

Together

FEBRUARY 2023

AT DAWSON

JESUS IS WAITING THERE
WITH OPEN ARMS

JESUS IS WAITING THERE
WITH OPEN ARMS

20
22

At a Glance

DMA
ignite
bands
rock!

ONE LIFE
AT A TIME

A Kids
Connection
Story

Meet
KYLE
BAILEY

ASSOCIATE MINISTER OF MISSIONS

DNOW
2023
RECAP

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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dawsonchurch.org/AfterThoughts

WATCH LIVE
live.dawsonchurch.org



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,

As you receive our newest edition of the *Together at Dawson* magazine, my favorite time of the year is right around the corner. In just a few weeks, we will officially enter the season of spring. There will be flowers blooming, birds chirping, and most importantly pitchers and catchers reporting for Spring Training! This is a time of new beginnings and fresh starts.

As Christians, this season is a reminder that we have the privilege of celebrating a God who offers us new beginnings and fresh starts each day of every season. This is the message of hope that we have the privilege to share in our community, nation, and far beyond.

In this issue, we look back and give thanks for the many opportunities we have had as a church to share this message of hope in 2022. At the same time, we recognize that the work of the Holy Spirit can never fully be told with just numbers. There are many stories to tell of God's goodness and faithfulness that often are behind the scenes. One such story tells of how God is transforming lives through the faithful volunteers and ministry in and through Kids Connection.

I pray these stories will inspire us to seek God's leadership as we continue to look for opportunities to live out and share this message of hope. May He find us faithful as His people in all that we do.

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Eldridge". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Pastor David

Life Group Stories

By Angela Smith



In August 2022, Pastor David preached a message on Matthew 5:13-16 wherein Jesus instructs us to be salt and light in the world so that others may see our good deeds and glorify our Father in Heaven. Subsequently, this passage and sentiment became the fall focus of the Adult Special Education (ASE) Ministry.

For those who have had the privilege of engaging with members of the ASE Life Group (also known as the "Happy Class") on Sunday mornings, you know that they are an energetic, live-out-loud group that joyfully participates in worship and fellowship. Each member of the class takes that innocent joyfulness into their workplaces and communities every week and exemplifies Christ's charge to be salt and light.

Over the past several months, Happy Class volunteers have visited our class members to encourage them, but these visits quickly became an encouragement to us. Each time a visit was made, our class members would exclaim to their coworkers, friends, and case workers, "These are my friends!

My church friends came to visit me!" Those visits provided us with such a sweet opportunity to witness our class members living out Jesus' call to be salt and light in the world.

In fact, the Happy Class is salt and light all over the city. On Green Springs Avenue, Calvin Morris dances with a street-sign at Firehouse Subs while James Sasser collects shopping carts and bags groceries at Publix. In North Birmingham, Jamichael McGhee cleans trays at Niki's West, and west of town, Anthony Derrico washes dishes in the cafeteria at Birmingham-Southern College. In Wildwood, Rene Bainbridge buses tables at Wendy's, while Penny Williams delivers pizzas for Papa John's downtown. And in Crestwood, Mary McPhillips works the front desk at the ARC.

Other class members live out the call to be salt and light by encouraging their friends and neighbors. Michelle Banks and Janie Reeves bake cookies and deliver them to neighbors. Thomas Campbell, Quinton Jones, and Rip Carper cheer on their group home members and caseworkers.

Frank Owens and Curtis Harris sit on their front porches on Valley Avenue and wave to commuters. Kelly Ostrom lives in community at Episcopal Place. Steve Hatcher attends a weekday program at South Highland Presbyterian Church, and Kent Nunn and John David McCrorie lighten our hearts in class each week.

Shortly after Pastor David's message, the Happy Class studied Ephesians 4:1-16. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul reminded us that God blesses each person with specific gifts and abilities, and each person's gift is important to make up the complete body of Christ. Every member of the Happy Class fully embraces their gifts to cheerfully and eagerly be Christ's salt and light in the world so that others may see their good deeds and glorify our Father in Heaven.





Angela Smith grew up at Dawson and works in economic development at the Alabama Department of Commerce. She has served with the Adult Special Education Ministry since 2019.

2022

BY THE NUMBERS

 **2,040**
Average Worship Attendance

 **167**
New Church Members


  **1,593**
Average Life Group Attendance

 **95**
First Time Guests

 **68** Baptisms

 **30**
Family Dedications

  **60**
1st Graders Received Bibles

 **980**
Thursday Chapel Participants

  **337**
Average Bible Study Participants

 **103**
AUXANO Average Attendance

 **47**
Couples in Together for Life

 **389**
Average Weekly Livestream Views

 **3,094**
Women's Ministry Podcast Listens

 **2973**
Social Media Posts

 **455,052**
Website Page Views



1,024

Preschoolers & Kids at KidLife



429

KidLife Volunteers



98

Kids in Attendance at Hispanic VBS



271

DNOW Students



155

Hispanic Retreat Attendants



63

KidLife Gospel Conversations



8

High School Community Group Homes



239

Sanctuary Choir and Orchestra Members



224

Students at Back to School Retreat



235

Kids at Summer Music Camp



140

Adults & Students on Chapel Choir Mission Tour



2,117

FRC First Time Visitors



138

Ballet Students



10,704

DMA Lessons Given to 322 Students

373



Kids at Recreation Summer Camps



7,823

Wednesday Meals Served



6,000

Candlelight Candles

Missions



Church Planting Partnerships



Coy Backpacks Collected



Families Stayed in the Missionary Houses



Foster Children Served at Christmas



Dawson Volunteers Conducted a Mega Sports Camp for **226** Kids in Mead, CO



The Learning Center Students



491

Operation Christmas Child Shoeboxes



Students Enrolled in Hispanic Ministry Training Institute Held at Samford University



GED Graduates from The Learning Center



1,200

Children Served



400

Christmas Stockings



Spiritual Support Sessions



1,100

Pairs of Shoes Distributed



880

Coats Purchased

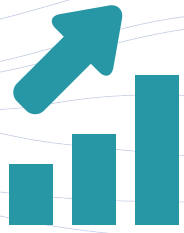


380

Packages of School Supplies Given

2022

FINANCIAL INFORMATION



Tithes & Offerings

\$11,365,451



Expenses

\$10,125,898



Reserve Fund Balance

\$1,161,086



23%

Missions, Ministry
& Music



16%

Operations



18%

Facilities
Support



43%

Personnel

GOD TRANSFORMS ONE

LIFE AT A TIME

THROUGH DAWSON'S KIDS CONNECTION MINISTRY

BY PAULETTE ROGERS

HE CAME TO THE SPIRITUAL
COUNSELING AREA, HEAD
DOWNCAST, SEEMINGLY UNHAPPY,
PERHAPS TROUBLED.

He looked about 17 years old. He will be a senior in high school this upcoming year. I greeted him (let's call him Andrew) and an older woman, who was holding an infant. She, (let's call her Susan), was cordial and thanked me for all the items they have received through "shopping" at Kids Connection. The clothes and other items meant so much to her and the children in her family. She stated how nice everyone was to her and she really appreciated that. Andrew said nothing and did not look at me. I thought, *"I wonder what his story is."* I prayed silently, *"Lord, may your Holy Spirit touch his heart as You, Lord, speak to Andrew through me. I do not know really what he needs to hear."*

I asked Susan if I could pray with them and she said, "Oh, yes, please. This is the main reason I come to Kids Connection so that someone can pray with me." I said, "Well, Susan, tell me a little about yourself, anything, and then your prayer requests." Andrew did not look up or respond...not seemingly wanting to engage in the conversation. However, Susan shared with me about her life, her life dreams, her walk with the Lord, and her prayer requests.

Listening. Yes, that is what we do as a part of the Spiritual Counseling Team at Kids Connection. And, praying. Sharing Christ. Hearts shared. Many needs are shared: physical, practical, spiritual, and emotional. Some needs are met. Specific devotional resources shared. Scriptures shared. Contact information about additional resources in the Birmingham Metropolitan area shared. Bibles given away. Hope given.

Back to Andrew and Susan. Susan and I visited for about 30 minutes. Andrew remained silent, head cast down, slouched in his chair. I asked Susan if she would mind if I visited with Andrew by himself. I thought he probably would not say

anything sitting right next to the adult figure he was with. Susan seemed pleased that I asked to visit with Andrew and went to walk around "the store" with the baby.

I prayed silently, *"Lord, help me listen. Help me ask the right questions. Help me not 'rush' him. Open his heart to what he needs to share. Open his heart to You."*

I asked Andrew to move to a closer chair to me and he did. I asked him to look at me and said, "Aren't you glad she is gone so you and I can visit?" He smiled. I told him this was not an interview or interrogation but that I really wanted to get to know him. I told him a little about myself—about having had teenage sons and a daughter and what a special and sometimes hard time of life it can be. His response was silence. More silence. I asked him what his life dream was. Silence. More silence. More silence. I'm praying. More praying. *"Open his eyes Lord, his heart."* May he trust me enough to speak. And then, Andrew spoke.

Andrew talked and talked and talked, sharing with me about his life, his regrets, his hopes, his guilt for poor decisions and bad behavior, his need for forgiveness by his family. He told me he was in foster care now, about six months, and deserved to be there. He said, "My mother does not want me." My brothers and sisters are afraid of me. I just want to be forgiven and go home. I am so angry." Now, it's my time to be silent. To have eye contact with him. Listening more. I indicated my sadness that he has been through so much and is suffering so. More listening. More looking at each other. Together. More silent praying by me. I asked him if he had one question he would like to ask me. Silence. Waiting. Looking at each other.

Then he spoke. He asked me, "How long do you have to pray about something before the prayer is answered? I have been praying and praying, and I do not know if God even hears my prayers. I mean I am praying a lot." More silence. A pause in the conversation. I prayed silently. I nearly wept. As a matter of fact, I almost fell out of my chair. Silence now looking at each other. Him looking at me. I'm looking at him. I prayed silently, *"Thank you God, for Pastor David's sermon this past Sunday on 'How Long, O Lord?'" Thank you, God, for preparing the way for this young man. For loving him enough to lead our pastor to change his sermon plans last Sunday so that I can share*



Your Word in response to Andrew's question. Thank you, Lord, always, for your perfect timing. Thank you, Lord, for your Holy Word, for the Scriptures you have shown me through the years on praying, seemingly unanswered praying, waiting, trusting, hope." More silence. Still looking at each other.

I leaned in a little bit closer to Andrew. I thanked him for asking such an important question. Only because of the awareness that the Holy Spirit was guiding our conversation, I responded, "Andrew, before I answer your question,

I shared with him that he needs to do a few things: 1. Bring honest questions before God, which he is already doing; 2. Turn to God in the midst of questions, which he has done; 3. Trust God even when he does not have all the answers. I wrote down for him multiple Scriptures to read in addition to Psalm 13. I showed him where Psalms is in the Bible. I encouraged him to read through the Psalms. Specifically, I encouraged him to read and pray Psalm 27, Psalm 28, Psalm 22, and to trust God as found in Proverbs 3:5-6.

approve it. They left, holding their heads high. Encouraged, grateful, with a sense of hope.

Yes, that is what God does through Kids Connection. He sends the people. He prepares hearts, directs and equips volunteers, and is always the God of Hope. He transforms lives.

Our visit extended beyond the time when Kids Connection should have closed. I thanked Bob Gowing, who serves there too. I asked Bob if we could pray together for Andrew and Susan after they left, and we did.

"HAVE YOU EVER ASKED CHRIST INTO YOUR HEART OR THOUGHT ABOUT ASKING GOD FOR FORGIVENESS OF YOUR SINS?" SILENCE.

I have an important question for you. Pause. Have you ever asked Christ into your heart or thought about asking God for forgiveness of your sins?" Silence. He leaned forward in his chair, looking at me. He said, "Well, I have thought about it and wondered how to become a Christian. I am now attending a private Christian school. I just do not know how to do that. I want to be a Christian." Silence. I just looked into his eyes. I said, "Would you like to pray asking God for forgiveness of your sins and asking Jesus into your heart, to follow him forever?" Without hesitation, he said, "Yes, yes. I really want to do that." I said, "Will you pray after me, a sentence at a time, asking Christ into your heart and forgiveness of your sins? Now?" He said, "Yes." We prayed. Afterward, now looking at each other. Thinking. More silent praying.

I spoke with Andrew about what it means to be a believer and responsibilities of a believer. I then said, "Now Andrew," and smiled, "You still want me to answer your question, "How long does it take before God answer's your prayer?" He said, "Yes, please. I just need to know."

I shared with him the teachings from Pastor David, focusing on Psalm 13. (I had my notes in my Bible from the sermon with me.) I also encouraged Andrew, saying that his question is not an unusual question and that many Christians, as well as people who are not Christians, have this question.

He said, "I am glad you mentioned trust. I am trying to trust God with all my stuff. How do I get my family to trust me?" They won't let me come see them." I asked him if he understood why. He said he did; however, he has already been trying for a few months to do the right things and was praying. I reminded him that he does not need to carry his burdens or his sorrows alone anymore, but that Christ is with him and cares about everything in his life. I encouraged him to talk with his foster parent and social worker about his desire to see his family. Also, I encouraged him to write his mother a letter of apology, seeking forgiveness, while being willing for his foster parent and social worker to approve the letter. I reminded him that it may take awhile and a lot of doing the right things and making good decisions before he could be with his family again or build a new relationship with them. I encouraged him to be patient with himself, with God, and with others. Take baby steps. Make good decisions. Read his Bible. Pray. Wait. Hope.

He said he would. I asked him if he would, in front of me, tell his foster parent about his decision to follow Christ. And, would he tell her that he wants to write his mother a letter. He said, "Yes." He told Susan his decision and she just hugged him, saying over and over, "Thank you, Jesus." He also told her he wanted to write his mother a letter and that she could read it and

While we know the names of those who come to Kids Connection and the names of their children served, we do not know their hearts. However, we know that the great I AM knows. I thank God for being able to serve at Kids Connection in Spiritual Counseling. I thank God for our pastor who is sensitive to and follows the leadership of the Holy Spirit. I thank God for a church whose vision is to serve and reach others for Christ.

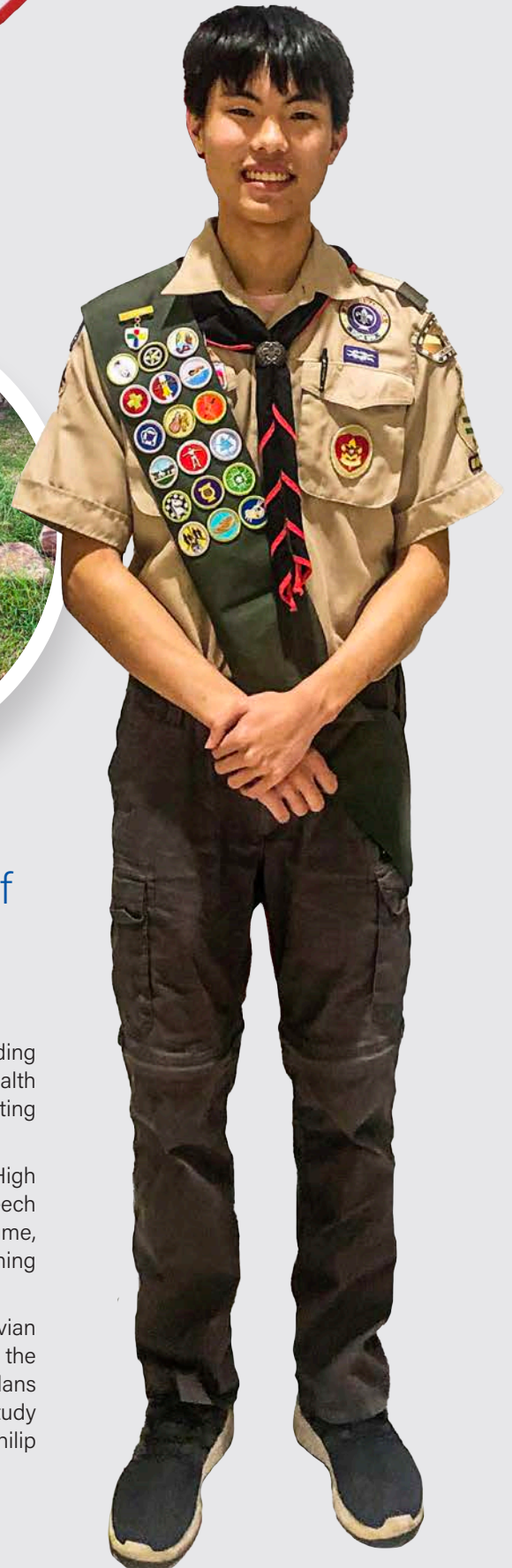
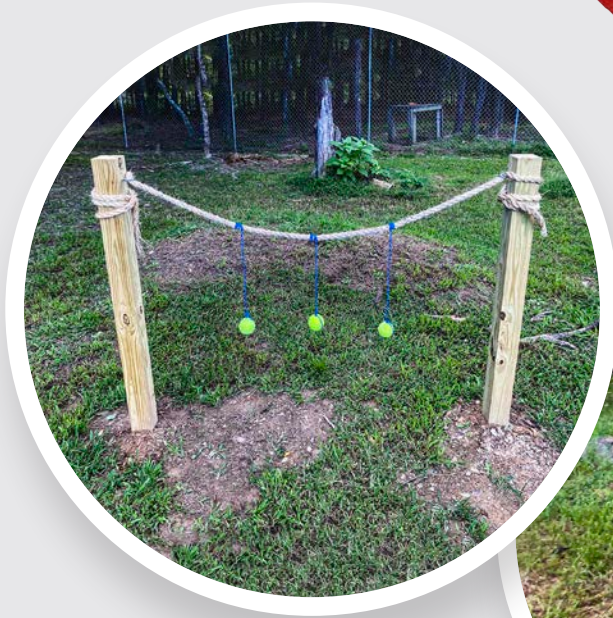
Months later, Andrew's foster parent shared how God has unbelievably changed him. His new life in Christ is now seen in his eagerness and faithfulness to attend church and read his Bible, in being a conscientious student at school, and in helping with responsibilities at home.

What a privilege it is to rejoice with those who love Him and follow Him. What a privilege it is to pray for the shoppers and the children. What a privilege it is to hear the heartfelt prayers of shoppers who thank God for Kids Connection, for Dawson, and for the volunteers. Yes! Praise God for transforming lives forever through Kids Connection. Praise God from Whom all blessings flow! Amen!



Paulette Rogers is a former school teacher, seminary graduate, Dawson staff member and college administrator. She gratefully serves others as a wife, mother, grandmother, missionary, evangelist, and as a disciple maker.

DAWSON CHURCH TROOP 83



Dawson Church Troop 83 is pleased to announce the achievement of the rank of Eagle Scout by **Philip Mitchell**.

Philip Mitchell achieved the rank of Eagle Scout at Dawson Church Troop 83 on November 10, 2022. Philip began scouting at an early age and earned the Arrow of Light as a Cub Scout. Since joining Troop 83, Philip has held various leadership positions, including Assistant Patrol Leader, Patrol Leader, Senior Patrol Leader, Historian, and Instructor. Philip earned 22 merit badges and attended Seabase High Adventure in Florida.

Philip's Eagle Scout project involved planning, designing, building, and installing a dog agility course for the Greater Birmingham Humane

Society. The project included building 6 different exercise sets for the health and well-being of dogs awaiting adoption.

Philip is a senior at Vestavia Hills High School and is a member of the Speech and Debate Team. In his spare time, he enjoys fencing as well as learning about computers.

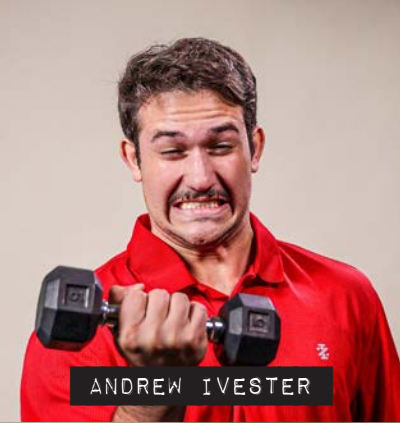
Philip's parents are Joseph and Vivian Mitchell. He is a member of the Church of the Highlands. Philip plans to attend college in the fall and study engineering. Congratulations to Philip on this monumental achievement!



ABBY BRADFORD



ADA BURRIS



ANDREW IVESTER



AUSTIN SANDERS

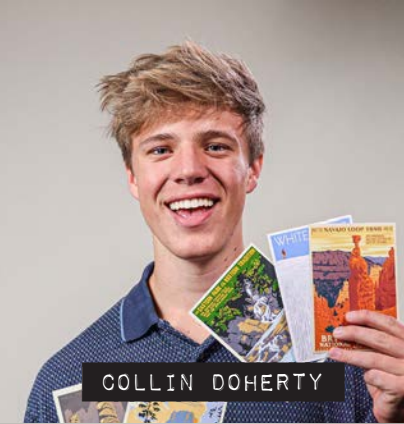
Our 2022-23 BETA Interns



AVERY FLYNT



CAROLINE MEYERS



COLLIN DOHERTY



EMMY TANE



GAUGE PARETTE



KATHERINE WILLIAMS



LINLEY DARNELL



MADELEINE CROW



MEREDITH LINDSAY



MICAIYAH BOLTON



RACHEL MOORE



RAINES LANGSTON



WESLEY LEDBETTER

To have a sturdy house, you have to build on top of a foundation. That is what I came to Dawson with:

a strong foundation.

By **Micaiah Bolton**

When I was a junior in high school, God called me to ministry, specifically music ministry, which led me to Samford to pursue a degree in worship leadership. Once I got to Samford, I realized that I needed to find a church that would not only pour into me but allow me the opportunity to serve God's people. During my first semester of college, Dawson became that place. It became not only a place, but a community of people with whom I could share grief and joy, that helped me heal from past hurts, and that modeled what it means to be filled with the Spirit.

Once I'd decided that I wanted to call Dawson home away from home, Blake Jenkins and Kara Fincher, our College leaders, began to nudge me toward the BETA internship program. I'd expressed to them a desire to serve as well as a need for financial support for school. At that point, BETA had only been around for a couple of years, but it seemed like an answered prayer. I would gain experience in my field, a strong spiritual community, and a scholarship. So, as a rising sophomore, I decided to apply to the program with nothing but my growing relationship with Jesus and an eagerness to serve. As He always does, the Lord provided abundantly more than I would ever have thought to ask for, and I became a BETA Intern in the Music & Worship Ministry.

The first thing I did as a BETA intern at the kickoff retreat was learn what it actually means to be a BETA intern. The word "Beta" is actually a mountain climbing term that refers to the "step-by-step description of a sequence of a climb." I have learned that this is a well-chosen descriptor of what it is to be a part of this program at Dawson.

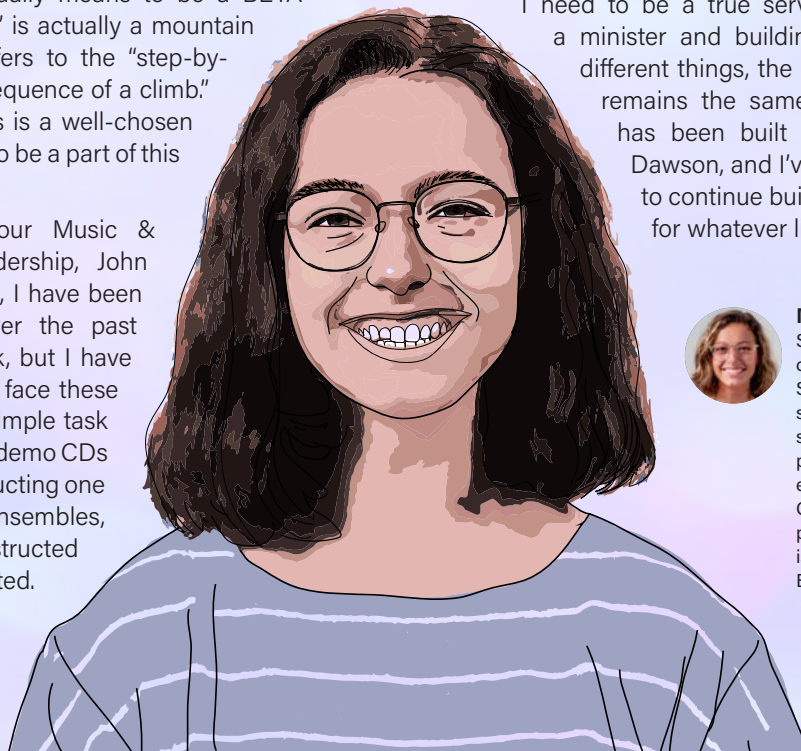
With tutelage from our Music & Worship Ministry leadership, John Woods and Dan Mullis, I have been greatly challenged over the past three years in my work, but I have also been equipped to face these challenges. From the simple task of burning hundreds of demo CDs for Candlelight to conducting one of the many worship ensembles, I have been well-instructed and thoroughly supported.

One of the greatest joys of my intern experience has been taking up the responsibility of musical leadership on Sunday mornings. Whether conducting the choir, playing my French horn, leading as a front line vocalist, or herding kids on DMA Celebration Sunday, I have continually been empowered to lead well and to worship well.

While my musicianship and leadership skills have certainly grown through this internship, that growth doesn't compare to how I've grown as a follower of Christ and future minister of the Gospel. The Lord has truly revealed Himself and guided me through this season. I've learned how hard ministry can be, and about the sacrifices that come with it. Having experienced authentic joy and deep sorrow while working here, I'm learning how to serve consistently and serve well through all seasons of life. And, I've learned how God uses the church as a comfort to those who are going through turbulent times.

Throughout this experience, I have been given wonderful opportunities to cultivate my skills and knowledge of music, ministry, the character of God, and myself. I am incredibly thankful that I was chosen for the internship position. Being a BETA intern is something that I would recommend to any college student who God has called to ministry.

This BETA internship has given me the tools that I need to be a true servant of God. While being a minister and building a house are two very different things, the need for a firm foundation remains the same. My spiritual foundation has been built upon during my time at Dawson, and I've become better equipped to continue building upon that foundation for whatever lies ahead.



Micaiah Bolton is a senior at Samford University with a Bachelor of Arts in Worship Leadership. From Savannah, Georgia, she plans to stay in Birmingham and complete seminary and seek a ministerial position. Her grandmother always encouraged her to use her gifts for God, and she is so thankful that God provides her with opportunities. She is Dawson's first and only three-year BETA Intern.



DNOW



DNow Weekend 2023 was an amazing way to kick off the year! The weekend was full of top-notch worship, convicting messages from Miles Fidell, epic late-night activities, and a meaningful service project to serve our city on MLK weekend. We had 314 students, over 60 leaders, 25 host homes and even more homes ready to step in if needed. We can see God stirring the hearts of our students through the numerous "next step" conversations following the weekend. We are grateful to the volunteers, from host homes to food team and beyond, who sacrificed their time and sleep to come alongside these students.

— Dawson Student Ministry Team






2023

RECAP





THE LONG ROAD OF CALLING

BY **KYLE BAILEY**

Associate Minister of Missions



I LED MY FIRST MISSION TRIP AS A CAMPUS MINISTRY INTERN. LESS THAN A YEAR OUT OF COLLEGE, I TOOK A TEAM OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS FROM ATHENS, GEORGIA, TO MONTERREY, MEXICO, DURING SPRING BREAK.

We left in the middle of the night, driving two 15-passenger vans. Long before the age of cell phones and navigation systems, we had just a road atlas in each van and a pair of walkie-talkies to communicate with one another. And, just to be safe, we also packed a box full of engine parts in case the older van broke down along the journey.

Looking back, I realize going on a trip like that probably sounds *absolutely crazy*. I would never, today, encourage a group of college students to drive thousands of miles and cross an international border unsupervised. Yet, those were different times. I, along with my team, believed God had called us on this mission. We went out in faith, trusting in God's protection and provision. God was faithful to us every step of the way, and we returned safely home after a week of incredible ministry.

I loved every aspect of the trip: the planning, the coordinating with national partners, the helping participants navigate the experience. At every turn, it was like God was confirming something within me. The work was joyous and natural and full of purpose.

One summer, I had just returned from church camp and I felt a clear impression from God. He was calling me to serve Him with my life and work. God clarified this direction during my college years with a calling to Christian ministry. Leading the team to Mexico further focused that calling to missions.

I FIRST FELT A SENSE OF GOD'S CALLING ON MY LIFE IN HIGH SCHOOL.

After college, I took a position as a student minister in my home church. As a congregation active in missions, I had many opportunities to join short-term teams in various places around the world. The trips helped shape my understanding of missions and the global church. Also during this time, I set out to read every missionary biography I could find. I was in awe of the lives of Jim and Elisabeth Elliot, Hudson Taylor, Rees Howells, Adoniram Judson, C.T. Studd, and many others. They heard the call of God, left all the trappings of home behind, and went out into the unknown of faith.

With a calling to ministry and missions, I started asking God *where* He wanted me to serve. I found myself a little envious, in a way, of the missionary greats I read about. They all seemed to have a calling to a place or to a people group. This was conspicuously absent from my own calling. I remember asking God to give me similar clarity.

I prayed, "I will go anywhere, God! Just tell me the *place*."

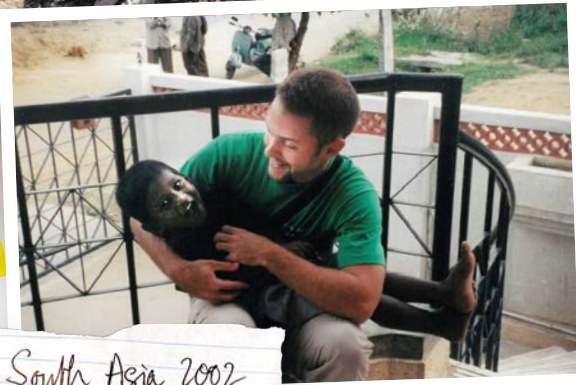
And God, as He so often does, had a different plan. I realized He was not so much interested in the question, "Where?" Rather, He was focused on a "Who?" Now, do not get me wrong, God does still call people to serve in specific places. This was just not my story. You see, God was doing a work deep inside my heart. He was teaching me to trust Him, for everything—without a road map. He was more concerned with who I was becoming than where I was going.



Mexico 1998



Costa Rica 2004



South Asia 2002

Panama Canal 2007



Through these formative experiences, a theme emerged in my ministry. God gave me a burden to connect the church to the world. I had seen the powerful potential to change lives through short-term mission trips. When done well, these trips not only bless the ministry partner and help reach the unreached, but they also serve as a spiritual catalyst for the participant. A week or two outside of one's comfort zone can produce the raw materials for God to do something special. Without the distractions of our daily routine, God seems nearer, his voice clearer. As in my own life, I saw others yield themselves fully to the Lord in these *thin* places where we can glimpse God's Kingdom on earth.

Many years after my initial calling, the disparate pieces of ministry and missions were coming together. I knew God was calling me to be a connector, to be a *bridge*. I wrote about the vision. I talked with my pastors and closest friends. It seemed so right and obvious, yet hurdles remained. In those days, the category of missions ministry in the church was undeveloped. I had a calling without a clear path forward.

This is a critical juncture in my story. Through mutual friends and shared experience in ministry, God brought Ali, my wife, into the picture. As only God can orchestrate, He had given each of us a very similar vision for missions and ministry. When we married, we were joined as husband and wife, *and* as partners in ministry. We now shared the vision of the *bridge*, and had a calling together.

**I HAVE CALLED YOU.
BE PATIENT.
WAIT ON ME.
THOUGH YOU
CANNOT SEE IT,
I AM WORKING.
BE FULLY PRESENT
AND SERVE ME
WHERE I HAVE YOU.**

I learned a very important lesson over the next few years: God's timing does not directly correlate to my own. I had a vision for ministry, and I thought I understood what it should look like. As Ali and I took steps forward in obedience to the call, the available opportunities often seemed to pull us further from the picture I held in my mind. While this was happening, I found comfort in God's words spoken through Habakkuk: "For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay" (2:3). I sensed God saying, *I have called you. Be patient. Wait on me. Though you cannot see it, I am working. Be fully present and serve me where I have you.*

Year after year, the core of the vision to be a bridge between the American church and the world remained constant. The pursuit of obedience to God took us to unexpected places. We traveled countless miles on short-term and mid-term mission trips. We sold our home and our cars so we could live lean and respond quickly to needs. I worked as a carpenter and contractor to have more vocational flexibility between mission projects. When our children were young, we were invited to serve with a ministry in Latin America for two years. Each experience, though not a full representation of my personal vision, provided a piece of the whole. We were on a long road of calling, believing God would give us enough direction to take the next step.



I always trusted I would eventually work in the local church. With this in mind, we moved from Latin America to Birmingham for me to attend seminary at Beeson Divinity School. While there, Ali and I served as Missionaries in Residence with Samford University Ministries. We had the wonderful opportunity to work with Third-Culture Kids and students with a vocational interest in missions. In this season, I developed a theological framework for missions and ministry that can only come from studying God's Word in community with other believers.

This experience opened a new and unforeseen chapter in our calling story. In what seemed like a detour, I spent the next decade working in higher education. The bulk of this time I worked with international students. I was serving as *the bridge* in reverse. Instead of connecting the church to the world, the world was here! I had the wonderful task of connecting students with one another, with domestic students, and with the local community. Though this was far from what I expected, I trusted God was at work. I loved the students yet felt a disconnect from my original ministry calling. But God confirmed over and over again I was in the right place...*for now*.

There were many times the gap between what I was doing professionally, and what I believed I should be doing, seemed like a vast chasm. Proverbs 13:12 states, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick..." My heart often ached to serve God and see the vision that I knew He gave me come to fruition.

I AM INCREDIBLY THANKFUL ALI AND I ARE SERVING AT A CHURCH WITH SUCH A RICH HISTORY IN MISSIONS ENGAGEMENT.

God helped me to understand that my work, though not in a church setting, was *ministry*. My profession did not change my identity or calling. Sometimes God would remind me of this in the quietness of prayer, other times it was through challenges. It was a lesson not easily learned. Yet, He remained a patient teacher. He helped me to learn contentment and how to be fully present where He placed me.

At just the right time, God opened the door for me to join the ministry team at Dawson. I am reminded of the second line of Proverbs 13:12, "...but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life." This is what I have always felt called to do. I am incredibly thankful that Ali and I are serving at a church with such a rich history of missions engagement.

I can see now that my experiences have shaped and prepared me for His purpose and for His calling. Though the road to get here was long, I would not trade a single moment of the journey.



Kyle Bailey became Dawson's Associate Minister of Missions in September 2022. Originally From Marietta, GA, Kyle graduated from Beeson Divinity School in 2013 with a Master of Divinity. He met his wife, Ali, as undergraduate students at the University of Georgia, and they tied the knot in 2001. Kyle and Ali served primarily with mission partners in South Asia and Latin America. They have two children (Thomas and Claire) and live in Homewood with their Goldendoodle, Gus.

Let's Go!

MOBILIZING MISSIONS 2023



MISSIONS IS CENTRAL TO OUR IDENTITY. GOD HAS UNIQUELY CALLED US TO MISSIONS AND WE SERVE OUT OF THE OVERFLOW OF HIS LOVE.

Did you know that every Christian is called to missions? The Great Commission is not a directive to just certain believers; it is an invitation to joyfully participate in God's redemptive plan, and it's for all followers of Christ. God has uniquely designed each one of us with specific and useful gifts. Paul writes: God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as He chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body (1 Corinthians 12:18–20). We are all called, and we all have a role to play.

Joy comes in serving when you find your place. We each have a specific calling to use our unique gifts in the mission of God. We, as a church, are called to train and develop disciples and send them out to expand the Kingdom of God. This is what we call "mobilization." And one of our important roles is to help with navigating this process.

Some may want to serve in a physical location. You might look at the list of Dawson mission trips and feel God's call to a country, city, or people group. Others may be called to serve with a specific ministry or area. Rest assured, God will burden your heart to share the Gospel with the unreached and to use the gifts He has given you. This can happen in a variety of ways.

For instance, you may not currently be able to go on that mission trip, however, you may have a strong desire to intercede for our mission teams and ministry partners. Or, God may prompt you to help the team prepare for the trip. Others may seek to serve missionaries who are on furlough or drive departing mission teams to the airport. You may even choose to lend your time and talents at Kids Connection, The Learning Center, or M-Power. We are all called, and we all have a role to play.

One of our Theological Vision statements is "Missions is our passion." This passion comes from a century of faithfully loving and serving others outside the walls of the church. Missions is central to our identity of who we are as a church. God has uniquely called our church family to missions, and we serve out of the overflow of His love.

This vision also reflects a future reality. As each of us learn to walk in our own calling to further God's Kingdom, we will find ourselves operating from a deeper understanding of God and of our role in His redemptive story. Through Dawson, God is mobilizing us to joyfully serve Him. This is why Missions is, has been, and will always be our passion!

INTERNATIONAL

GUATEMALA | Medical Mission Project
(Registration Complete - Ready to Go!)

Estimated Cost: \$1,200*
Dates: February 20 – 24
Leader: Dr. Randy Stewart
Type of Ministry: Medical Outreach
Participant Profiles: Adults, College Students
Special Qualifications: Medical background preferred, but not required

EAST AFRICA | Education Support Project
(Registration Complete - Ready to Go!)

Estimated Cost: \$1,300*
Dates: March 10 – 18
Type of Ministry: Teaching, Children's Ministry, Cross-Cultural Worker Support
Participant Profiles: Adults
Special Qualifications: Education background helpful

ECUADOR | Family Mission Trip
(Registration Complete - Ready to Go!)

Estimated Cost: \$1,200*
Dates: March 25 – April 1
Leader: Bryan Howard
Type of Ministry: Service, Community Outreach, VBS
Participant Profiles: Families, Students

EURASIA | Ministry Support Team

Estimated Cost: \$1,900*
Dates: April 15 – 22
Leader: Lisa Simpson
Type of Ministry: Children's Ministry, Cross-Cultural Worker Support
Participant Profiles: Adults

EURASIA | College Ministry Team

Estimated Cost: \$2,000*
Dates: April 30 – May 7
Leader: Cole Frier
Type of Ministry: Outreach, Evangelism
Participant Profiles: College Students, Young Adults

WALES | College Student Internship

Estimated Cost: \$1,880*
Dates: May 26 – July 3
Leader: Kyle Bailey
Type of Ministry: Outreach, Evangelism
Participant Profiles: College Students

POLAND | Ministry Support Team

Estimated Cost: \$1,700*
Dates: July 28 – August 6
Leader: Kyle Bailey
Type of Ministry: Children's Ministry, Cross-Cultural Worker Support
Team Size: 15+
Participant Profiles: Adults, Families

GUATEMALA | VBS & Medical Mission Project

Estimated Cost: \$1,200*
Dates: July 29 – August 4
Leader: Dr. Randy Stewart
Type of Ministry: Medical Outreach, VBS
Participant Profiles: Adults, College Students

UGANDA | Medical Mission Trip

Estimated Cost: \$2,050*
Dates: August 25 – September 5
Leader: Debbie Moss
Type of Ministry: Medical, Refugee Relief
Participant Profiles: Adults
Special Qualifications: Medical Training
(Note: Please contact team leader for needed specialties)

NATIONAL

COLORADO | Sports Camp Outreach

Estimated Cost: \$950*
Dates: July 8 – 15
Leader: Meg Brown and Josh Donaldson
Type of Ministry: Sports Camp, Community Outreach
Participant Profiles: Families, Adults, Students
Special Qualifications: None

MAINE | Worship Leaders Conference

Estimated Cost: TBD*
Dates: TBD
Leader: Dan Mullis
Type of Ministry: Leadership Training, Worship
Participant Profiles: Adults
Special Qualifications: Worship Leaders

Scan the QR code for more information, or visit dawsonchurch.org/missionsopportunities. If you have questions about any of these ministries, or just want to talk though your calling story, please contact Kyle Bailey at kbailey@dawsonchurch.org.



*For 2023, Dawson will underwrite the trip cost for church members by 50%. The published price includes this subsidy.

WALK AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS STEPS OF FAITH

By **MEG BROWN**
Associate Minister to Children

Living in response to the good news is the call to all believers. Because we have received the gospel of Christ, we are to fully embrace a life that offers this glorious gift to others.

While the Gospel message is singular and clear, the display of this Christian life is a colorful kaleidoscope, a multi-faceted diamond reflecting the light of Christ for all to see. (Colossians 3:17).

We are united in obedience to the Greatest Commandments and Great Commission, but the way we live this out is as different and unique as God has created each of us to be.

In 2017, God softened my heart to see how I could be of use in sharing the Gospel in a new and,

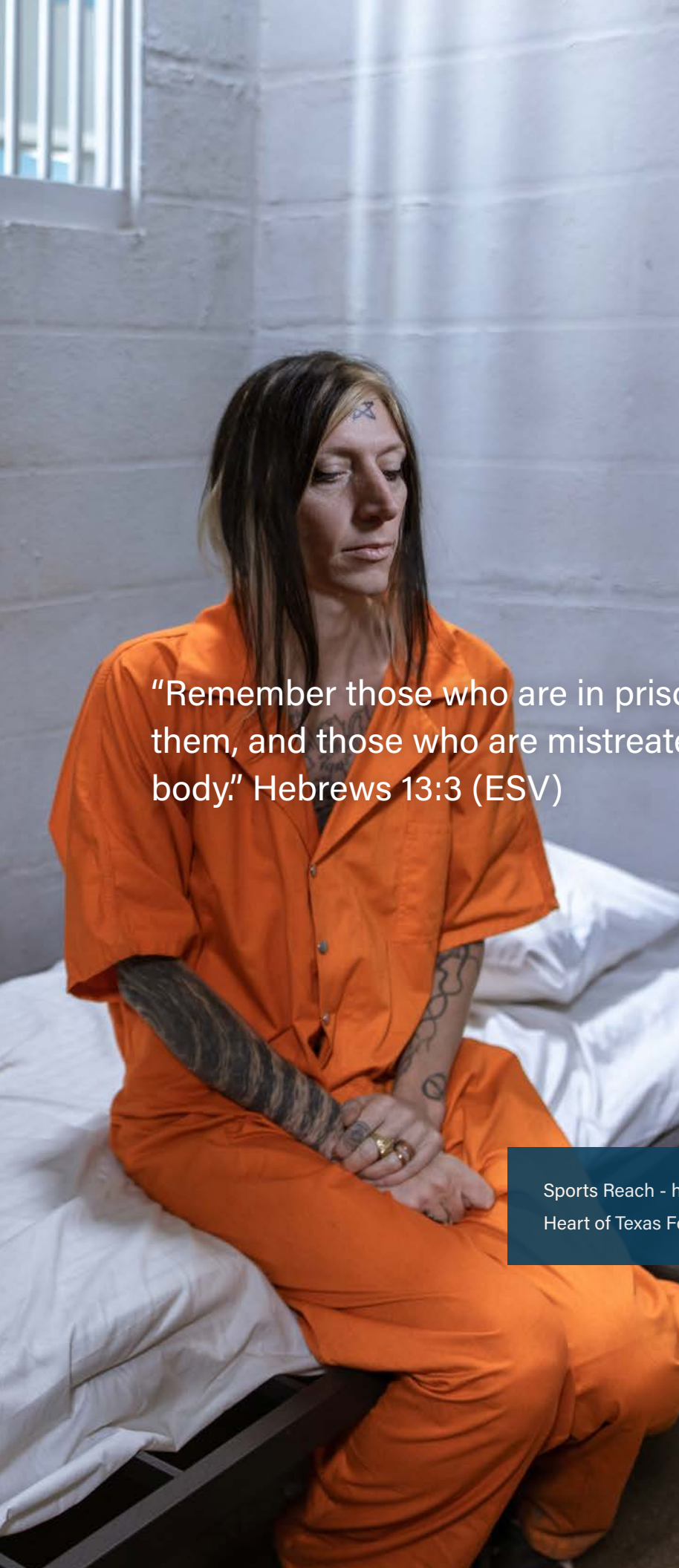
admittedly, unexpected way. Because of my experiences as a Bible teacher and collegiate athlete, I was invited to be part of a ministry team that went to women's prisons to share the love of Christ. This organization, Sports Reach, was connected to my local church, and my mentor, Tina, was to lead the week-long trip. The plan was that our team—composed of women aged 18–48 with varying backgrounds ranging from music ministry to a volleyball team captain—would go into a maximum security women's prison, share the good news of the Gospel with the inmates, and then play a sports game or two.

We quickly found that what the prisoners wanted was not a competitive softball tournament or even a sermon. What they desired was to be heard and to be received with grace. Those hot days spent out on the yard were much less about anyone's athletic ability and much more about the love of Jesus. Through the means of sport, we connected with people who we found to be much more like us than different. We met believer and unbeliever alike in these moments, being used by God and being sharpened by God in the most unlikely of places.

I served as team member or team

leader for these types of trips for a few years. And I would do it on an annual basis if I could! It was in those prison chapels—not on a church platform or behind a proper pulpit—where I practiced my Bible teaching, which served me greatly when I later took on the role of Women's Minister and Children's Minister at Porter Memorial Baptist Church. From these experiences, I was connected with my seminary to teach in local jails. And through those opportunities I was later connected to a prison educational program where I have served most recently.

These programs can be found all over the country, from Kentucky to Florida to Texas. This sort of ministry was never one that I would have identified with or found on my own, but it is what God placed in my path. Serving with them has stretched my comfort zone and my abilities. During these times, I have been made to rely on the Lord and to trust Him in each next step. He used an ordinary individual, with an ordinary makeup of gifts (and flaws) for His glory in this way. When God places opportunities, even ones maybe as foreign to you as serving those in prison, will you step out in faith?



“Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.” Hebrews 13:3 (ESV)

My experiences in these places have drawn me closer to Christ. These times have caused me to see more clearly the great grace that the Lord extends to each of us. In all places are people in darkness, with our sin and need. And to all places, including the seemingly hopeless and often forgotten prison cell, the light of the Gospel can reach. The light of Christ extends to these places as our Savior is sufficient to meet our great need. Will you remember that truth as God calls you? Will you step out, with the light of Christ, to even the darkest places?

In response to the Gospel, may we go with the compassion of Christ to anywhere and everywhere Christ calls.

For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.

Ephesians 5:8

Sports Reach - <https://sportsreach.org>

Heart of Texas Foundation - <https://heartoftexasfoundation.org>



Meg Brown serves with Dawson Kids as the Associate Minister to Children. She is a proud Kentucky native who loves basketball season and likes to spend time outside with her dog, Russell, or enjoying a good read and a hot cup of coffee.

"Come away with me," Jesus beckons.

The Spiritual Discipline

of Silence
& Solitude

By Staci Waldvogel

Jesus invites you to come away with Him. Not because you should. Not even out of obedience. Not because it's a duty. But because He loves you. Because He thinks you are special. Because you are worthy of His time, and He wants to be with you.

The Lord calls to us, men and women, to a level of relationship and connection for which our souls long. It's what we were created for. The busyness around us, of this world, calls loudly. Work, productivity, volunteering, the raising of children, obligations, media, and constant availability. We live in a place full of commerce, social engagements, social media, news media, and distractions—all manner of enticement for our focus, our time, and our devotion.

The Lord's voice can be hard to hear in the midst of all that. His creation reminds us of Him, but do we pause very often in wonder, in awe? God created the beauty of this world, the relationships we enjoy. He created work and family. He modeled serving others. All of these are good! But when these gifts are our focus and we become distracted from the Lover of our souls, they become diversions, even barriers, to what Jesus called the better way: quietly sitting at the feet of Jesus and learning from Him.

Did you know that you have received an invitation? A personal invitation, sent with love and addressed to you? Jesus calls you "Beloved" and invites you to come away with Him. I can imagine Him saying this to me: "Find rest for your weary soul. I will give you rest. The world gives you yokes. So many of them. But I want to exchange all of those for the one I have prepared for you. Come, take this one. It is easy; this one is light. I want you to learn from me, one-on-one. Like my personal apprentice. But it's not work or another thing to add to your list. Oh no, I have hand selected you. Not because of anything you have that will benefit me. No, I picked you out because you are special in my eyes. Because I know everything about you and love you unreservedly. There are things I want to show you. A new work

that I want to do. I want you to spend time with me; just with me. I am gentle and lowly in heart, easy to get along with. I'm not calling you here to berate you or chastise you about anything. I just want to spend time with you. Time that you have set apart, recognizing that I truly am your best thought by day or by night."

*Longing for peace?
Of course you are.
Need rest for
your weary soul?
Absolutely.*

Jesus invites all who labor and are heavy laden to come to Him. We just need to accept his invitation. Longing for peace? Of course you are. Need rest for your weary soul? Absolutely. God said it would be this way! He longs to fill that space. But we have to make space for Him to fill. So what can we do about that?

Recently, Kristen Torres, Minister of Spiritual Development and Women's Ministry, and I took a much needed break from everyday life, each of us sensing the need to get away with God. We went to a serene space about an hour away, a place specifically set aside for this purpose. Both of us realized that God was moving us in similar directions. As we listened to God and poured out our hearts to each other, we knew we were not alone in this. Most women we know feel the same kinds of pressures, busyness, and longings for God.

Last summer the Dawson Women's Ministry podcast, *Everywhere You Are*, curated a series focusing on spiritual disciplines. Women from Dawson shared their stories of connecting with God through prayer, lament, studying Scripture, worship, and silence and solitude. Last fall, Jan Kenamer Hart led a Wednesday-night series that

explored spiritual disciplines, which is again offered this spring. Also, Dawson's Women's Ministry hosted three 5-hour quiet retreats last September, October, and November.

What is a quiet retreat, you ask? It's really just space. Making space, on our campus, for people to spread out, to find a quiet nook or cranny (or Life Group room, or pew, or comfy chair) to get away and be alone and quiet with God, the Lover of our souls. We started and ended by calming our bodies and focusing on Scripture and quietly stretching our muscles. As we were doing this, I recognized the tension and stress I was carrying physically—my yokes—and then released them to the Lord. Then I was able to become calm and focused on God, shutting the door to all that clamors for my attention and fully opening the door to Him. Quieting the noise of the world so I could hear the still, small voice God most often uses. Prompts helped us to get started, but then we made use of the weekday quietness of the Dawson space and just met with God individually.

In the Spring, Dawson's Women's Ministry is planning a weekend retreat April 14–16. It won't be your usual women's retreat of Bible study, worship, and fellowship, although that sounds nice too! This one will be for those longing to get away, to have a break, to hear God in the quiet, peacefulness of a beautiful place away from all that calls for our attention every day. And yes, you are invited!

"Come away with me," calls the Lord. That's what we are going to do. Carve out space to hear God, to connect deeply with Him, to find real and deep refreshment for our souls. To paraphrase a mentor of mine, "Let us wait upon the Lord and see what He is going to do!"



Staci Waldvogel works at Fuller Theological Seminary and has been a member of Dawson for three years. She and her husband, Dieter, have three children, Mathis, Tyler, and Anna. Staci and Dieter serve with Dawson Young Professionals.



ignite bands

By Kimberly Jones

Dawson Music Academy Director

One of the most important callings that God gives us is the call to invest in the next generation. In Psalm 145:4, we're reminded: One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts. As we choose to share our testimony, time, and talents with the next generation, the Lord stirs the hearts of a new generation of worship leaders, pastors, and prayer warriors.

Through a variety of ministry opportunities, the Dawson Music Academy prioritizes an intentional investment in the next generation of worship leaders. Sometimes that investment comes in the form of private weekly music lessons to develop a student's individual talents to sing or play in worship. However, sometimes the investment takes a different path.

Ignite Student Bands provide a pathway for youth musicians to explore their talents while also gaining new insights about leading in worship.

Ignite Bands first launched several years ago when a few Dawson Music Academy instructors had a vision to invest in the next generation of worship leaders. After prayerfully exploring several different ideas, the instructors created Ignite Bands. The name "Ignite" reflects the goal of the bands: to "ignite" a love for music, a connection with other musicians, and a passion to lead in worship.

In keeping with our commitment to invest in the next generation, Ignite Bands provide opportunities for young musicians, ranging from elementary-age to high school, to explore their talents with other musicians. Each Ignite Band includes a small group of 4-8 band members of similar age and ability level. In weekly sessions, vocalists, guitarists, keyboardists, and drummers come together to rehearse worship songs. Students and coaches create the playlist of worship songs each semester. Some of the favorites through the years have been "How Great Is Our God" (Tomlin), "Glorious Day"





(Ingram & Smith), and “House of the Lord” (Wickham). Led by an Academy Band Coach, each rehearsal provides students the opportunity to develop new musical skills while also learning how to lead in worship. Band Coaches collaborate with band members to create song maps for each of the songs they are playing. Through these discussions, band members think through different dynamics that are important to incorporate when serving and leading in worship. At the end of each semester, Ignite Bands host a Band Showcase where they lead their family and friends in a night of worship. Through the years, a variety of different students have participated in Ignite Bands. Many of the students and their parents have shared with me that Ignite Bands have provided an encouraging foundation for students both musically and spiritually. The soundtrack of worship songs learned through Ignite Bands has encouraged teenagers on difficult days, through challenging

times, and through lonely seasons. The promises of scripture sung over the seasons of life is a firm foundation that won’t be shaken. In addition to building a strong spiritual foundation, Ignite Bands provide a positive connection point for youth to build relationships. Some of our Ignite Band students have been part of bands since their beginning in 2018. It has been truly amazing to watch those students grow in their friendships with each other over the past several years. The strong relationship between band members helps them as they learn to communicate with each other about musical details (how fast to play, how loud to play, which instrument has the lead, etc.). Band members also develop new musical skills of listening to the group and following the band leader. They grow in their confidence with playing their musical instrument as well as in their ability to lead others in worship. Ignite Bands are open to any interested

musician, not only students at Dawson Music Academy. We’ve had some students from other Birmingham-area churches join Ignite Bands for one semester to gain musical experience in worship. After a semester, those students felt prepared with the skills they needed to participate in youth worship bands at their churches, so they plugged into their local church leadership teams. Additionally, several Ignite Band students have moved on to serve as leaders in worship at Dawson or other area churches. We’re grateful for the opportunity to equip and encourage these young musicians to use their God-given talents in worship. As we look ahead, we’re excited to continue to invest in the next generation of worship leaders through Ignite Bands. It’s a privilege to connect with youth and “ignite” a love for music and worship. Thank you for joining with us in prayer for the worship leaders of tomorrow!

If you are interested in learning more about connecting with the ministry of Dawson Music Academy, please email Kimberly Jones at kjones@dawsonchurch.org.



Kimberly Jones serves as the Director of Dawson Music Academy. She is passionate about helping students of all ages and backgrounds experience the joy of music and use their gifts to worship God. In her free time, she loves spending time with her husband Greg and son Garrett.

TEN MINUTE TALK

A Series of Rapid-Fire Questions With Dawson Staff Members



We know Jan Kenamer Hart as Pastor David's Ministry Associate. She is an incredible Bible Study Leader and mentor, and also a HUGE Auburn fan. But, did you know that Jan is musically talented and can use her vast supply of musical terminology as needed? One thing is for sure, Jan's deep love for the Lord is evident by the way she cares for others and through her joy-filled spirit. Read on for more!

What's something that people don't believe when you tell them?

That I've been to prison many times.

Ahhmm, may I ask why?

Yes! My first job out of seminary was working in Prison Ministry.

Where did you go to seminary?

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in North Carolina.

If you didn't work in ministry, what job would you like to be doing?

I've always wanted to be a high school English or History teacher.

Favorite book of the Bible?

The Gospel of John.

What's a memory that makes you smile?

Singing in the College Choir at Auburn First Baptist Church.

What food do you refuse to eat?

Brussels sprouts. Wait, there's a whole lot more. I don't eat ketchup, I don't eat mustard. Oh! And Chinese food, I would never. No, sushi! Sushi is a food I wouldn't touch in a million years, because I don't like seafood.

Do you play a musical instrument?

I play the guitar and the right hand on the piano.

Who is your favorite Disney Princess?

Belle.

Why Belle?

Because she loves books and because she sees there can be a redemptive end to her story with the Beast.

What's something people may be surprised to know about you?

I'm a huge Star Wars fan and love *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy.

Favorite book other than the Bible?

Renovation of the Heart by Dallas Willard and *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction* by Eugene Peterson.

Do you have any pets?

I do, we have a 12-year-old golden retriever named Champ.

What sports or clubs were you involved in during high school?

I was in the band. I was a majorette. I originally played the flute because my aunt did and it was the easiest thing to learn. And then I tried to play the marching trombone, which is called the flugelhorn, but I never could get the embouchure right, so I didn't do very well with that.

Do you have any hidden talents?

No, I'm so boring. Wait! I can twirl two batons at once!

Are there any podcasts you listen to regularly?

I listen to James Bryan Smith's *Things Above* podcast. I also listen to *The Next Right Thing* by Emily P. Freeman.

Favorite band or musician?

I loved Journey, and also the Eagles and James Taylor.

Favorite holiday? Oh, Christmas.

Who is the last person you texted?

A friend from college.

Who was your celebrity crush?

Kevin Costner.

Is Jan short for anything?

Yes, Janet. But my mother is also Janet, so I got Jan.

Do you collect anything? Yes. Tigers.

What was the last movie you saw in theaters?

Top Gun: Maverick. I went with my husband. He is a big fan of the original *Top Gun* movie.

First concert you went to?

Lionel Richie.

What's something rebellious you did as a teenager?

I was part of a competition Color Guard squad that my parents did not approve of, because we traveled on the weekends.

What's a skill you'd like to learn?

I'd love to be able to play the piano with my left hand, too. (Both hands!)

How many states have you been to?

Like eight, not very many.

What would you do on a day off with no responsibilities?

I would read for pleasure.

What game show would you be really good at?

I'd be terrible at Wheel of Fortune. Because now they have weird puzzles. I'd be good at The \$100,000 Pyramid. You just have to name things and try to get somebody to guess what the category is.

What's your pet peeve? Rude drivers.

How many pillows do you need to sleep well? Four.

You're on a deserted island, what three things do you bring with you?

Can I have my phone? Because then I'd have my Bible, and music, and all the things. And water and chocolate.

Is the chocolate milk chocolate or dark chocolate? Milk chocolate!

You've been granted one wish. What is it? Good health, so I can take care of all the people around me.

Big city or small town? Small town.

What are you grateful for?

My family and friends.

GOD

AT
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KIDLIFE 2023

JUNE 5-8

[DAWSONCHURCH.ORG/KIDLIFE](https://dawsonchurch.org/kidlife)

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MIDWEEK BIBLE STUDY

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

A Study of Angels & Demons

WEDNESDAYS AT 11:00 A.M. & 6:15 P.M.

DAWSONCHURCH.ORG/GOODBADUGLY