or coffee shops for intentional and encouraging Gospel-centered conversations. We currently have more than 50 Table hostesses who lead and love well.

As we consider the importance of gathering with intentionality, we look to the greatest model of all, Jesus Christ. Jesus' first miracle was performed around tables at a wedding feast, and one of His final moments with His disciples was "the Last Supper." Throughout His earthly ministry, we see evidence of Jesus at a table, meeting people right where they are. Not long after Jesus, we have the picture of the early church also modeling life around the table.

"They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts." Acts 2:46

Our Table Ministry is based on this verse. The numbers in this Scripture reference provide a simple way to remember and explain table: two hostesses facilitate four open-ended questions, and six (or more) women are invited to gather for a meal each month throughout the school year. Sometimes we offer a book as supplemental reading for conversations, but no preparation or "homework" is required to participate in Table. Women are invited to simply show up and to share a meal or coffee time together once a month.

The purpose of gathering is less about the "what" and more about the "who." It is first about our Heavenly Father, who provides our daily bread. Second, it is about the fellowship, gathering to encourage one another, share with one another, and pray for one another. And finally, it's about food. While the food is both filling and fun to talk

about, the "main course" is pointing to Gospel-centered conversation and encouragement in the Word and with one another. My prayer for the women gathered around the tables is that the time truly will be spent "breaking bread together with glad and sincere hearts."

As we embark upon a new year of Table we will use three words to guide our conversations each month: Abide, Connect, and Share. Jesus modeled life in relationship. He had an intimate and abiding relationship with His Father.

This relationship impacted all other relationships. He lived in community with His disciples, connecting with believers. He also cultivated relationships with people who didn't know God, sharing the message of salvation and expanding the Kingdom of God.

I hope that this will be a great year of growing together in community and growing closer to God. May the conversations around the tables prompt a desire to more deeply abide in Christ, more sacrificially share our lives, and more intentionally proclaim the Gospel of Christ.

If you would like to learn more about Table or would be interested in joining a group, please contact Laine Stidham at lstidham@dawsonchurch.org.



Kristen Torres is a lifelong Dawson member, and she currently serves as Minister of Spiritual Development and Women's Ministry. She enjoys leading Immerse, a Word-centered stretch and strength experience that is both graceful and grace-filled. She is wife to Angel, mom to Dante, and daughter to Bill and Jeanne Wear.

A Taste of Table:

"Table has been such a blessing to me this year. As a busy mom, it is hard to find time for everything, but time with friends in devotion and prayer always left me feeling refreshed. I also really loved getting to know our hosts, who so graciously opened their homes and shared their Christian experience."

-Suzanne Carroll, Table participant

"The Table Ministry is one of the best things Dawson has provided for women. Not only is it a great place to meet new friends, but it is also a place to get to know women more deeply and intimately. As we share through Bible study and prayer requests, we get to know one another on a whole new level. Our Table group has walked together through deaths of a spouse, adoptions, births of grandchildren, job loss, children marrying, loss of a parent and a sibling, and children moving far away. We have shared recipes, encouraged one another and prayed faithfully for each other. I love Table."

- Mary Jackson, Table hostess



MISSION OF LIFE

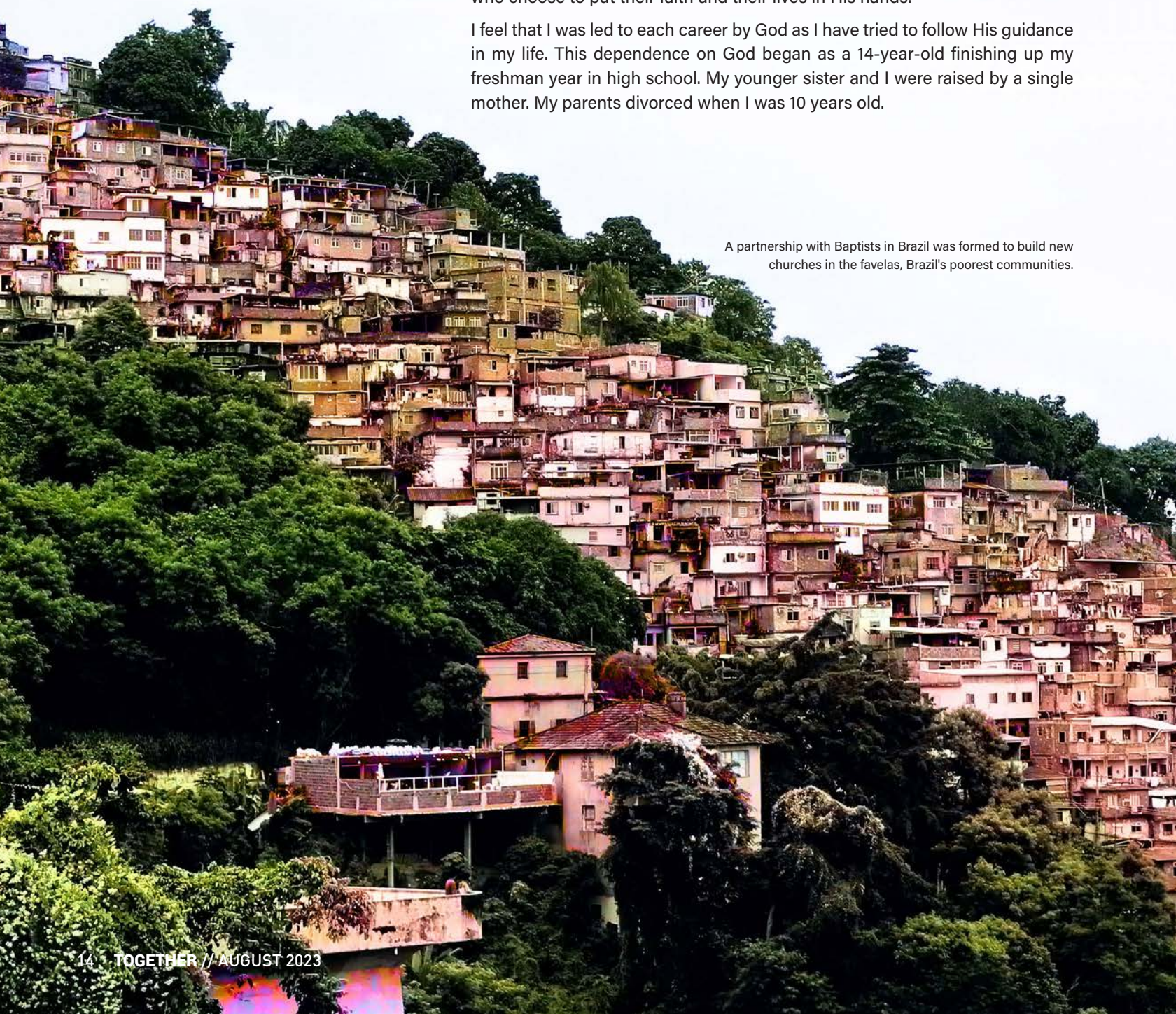
MY NAME IS ROBERT "BOBBY" KEITH.

I am retired from three different careers I truly believe I was led to all of them by my Savior, Jesus Christ. I hope in this story, I can tell you a few things about my third career, which turned out to be the most meaningful and the culmination of the other two.

I have given much thought to what I could say that would be helpful and possibly meaningful to others. I am now 81 years old, and while thinking about the past, I have been reminded of the many, many blessings I have received in life and of how faithful God has been to keep the promises He gives to those who choose to put their faith and their lives in His hands.

I feel that I was led to each career by God as I have tried to follow His guidance in my life. This dependence on God began as a 14-year-old finishing up my freshman year in high school. My younger sister and I were raised by a single mother. My parents divorced when I was 10 years old.

A partnership with Baptists in Brazil was formed to build new churches in the favelas, Brazil's poorest communities.



In the last few weeks of my freshman year, God sent me a case of the mumps. Mumps were common then, and the recommended approach for boys was to go to bed for a couple of weeks. This came at a very bad time for me, as we were nearing six-weeks and final exams. In addition, I had an English course project I had put off doing that was due at the end of the period.

My grades as a high school freshman were awful. A lot of Ds and a few Cs. This had not been the case in elementary school, as I had been able to get excellent grades with little-to-no studying or effort on my part. My high school had an excellent academic program, and my old habits of very little studying were not getting the job done. In fact, I'm ashamed to say that I had cheated on a few tests. I guess those were the subjects in which I received a C.

Suddenly, God made me very aware of the fact that I was about to fail several subjects. That would have meant repeating my freshman year. Several months earlier, I had walked the aisle of Shades Crest Baptist Church and pronounced my faith in Jesus Christ, joined the Church and was baptized.

As a 14-year-old with the mumps, I suddenly realized I was about to fail my freshman year and seriously disappoint my mother and my God, I was really shaken. I cannot adequately describe the feeling of guilt that overcame me. It was overwhelming! Now, this awareness did not come from a loving, sacrificing mother who, apparently, still had confidence in me and only wanted me to get well, but from a loving God who was shaking me to the core. The only place I had to turn was in prayer to God. I prayed for forgiveness and direction. God gave me both.

I built my English project (a replica of Shakespeare's home) while lying in bed with my mother and sister bringing me the materials when they were home from work and school. I also studied hard while in bed and managed to do well enough in all my exams, not failing any subject.

However, it did not end there. I spent the next three months with my grandparents in Miami. I spent the entire summer dedicating myself to God and was determined to follow His guidance. I remember watching several Billy Graham crusades on TV and praying to God on my knees.

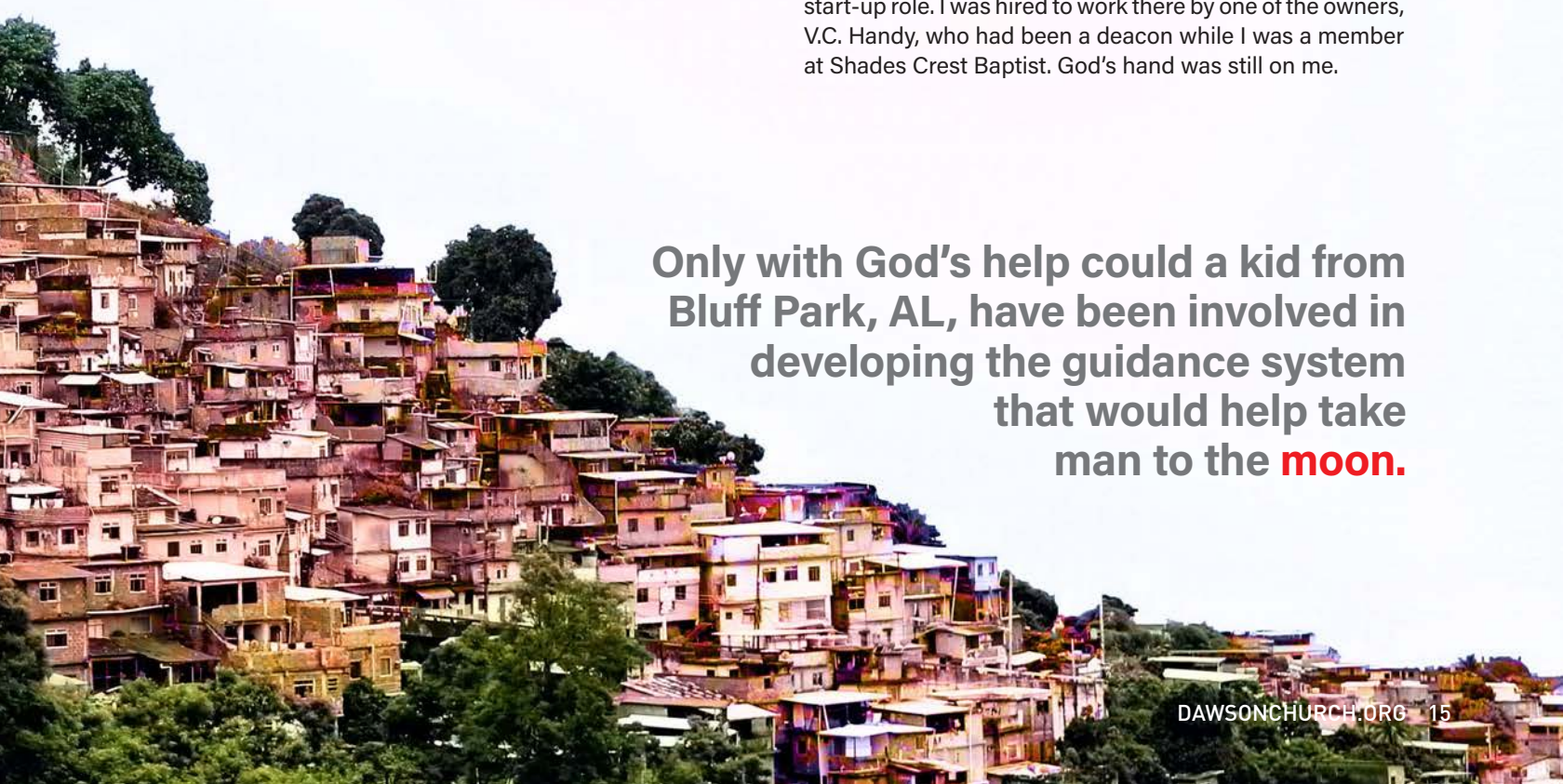
I was, in fact, a different person, and I owed it all to God. From that point on, I finished my high school career on the A/B honor roll. I'm not that smart, but God had showed me that hard work can overcome a lot.

Years later, I graduated from Auburn with a Mechanical Engineering degree and married Donna Vanderver. Only God could have made that match. She was and is an angel on Earth. I started my first career in Huntsville working in the Saturn/Apollo Lunar Landing Program. This lasted seven years, and then I left Huntsville—more than a year after the first lunar landing.

Only with God's help could a kid from Bluff Park, AL, have been involved in developing the guidance system that would help take man to the moon. More importantly, God blessed us with two daughters, Laurie and Susie, who have grown up to be godly women.

I had earned money for most of my college education working as a laborer for F.R. Hoar & Son Construction. With my mother's help and some other part time jobs while in college, we were able to pay for my college education. I left Huntsville to rejoin my old company F.R. Hoar in a start-up role. I was hired to work there by one of the owners, V.C. Handy, who had been a deacon while I was a member at Shades Crest Baptist. God's hand was still on me.

Only with God's help could a kid from Bluff Park, AL, have been involved in developing the guidance system that would help take man to the moon.



I spent my second career, and the next 30 years, at what became Hoar Construction. Again, God had His hand on me as my partners at Hoar were Christian men who tried to live their lives to please God. We never once had a serious argument nor fight but were always able to resolve our many problems amicably. The company is still guided by Christian principles.

My second career enabled me to retire early enough and to afford my third career, which was to focus on mission work. I was in my early 50s when a Christian friend and coworker, Jerry Cross, started talking to me about missions. He wanted me to join him in a church building project in Brazil. I trusted him as a friend and told him I would be glad to support the work financially but I did not see any reason for me to go. I had several sensible reasons for that decision, but my sensible reasons did not dissuade him. For the next three years he continued to insist that I go until finally, out of love for my friend, I told him I would go just to appease him and prove that I was right. God was working on me again.

It was during that 7-day trip that I realized my life was changing again, I just did not know how much. During that week, with only three other Americans, we worked in a very poor and dangerous favela in the suburbs of Brasilia.

We witnessed, through an interpreter, to the young Brazilian man who was making the mortar for the

church we were building. While we were there, he accepted the Lord. When he announced his belief in Jesus Christ, my third career began. I didn't know how, but I was committed to missions. I had never felt closer to the Lord than while I was utterly dependent on Him for my safety, and only my ability to get things done in order to accomplish His will.

At that time, the Birmingham Baptist Association's (BBA) Director of Missions was Pastor Earl Tew. Pastor Tew was very mission-minded and wanted to make a difference for God, which, I believe he did, in every aspect of his life. Dr. Tew formed a partnership with Baptists in Brazil to build churches in their poor communities (favelas), and, as the Iron Curtain fell, he formed a partnership with the IMB to build churches in Romania, a former Soviet Union communist country.

These partnerships led to 40+ churches being built by BBA partner churches in very poor neighborhoods in Brazil and over 140 churches in Romania by working with church groups from several states in the United States.

Mission work also led me to Dawson. I had known Ben Hale, Dawson's Evangelism & Missions Pastor, through his involvement in other missions work, and so Donna and I decided to move our membership to Dawson due to their growing missions emphasis.



I had never felt closer to the Lord than while serving Him where I was completely dependent on Him.

My dear friend, Adut.



With Metro Changers Birmingham.



With LifeSong for Orphans in Ukraine.



With Dawson Builders.

I had already been aware of Dawson's mission work, which had sent a team to Romania. Debbie Moss, Dawson's Health & Wellness Minister at that time, had spoken to my former church's mission group about their work in Sudan, and Dr. Gary Fenton, Dawson's former Senior Pastor, had partnered with us in our work in Venezuela.

I prayed for the Lord to "enlarge my territory" like Jabez did in 1 Chronicles 4:10. I prayed this prayer after two or three trips to Brazil. Don't pray for something you are not ready to receive! I'm convinced that prayer led me to Romania (Romania Chapel Project), Venezuela (Fundabrez), Honduras, Ukraine (LifeSong for Orphans), Spain, Sudan/South Sudan (Living Waters Community Transformation), World Changers/Metro Changers (BHM), and Carpenters for Christ (multiple states). I must admit that I got to the point that I thanked God for His answer and that I was overwhelmed. I hope that was in His will.

I cannot begin to tell you all the blessings I received from following God's will in my life. I just wish I had followed it 100% of the time. When you are confident you are in His will, everything is easier. I felt a closeness to God like I had never felt before. When you are crossing a country like South Sudan on a dirt road, known for its violence including murder, you have no one else to trust but God. I will forever

be grateful to my dear departed friend, Dudley Hindman, who, knowing the risk, accompanied me on that day-long trip. I know he is in Heaven with our Lord.

Sometimes I would be asked if my efforts were making a difference. Why go to South Sudan which has been mired in its own culture for generations? My response was that I was there because God sent me. As my friend Ben Hale often says, "We go because God tells us to go." And really, that is enough. But I'm equally convinced that it always makes a difference, because I have personally witnessed the difference. For example, during a time of civil war, two elementary schools, a farm (partially watered with solar power), a community building used for worship, and a women's ministry that touched hundreds all became a reality in South Sudan.

Also, it most certainly changed me. God's train leaves the station every day. And every day, we believers have the opportunity to board or not! "And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"

Then I said, "Here I am! Send me."



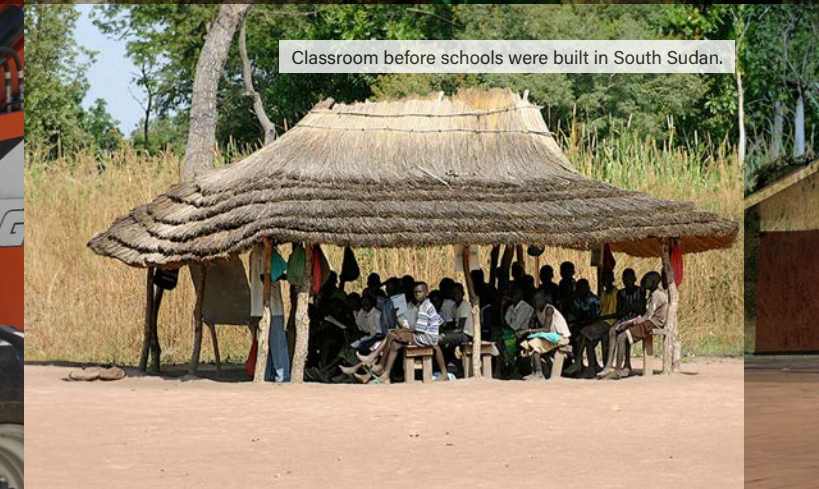
Bobby Keith is an Auburn University graduate in Mechanical Engineering. He is married to Donna Vanderver. They have two daughters (Laurie and Susie), five grandchildren related by blood and seven related by God's providence for a total of 12, plus two great granddaughters. Bobby worked in the space industry then with Hoar Construction. He then spent around 20 years doing mission work, both foreign and domestic.



Building churches in Romania.

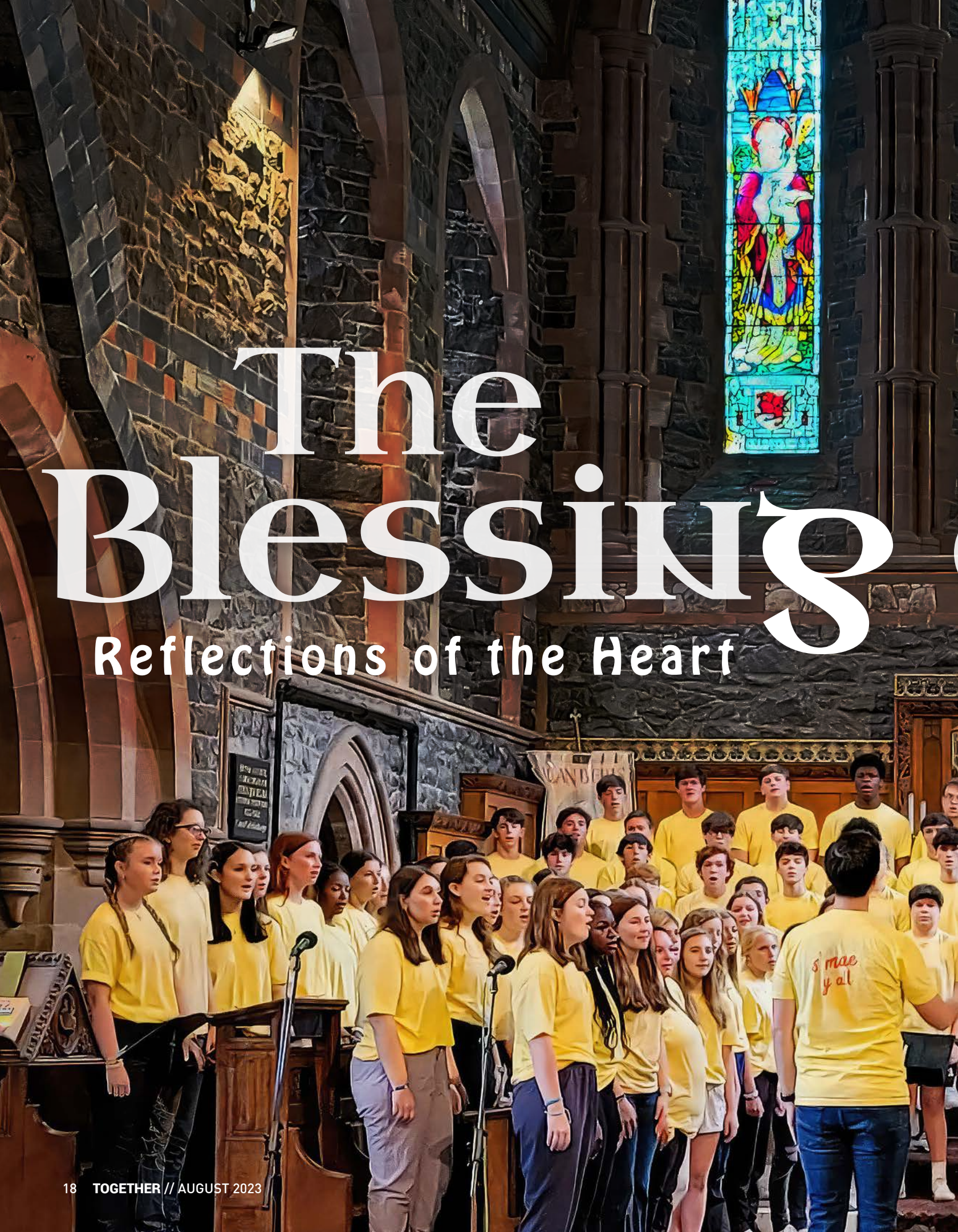


Classroom before schools were built in South Sudan.



New school building in South Sudan.





The Blessing

Reflections of the Heart



of Wales

By Livi Cate Osborne

“Why are we here?”

John Robinson, the missionary who has been serving in Wales for more than 25 years, asked this to about twenty high schoolers at 7:00 a.m. one morning of our Chapel Choir Mission Tour. We sat in silence, waiting for John Robinson, also known as JR, to answer his own deeply theological and philosophical question.

“We are here,” he continued, “to share the Gospel to people who have never heard it. This is the only thing we cannot do when we get to Heaven.” This phrase motivated more than 150 students and adults as we traveled across the Atlantic Ocean to Caernarfon, Wales, from June 16–23. Our goal was to share the Gospel by serving with Chapels and organizations that have already established relationships in Wales.

Preparation for Mission Tour 2023 began in August of 2022. While we may have not known where we were preparing to serve, we knew we needed to be ready to work as a team chorally, spiritually, and culturally wherever Mission Tour would take us. With a repertoire of thirteen songs, we were ready to face crowds of children, adults, and tourists on street corners. After learning we would be heading to Wales for Mission Tour, one of the most difficult aspects of preparation was learning to sing in Welsh.

JR is the director of Linguæ Christi, an organization that seeks to share the Gospel with minority language people groups in Europe. So naturally, we translated our favorite song, the song and prayer we end all of our rehearsals and concerts with, into Welsh. This song is called “A Blessing,” and we learned to sing it in Welsh so that we could sing it in, what JR calls, the “heart-language” of the Welsh people. A heart-language is the language in which the Lord speaks to a person, and having the opportunity to sing such a special song and prayer to the Welsh people in their heart-language was the propelling factor that allowed us to overcome the challenge of singing in such a foreign language.

Next, we prepared for Mission Tour spiritually by praying to the Lord and asking that He would already be working in the hearts of the people we would be serving in Wales, specifically through the missionaries already on the ground there. We prepared our hearts to serve the Lord by pouring into our Bible studies, Student Ministry activities, and Sunday morning worship. Finally, we prepared culturally for Mission Tour with JR, who went above and beyond in preparing our choir to serve in Wales. He made a series of videos that thoroughly explained the history of Wales and the Welsh language, and we were able to understand how we would be serving on a much deeper level than we had previously imagined.

On Sunday, June 18, we had an orientation meeting with JR where he condensed the week-long training sessions he gives to his college students into an hour and a half lecture. This proved to be incredibly impactful, as it was the first time many of us fully understood the “why” of Mission Tour this year.





This Mission Tour was different from every other mission trip Dawson has taken recently because it was a musical mission trip. Most mission trips will go into a city or country and provide a service to them, like cleaning schools, picking up trash, serving a local church, or providing medical needs. This mission trip was quite different. To the Welsh people, music is a means of communication, connection, and cultural exchange. We were able to communicate the Gospel with people who had never heard the good news because the difference between a mission trip in Wales and America is that many people in Wales have never heard the Gospel before in their life, whereas in America, and especially the South, many people have heard the Gospel many, many times in their life. We were also able to connect with local Chapels and showcase some American choral music alongside our final song of all concerts, "A Blessing," but in the Welsh language.

During this trip, we had numerous opportunities to meet, share the Gospel, and sing for the Welsh people. But, it was the unplanned opportunities that the Lord chose to work the most through. On Monday, June 19, we walked to the top of Twthill, a large hill that overlooked the whole town of Caernarfon. We were going to have a personal time of prayer for the people of Caernarfon, but the Lord used this time differently than we had expected.

While 157 students and volunteers hiked the hill, we came across three Welsh teenagers that were spiritually lost but longing to be found. Our Student Minister and Associate Student Minister, Bryan Howard and Aubrey Johnston, along with some students, had the opportunity to speak with the group of teenagers extensively. They explained why our group from Alabama was there, and had the opportunity to share the Gospel with them. After we finished our time of prayer on the hill, we invited the teenagers to our concert for the community on Wednesday night and hoped to see them again.

Little did we know, God wanted us to see them again, but sooner than expected. The very next day, we had a time of games and recreation at a local park, hoping to share the Gospel with kids and families in the area. During this time, two of the three teenagers randomly showed up at the park. They said that they never hang out at this park, but they happened to be here today. We knew it was the Lord working to put these teenagers on our path again, and once again we had the opportunity to show the love of the Lord. Finally, Wednesday night at our concert, one of the teenagers attended and heard our full repertoire of songs along with the Gospel once more. All of these interactions proved that the Lord works in mysterious ways and that He always has a plan despite our own agenda.

The local Chapel we served with was Caersalem Chapel. On Sunday, June 18, we sang alongside them, in Welsh and in English, during their time of worship. The service was in Welsh, but Pastor David was able to use an audio translation device and shared what was said during the announcement portion of the service with us that night. He explained to us

that they had announced that their pastor would be taking an extended leave due to medical needs. This news came as a surprise to the congregation. It would mean that they would be going through a lot of changes and some rough patches for the next few months. After hearing this from Pastor David, I realized the incredible impact we potentially had on the congregation of Caersalem this specific Sunday morning.

We had the opportunity to sing "Orphans of God," with soloists Maddie Bemby and Ella Jayne Hyde, and violinist Mae Martin. This is a semi-popular song in America, but not as well-known in Wales, so I wondered what made John choose this song. I realized that this Chapel is so secluded and seemingly alone in this town, and it is one of the few Chapels that actively lives out the Gospel and looks to grow the kingdom of God in this area. It is easy for the congregation of this Chapel to get discouraged and to think God has abandoned them, especially since entering a time of transition and change after hearing their pastor is taking an extended leave. But, as the words of the song say,

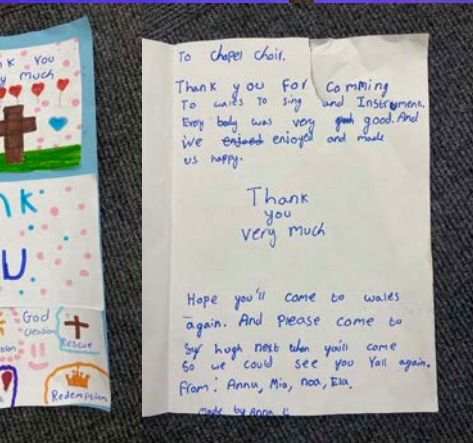
*There are no strangers, there are no outcasts
There are no orphans of God
We all have fallen, but Hallelujah
There are no orphans of God.*

We were singing these words to the body of Christ before us, and encouraging and lifting up a group of believers to remind them that they, and their small Chapel of fifty members, have not been abandoned by God.

On a personal note, this trip gave me invaluable knowledge and preparation for my future career on the mission field. A shocking statistic that JR shared was that the United States has 95% of all Christian resources in the world. This encouraged me to consider foreign missions more faithfully, because so many people in the United States have heard the Gospel on multiple occasions, and there are still people out there who have never heard the good news of the Gospel. I was inspired to share the Gospel more intentionally through this mission trip. On multiple occasions, I listened to John Woods beautifully share the Gospel to hundreds of children and adults at various concerts.

Finally, this trip broadened my understanding of the Welsh people, which is very important because they are a group of people that desperately want to be understood. Their language, history, and culture is so much different than that of England, which they are so commonly compared to, and it meant so much to them that 123 American teenagers would take the time to understand. Overall, Mission Tour aided in my aspirations to be a missionary and broadened my cultural understanding.





Naturally, there were some challenges and setbacks during this trip. One of the most difficult challenge was the difference in cultures. The Welsh people are very proud of their culture and their language, which causes them to be wary of potentially insensitive tourists. Our choir took the time to learn about Welsh culture and understand why the Welsh language was so important to them. Then, the cultural gap was quickly closed once we had the opportunity to sing "A Blessing" in Welsh for them. They understood that the song we sang for them was so important to us that we wanted to share it with them in their heart-language. The hand of the Lord was with us through all the difficult moments in preparation and execution of this mission trip.

The repertoire we performed was riddled with the Gospel and other biblical notes. We had multiple songs that could be categorized as "Southern Gospel" songs, which allowed us to share some of our own culture from the United States. Songs like "He Never Failed Me, Yet" and "I've Got My Foot on the Rock" were quicker and livelier songs that would captivate a younger crowd on the occasions that we sang in school buildings for children. John Woods introduced the songs in a way that introduced the Gospel. The song "When I Think About the Lord" was the song that laid out the Gospel most fluently, and before we sang it, John would make sure the audience knew that this song is the basis of our beliefs. Thanks to his forethought, the audience, no matter how old or young they were, heard and experienced the Gospel.

Music played a larger role in Mission Tour this year than past years due to the vast choral history and appreciation in the country of Wales, and our directors, John Woods, Brent Coleman, Dan Mullis, and Dr. Brent Reeves wholly prepared us for success.

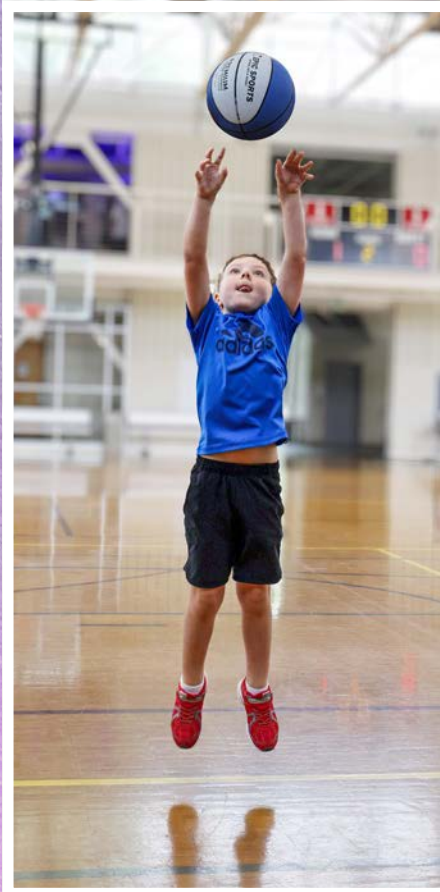
I will never forget being in an area where almost every person I encountered had never heard the Gospel, and that the Lord had placed our choir on their path to plant that seed for the first time. I cannot wait to bring the Gospel to more people who have never heard the good news, and to work on a mission field as selflessly as JR while serving the Welsh people. This trip has helped me realize and understand more about the calling the Lord has put on my heart to help fulfill the Great Commission through international missions. I will also take away a more profound sense of respect for the way music can spread the Gospel.

Chapel Choir Mission Tour to Wales was a transformative experience for both the people we served in Caernarfon, Wales, and for every member of Chapel Choir.



Livi Cate Osborne is a recent graduate from Vestavia Hills High School and will attend Mississippi College in the fall. She has hopes of becoming a missionary after college. She has been an active member at Dawson and has enjoyed being involved in Chapel Choir and the Dawson Student Ministry.

MORE SCENES OF SUMMER!






Learning to Trust God

By Cole Griffith
Minister to College Students





When you meet someone new, what are some of the first things you ask? “What do you do for work?” “What part of town do you live in?” “Where are you from?” For me, the last question is always the hardest.

Growing up, we moved around a good bit—but always stayed just long enough to fall in love with the place. In 1996, I was born in the Southern California desert, among retirees, palm trees, and golf courses. In 2005, my family moved to a suburban town, south of Atlanta, Georgia, where we drove golf carts through the pines. And in 2012, we moved again—to Muscle Shoals, Alabama—where my family still lives today. I come from a lot of places; it’s hard to pick just one to call home.

Growing up, I was a pretty shy and cautious kid. The oldest of three sons, I felt a responsibility to lead the way, make right decisions, and make my parents proud. Because of this self-imposed pressure, I would often try to hide myself in humor, by putting someone else down, or going along with the crowd. My parents are incredible people and demonstrated to me what a life of virtue, hard work, and humor looks like. I went to church whenever it was open, memorized Bible verses through Awana, and was a Sunday School regular.

When I think back on my life as a kid, I see a Gospel truth at work. I wanted to make my parents proud of me—I tried to accomplish this by being smart enough, funny enough, or obedient enough. But I was their son. In the same way, God was slowly unveiling good news for me—I didn’t have to check all the right boxes for God to be “proud” of me, but he already loved me as a son through the sacrifice of His only begotten Son, Jesus of Nazareth. Even though I was a good kid growing up, I was far from God, because I was trying to earn my favor with Him.

It wasn’t until high school that the songs, stories, and lessons of my childhood took on new significance. Through the ministry of my high school youth group, I brought my fragmented understanding of the Bible, my questions about God, but, most importantly, my sin to light. In doing so, I was met with a community of my peers asking the same questions and experiencing the same things. During a youth ministry retreat, I experienced the presence of God through preaching and worship in a new way. My eyes were opened to my need for grace and truth. I decided to leave behind all my efforts to be “good” on my own and to follow Jesus.



At Beeson Graduation: (from left to right) Grandmother, Joanne Williams; wife, Jada Griffith; Mother, Leanne Griffith; Brother, Nick Griffith; Father, Barry Griffith.

who I am today in large part to the faithful witness of the saints at Calvary Baptist Church. They loved me and invested in my life with the love of Christ. There, I was helped along as I tried to make sense of the world and discern what God was calling me to in life. I was introduced to folks who would become my closest friends. One of these friends, a girl named Jada, would later become my wife. At Calvary, I discerned a call to serve God through vocational ministry as a laborer in the Gospel of Jesus. However, discerning my call to ministry had been a wrestling match with God. I struggled with the idea of pursuing vocational ministry. I was afraid to truly rely on God, and I questioned whether ministry as a vocation made sense for me. I was studying engineering, I already had a job lined up, and I had a future that I had worked hard for—was I really about to change paths when I was so close to the finish line?

I struggled with the idea of pursuing vocational ministry.

Immediately following my decision to follow Christ, life took a sharp turn. The church my family and I had been attending was embroiled in a divisive, painful leadership scandal. In addition to this, my own family experienced a time of financial hardship that initiated our move back to Alabama. And to top everything off, my maternal grandfather passed away suddenly and unexpectedly, leaving my family exhausted, anxious, and grief-stricken. However, through these trials, I noticed a real change had taken place within me.

I was learning to trust God. Rather than make jokes at my classmates' expense, I began to try to be kinder and more servant-hearted. By no longer feeling the need to look out for my own good, God was turning my heart for the better. Throughout the remainder of my high school years, the Lord was kind to continue to build my trust in Him, establish in me a firm sense of self, and lay out a trajectory for my future.

College was the crucible of transformation for my adult life. I attended The University of Alabama and was an active member of Calvary Baptist Church. I am



At Hodges Chapel during Student Preacher Award Ceremony. Pictured is friend, classmate, and fellow Birmingham-area minister, Jacob May.



"I do."
December 12, 2020

Like Jacob, I spent many nights wrestling with the Lord in prayer. Through my internal struggle, the Lord confronted my fears around the cost of discipleship. He challenged my trust in Him and left me no option but to make a choice. Yes or no? I finally caved. I still remember the wet, spring night, sitting with a friend over a basket of cheap chicken tenders at Hooligans off University Boulevard at nearly midnight. I knew that if I uttered out loud what God was calling me to do, then I would be on the hook. I broke. I told my friend, "God is calling me to ministry, I think I need to go to seminary."

This breaking point gave way to filling out an application to Beeson Divinity School. A week later, I was accepted with enough scholarship money to make it happen. Through my cage-match with God, I realized a truth: if I can't control the future, then it's a wiser bet to gamble on God than to bet on myself.

I attended seminary right here in Birmingham at Beeson Divinity School. In the meantime, I began to serve as a ministry resident at Iron City Church in the Southside of Birmingham. There I cut my teeth on ministry and realized the joy in it. I made amazing relationships, learned more than I can tell, and sensed God's confirmation of His calling on my life.

God is calling me to ministry. I think I need to go to Seminary.



At Los Angeles Chargers NFL game, SoFi Stadium, December 2021.

A couple years into my time in Birmingham, I made another bet—I bet that I couldn't make it through life without my friend-turned-girlfriend-turned-fiancé Jada Culver and on December 12, 2020 made good on that promise by saying "I do."

After graduating from seminary, I moved on to Evangel Classical Christian School where I taught courses in New Testament and Rhetoric. At Evangel, I fell in love with teaching and mentoring students. I loved watching students have lightbulb moments as they read through Scripture. For me, one of my favorite things in ministry is helping someone to see that the Bible isn't a scary rule book or a mysterious maze of information accessible to only a select few, but it is the word of life and is available to all people.



Cole Griffith with Dawson's College Ministry team, Cole Frier, Dawson's College Ministry Coordinator, and Kara Fincher, Associate Minister to College Students.

The last few years have been a whirlwind of activity. From graduation to marriage to starting our family off with a dog, to buying a home and starting one new job and then another. Through all of the challenges and changes of becoming an adult, I still remember that moment of decision in college when I had to trust God. I can't control the future, and, thank God, I don't.

God has made good on His word to me. Every time. Early on in my life, I often felt transient. Moving around made it hard to nail down a hometown. But this town and its people have wrapped their arms around us, supported us through hard times, and blessed us more immensely than we could ever repay. Throughout my time at Beeson, ministry at Iron City Church, and now here as College Minister at Dawson, my wife and I are grateful for the gift of home, and the gift of Birmingham. We love this place and feel honored to serve here for as long as God should see fit.

I can't control
the future, and,
thank God, I don't.

All of that to say, come say "Hi!" Whether you see us here at Dawson on Sundays, or catch me running (or cycling) through Edgewood, or out to eat downtown (probably at our favorite, el Barrio!), at a Baron's game, playing pickleball at the FRC, seeing one of our favorite bands at the Alabama Theater, catching a comedy show at the Lyric, or just simply grabbing groceries at the Pig— we'd love to get to know you, grab a coffee or a meal, hear your story, and celebrate the goodness of God in Jesus together as family in Christ. It's nice to be in Birmingham, and it's even better to be here at Dawson.

As I begin my role here as Minister to College Students, I want to encourage you all to remember the gift that you can be to college students. God used the witness and love of families, individuals, and peers at Calvary Baptist Church to transform my life. They showed me what a redeemed life in the Gospel looked like. It wasn't fancy, it wasn't over the top, but it was faithful. You have an opportunity to show college students what a life lived in devotion to Christ looks like. Whether you work in the professional world, serve as a stay-at-home parent, have a herd of kids or none at all, whether you retired years ago, or even recently graduated yourself—we need you. We desperately need a vision of faithful, everyday people living out an everyday obedience to an extraordinary God. Just like Paul says to the church in Corinth in 1 Corinthians 11:1, we need your faithful witness to show us how to live as Christ followers in the world, just as you yourselves imitate Christ. Thanks be to our God who delights to give us a new home and who always makes good on His promises.



Cole Griffith spent time in California, Georgia, and Alabama growing up. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from The University of Alabama and a Master of Divinity from Beeson Divinity School at Samford University. Cole and his wife, Jada, live in Homewood with their dog, Cooper.

THE DAWSON FOUNDATION MAKING LASTING IMPACTS

By Kathy Nolen



Because of the generosity and faithfulness of generations of Dawson members, the Dawson Foundation, through the Dawson Educational Scholarship Program, has been able to provide financial assistance to many deserving students, enabling them to attend college and advance their education. These students represent a diverse population of cultures and socio-economic backgrounds and all share a connection to Dawson's mission and ministry. Since 2005, the Dawson Foundation has awarded a total of \$1,687,509 in scholarships to more than 1,131 individual students.

One of these scholarship recipients is April Alvarez. April has grown up at Dawson and is a remarkable and inspiring young woman. She and her family are active members of Dawson's Hispanic congregation. She is the oldest of four children. Her parents immigrated from Mexico in 1998, coming to America for economic opportunity, and as non-believers. Her father and mother became believers after attending Bible studies hosted by Dawson's Hispanic congregation. As part of that congregation, April

has been a volunteer youth leader, Bible study leader, and an advocate for Hispanic high school juniors and seniors hoping to attend college.

April graduated in criminal justice from UAB and has received a Dawson Educational Scholarship for each of her undergraduate years. She's now working on her master's degree in Public Administration at UAB. One of her goals is to help bridge the gap between law enforcement and many Hispanics and Latinos who, having fled violence in their own countries, are fearful of authorities. Because she speaks two languages fluently, April hopes to help connect the Hispanic community with the services they need. While working on her master's she is employed at the Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama. She is a family and victim advocate and works for the Strong Families program. Her vocational goal is to go wherever God leads as she gives a voice to people who don't feel like they have one.

April quickly testifies to God's hand in her life, opening doors, providing opportunities, mentors, and help as she has pursued her education.

She shares her appreciation for her scholarships below:

"As a first generation college student, The Dawson Educational Scholarship Fund was a blessing! I really loved how intentional the committee was during my application process. Their initiative to meet with me and to pray over me and my educational journey was extremely encouraging. To those who have contributed to the scholarship fund, thank you for supporting me without even knowing who I am. Your gift meant more to me than you will ever know. I was even able to begin working towards my master's in my last year of my undergrad! This is something I did not even expect, and truly shows how when we honor God through our actions, he provides us with more than we could even imagine."



Kathy Nolen is married to Rodney, and their family includes a son, daughter-in-law, and two granddaughters who live in California, and a daughter, son-in-law, and two more granddaughters who live in Utah. A Dawson member since 1972, Kathy teaches a 5-year-old Life Group, serves in the Music & Worship Ministry, and volunteers at Kids Connection.

// DAWSON FOUNDATION //

2023-2024 Scholarships

For the 2023-2024 school year, the Foundation awarded \$104,125 to these 69 recipients. Congratulations!

Rana Abawi	UAB	Jessica Natalia Meza-Cortes	Samford University
Caroline Adams	Samford University	Sury Meza-Cortes	Birmingham Southern
Thomas Bailey	UAB	William Morrison	University Of Alabama
Rachel Bensinger	Samford University	Caleb Mullis	Huntingdon College
Madilyn Berryhill	Samford University	Benjamin Nation	Mississippi State
Salvador Blanco-Perello	Beeson Divinity School	Jose Ocampo	Samford University
Lexa Botello-Montoya	Birmingham Southern	Carson Osborne	Samford University
Abigail Bradford	Beeson Divinity School	Olivia Osborne	Mississippi College
Emily Bradley	University Of Alabama	Anna McKaime Patrick	Mississippi College
Ethan Burnham	Troy University	Farrah Karimi Petski	Asbury Theological Seminary
Ashley Chicnes-Pizarro	UAB	Jordan Posada	Auburn University
Sophie Coleman	Auburn University	Sheraya Powell	Reid State Technical College
Elizabeth Cuenin	New Orleans Baptist Seminary	Kaylee Ramsour	Samford University
Elisabeth Doss	Auburn University	Jacob Ray	UAB
Jada Edwards	Coastal Community College	Madeline (Maddie) Roberts	University Of Alabama
Carter Engle	Auburn University	Andrew Rohdy	Auburn University
Emmalee Floyd	Auburn University	Elizabeth Rohdy	Auburn University
Hannah Gibson	Beeson Divinity School	Caroline Rutledge	Samford University
Katherine Rose Gillum	Wofford College	Margaret Ann Sanders	Samford University
Kiara Guerrero	Samford University	Timya Saulsberry	University Of Alabama
Jalayah Hamilton	Jacksonville State	Madelyn Stocks	Auburn University
Emily Hanrahan	Western Theological Seminary	Samuel Sutton	Arizona State
Reginald (Reggie) Hatcher	New Orleans Baptist Seminary	Tristan Tate	University Of Alabama
Regan Henkey	Lee University	Jackson Taylor	Samford University
Ainsley Hulsey	University Of Alabama	Caroline Thompson	Samford University
Alexa Hyde	Mississippi College	Danielle Thompson	Bowling Green State
Cassady Hyde	Mississippi College	Kathryn Varner	Samford University
Ella Jayne Hyde	Samford University	Joshua Wallace	Auburn University
Antwuan James	Coastal Community College	Timothy Watkins	Beeson Divinity School
Kate Kaiser	Auburn University	Chase Whitworth	Mississippi State
Charlotte Lee	Auburn University	Eleanor (Ellie) Willcutt	University Of Mississippi
Trey Lemmon	Birmingham Southern	Peyton Wolf	Samford University
Sophia Lindsey	Mississippi State	Lillie Young	Auburn University
Laura Matthews	Auburn University	Stella Young	Auburn University
Amar McCaslin	Berea College		



THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ,
his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived
by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried.

He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand
of the Father.

He will come again
to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.

Amen.

Josh Donaldson

It wouldn't be summer at Dawson without Dawson Day Camp and, for the last 15 years, it hasn't been Dawson Day Camp without Josh Donaldson. This June, as counselors arrived for their morning devotional time on the last day of camp, Andy Cartee, Minister of Recreation, asked them a question. "Who grew up going to Dawson Day Camp with Josh Donaldson as your Camp Director?" Almost every hand went up!

But now, after many years of faithful service and untold influence on so many kids, Josh is "retiring" from Day Camp to become the Athletic Director at Spain Park High School in Hoover beginning with this school year.

As a life-long member of Dawson, Josh grew up attending Dawson Day Camp. He became a follower of Jesus in the 4th grade. This was at Scripture Seekers with Mrs. Ginny Glass, who was Dawson's Children's Minister at that time. Mrs. Ginny also worked at the Day Camps leading crafts. Later, Josh became a camp counselor his 7th grade year. During his college years, Josh moved into the Assistant Director role, which led to him becoming our Camp Director after college.

Away from Dawson, Josh is a science teacher and track coach. A graduate of Homewood High School and The University of Alabama, he returned to his high school alma mater and immediately began to make an impact. Throughout his time at Homewood, Josh has coached numerous State Championship Track Teams and was named the Homewood High School Teacher of the Year for 2020–2021.

Because he has been at Dawson his entire life, Josh counts his family and numerous Dawson staff members as influences in his walk with the Lord. He says, "Other than my family, Chris Hunsberger and Brad Gowing have been major influences on my faith, especially through my work at camp. I started working as a counselor at camp when Chris was the Minister of Recreation. I worked for him until Brad Gowing took over. Not only did they both show me what it meant to

By
Rachel Langston



I worked with Josh Donaldson for four years leading Dawson Day Camps. Josh works tirelessly to ensure all details are covered and everything is in place for Day Camp to run smoothly. Josh operates this way in everything he does, but he does it for Day Camp because he loves Camp Dawson, he loves the campers, and the counselors. He desires for Day Camp to be the best experience for the campers to know the love of God. Josh's heart to serve is evident in all he does.
—Brad Gowing

In 2022, I went on a mission trip led by Josh. Josh's planning and provision ministered to our group in such an intentional way, and it made the trip a lifetime memory—all while serving the children and church staff who were the reason we traveled!
—Donna Allan

← Denver

be a servant leader, but they also showed me how camp could be used to reach the children (and the counselors, too) for Christ. I've also had the pleasure of working with former Rec Minister, Tommy Lunceford, and current Rec Minister, Andy Cartee. Both have helped shaped who I am as a person and leader and have influenced my walk with the Lord."

Naturally, Josh has been a part of many changes and updates at Camp Dawson. But even with the addition of the high ropes course, zipline, big swing, and gaga ball pit, he readily acknowledges that the core values and message of the Gospel have never changed. That truth has been a strong motivation for Josh to serve year after year. "I have always loved camp, and loved the impact it had on me as a camper. Each year, my hope was to give those who came to camp that same experience. Yes, the counselors change and the kids may be different, but it's amazing to see how many campers and counselors keep coming back each summer. When I look at the counselors on staff so many of them grew up as campers themselves."

When asked if serving at Dawson has helped him in his vocational work, Josh shared, "Yes! Serving at Dawson has provided me with leadership attributes that I have used in my job as a teacher, coach, and, now, athletic administrator. It has given me tools needed to guide others in building each other up, shaping character and pushing people to be the best they can be."



Dawson has also given me opportunities to serve on mission trips around the world where I have used the tools I have learned from mentors and those I've gained by leading at Day Camp."

We know that Josh has many fond Day Camp memories, but his favorite will always be seeing the campers arrive at Camp Dawson each year and the excitement on their faces.

As for how Josh wants to be remembered as Camp Director, he simply said, "I

hope that people remember me as a servant, with servant leadership, always guiding people to Him. I think that actions can speak louder than words. I hope my actions have spoken over the years."

Josh will certainly be missed as Camp Director (and his Co-Director, his dog, Denver), but we are grateful for other ways that he serves at Dawson—one of which is decorating the Sanctuary and Vestibule for Advent each year. He does it quietly, after hours without fanfare. After the season ends, he quietly comes back and removes and repacks everything. Servant-hearted. Servant leader.

Thank you, Josh Donaldson, for loving and serving Dawson and its children and so well!



Rachel Langston serves as Dawson's Social Media and Communications Project Coordinator. When she's not at work, she enjoys listening to true crime podcasts, traveling, and eating Mexican food. She and her husband, Kevin, have two college-age children.

When I first started working in the Rec Center, Josh was finishing up college at Alabama. When summer came around and it was time to get organized for camp, I was shocked when everyone's response was, "Don't worry, Josh will take care of that!" And he always did. Josh is the ultimate servant, and his passion for both Dawson and Day Camp has always been evident. His organization, strategizing, and affinity for nicely rolled and labeled t-shirts have made Dawson Day Camp the great success that it's been.

—Liz Cuenin

I had the honor of teaching Josh at Edgewood in 3rd grade. He was a gift as a student and is now a gift as a leader and teacher. It has been such a joy and a blessing to see the ways that he is using his gifts and his passion to glorify God. Whether teaching science, leading cross country, facilitating camps at Camp Dawson, or organizing mission trips, Josh has modeled being a disciple and making disciples in unique and specific ways that only he can do. Josh, may you continue to shine the Christ light brightly along your journey—whether walking, running, hiking— "even unto the ends of the earth." To God be the glory!

—Kristen Torres





TEN MINUTE TALK

A Series of Rapid-Fire Questions With Dawson Staff Members

You may have noticed Michel L , one of our talented graphic designers, taking pictures at Dawson events, or maybe you've seen him driving around town in his bright yellow FIAT (with "Yoda" as his passenger). One thing is for sure, with his big smile and heart of gold, Michel is a friend to everyone he meets. Read on and find out why our favorite Frenchman is truly one of a kind!

Where were you born?

Pau, in the south of France.

When were you last there?

4 years ago for my dad's 90th birthday.

Your heritage is Vietnamese, so how many languages do you speak?

Just two. French and English.

Do you have a big family?

Yes! I have six sisters and four brothers.

What did you want to be when you were a kid?

An airline pilot.

What was your first job?

In my teens, I was a courier in a bank. I would run notes and mail from desk to desk since there was no internet.

Last book you read?

It was a comic book, *The 6 Voyages of Lone Sloane*.

You are a huge movie buff. How many movies have you seen in one week?

Probably 6.

Favorite movie?

Blade Runner, the first one (1982).

Least favorite movie?

I've seen a lot of bad movies. Hard to pick just one.

You love Star Wars and have a great Star Wars collection (even at the office.) What peaked your interest?

I saw it when it opened in France in 1977, and I was hooked. It was a big revelation to me. It just set the standard.

How long did you live in Hawai'i?

We moved from New York and lived there for 13 years.

Can you surf?

I learned how to surf after a couple of years, but I am very lousy at it.

When did you come to the US?

In 1992. I now have spent more than half my life here.

What year did you receive your American citizenship?

The same year my first daughter was born in 1999. It was a very special time for my family!

Before Hawai'i, you worked for Marvel Comics in New York. Did you ever meet someone famous?

Oh yeah. I met Arnold Schwarzenegger and Stan Lee, like three times.

What Marvel superhero do you think could beat all of the others?

Captain Marvel. She has cosmic energy.

Your favorite action hero?

That's easy. Captain America. He is so fair and just.

So Captain Marvel would defeat Captain America?

Yes. I'm afraid so.

Two things you would bring on a deserted island?

A knife and my bifocal glasses.

Would you rather have the power of invisibility or flight?

Flight is more practical. I could go to France. Plane tickets are so expensive!

From Hawai'i, you moved to AL.

Right. God led us straight to Birmingham. Both Charlotte and Samantha are Homewood High graduates, and also Auburn grads.

Favorite place in Birmingham?

Sloss Furnace! It's just such an amazing historic place.

Is there a southern food you just don't like?

Okra. Not an acquired taste.

Favorite French food?

Maybe cassoulet. It's sort of a stew.

Are boneless wings just chicken nuggets?

I'm not a connoisseur on chicken wings, but no, I don't think so.

Favorite snack food?

Cookies. Especially the shortbread kind.

What do you do on the weekends?

Just relax, watch TV, go to the movies, hike, or go to Costco.

Favorite American fast food?

Bacon double cheeseburger with fries. Yummy!

Worst purchase you've ever made?

An expensive collectible figurine that I forgot I already had.

Who would play you in a movie?

Ken Jeong. He's a tad funnier than me.

Favorite Halloween costume?

One year I made a gigantic angel on stilts. It was 12 feet tall. I think it scared all of the neighborhood kids.

You're a snazzy dresser. How long does it take you to get ready in the mornings?

I can get out the door in 10 minutes.

What's something you are looking forward to?

Going to Aspen, Colorado, to my niece's wedding in August.

Where is your dream vacation spot?

Probably New Zealand.

Something people wouldn't guess about you?

I got a medal for falling 16 feet flat on my back in the French Army.

Have you ever broken a bone?

Yep, my right leg, while skiing.

What's something that's on your bucket list?

Traveling around the world. And holding future grand babies.

You have shared that you came to know the Lord later in life.

It's true. I had just turned 40 when God became real to me. I was changed instantly from a hard-core non-believer into who I am today. I'm forever grateful.

Favorite graphic project you've worked on at Dawson?

That is so hard. I've had a lot of great projects, but I really love designing *The Together at Dawson* magazine.





WEEKLY WORSHIP SERVICE FOR 18-29 YEAR OLDS

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STARTING AUGUST 29, 2023

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THREE WISE MIDWEEK BIBLE STUDY

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THAT'S NOT IN THE BIBLE

Common Misconceptions & Sayings

Wednesdays Beginning September 6 | 11.00 a.m. & 6.00 p.m. | Social Hall