

Together

MAY 2023

AT DAWSON

Caring in
KENYA

**KIDLIFE
PREVIEW**

**GOD
AT WORK**

Meet

**JONATHAN
PROPE**

Dawson's
Discipleship Pastor

CONGRATS

**2023
SENIORS**
OUR BIGGEST
CLASS EVER!

A Home For The
MEDINAS

Our Newest
Ministry Partner
STRONG TOWER
At Washington Park

Life's Better Together

There's a Life Group for you!

PRESCHOOL
KIDS
STUDENTS
COLLEGE
YOUNG ADULTS
ADULTS
SENIOR ADULTS



dawsonchurch.org/lifegroups

Together

AT DAWSON

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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,

A couple of days ago, I was having a conversation with someone in our community who had been visiting our church for a few months. One of his comments stood out to me. He said, "I've met a lot of people around Dawson who seem passionate about missions." I was encouraged to hear his words because, as you know, we prayerfully aspire for this to be true of our church. In our Theological Vision, we proclaim: Missions Is Our Passion. We desire to proclaim the love of Jesus to all people because the Lord's commission and our calling is to make disciples of all nations.

This edition of our *Together at Dawson* magazine highlights many examples of our members on mission to go, love, and tell of the love of Jesus locally and globally. I hope you will take the time to read about the beginning of a new partnership in Montgomery with a local church there called Strong Tower. You will be encouraged as you read of the ways that God is working in Fultondale at Vida Nueva and of a long-standing partnership in Coy, Alabama. You will also read of a recent mission trip to Kenya and how God is continuing to make His name known to the ends of the Earth.

Very few of us will have the ability to be in all these places in the coming days. However, we all, as members of the Dawson Family of Faith, are able to join God in His work in our own community and far beyond as we pray, go, and give as He provides us opportunities to do so.

I hope that reading these stories will inspire you to take the next step in allowing God to write new chapters in your life and our church's life in the days ahead.

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Eldridge". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" being more prominent than the last name "Eldridge".

Pastor David

Life Group Stories

By Bayron Mosquera



The Hispanic Congregation consists of approximately 200 churchgoers, Life Group members, and Bible Study participants. Of this congregation, the largest cohort is couples with school-age children. Today, more than ever, parents face enormous challenges in meeting their responsibilities in raising their children. These responsibilities have changed based on new social, cultural, and economic parameters dictated by the dynamics of the modern world. Today, it is more difficult to be a parent than it was years ago; especially so in the case of immigrant parents raising their children in a country that is culturally different from their own.

Faced with this reality, we consider it important to support these couples with spiritual formation that makes them healthy families. When we talk about healthy families, we refer to those that offer the basic conditions where their members develop physically, emotionally, and spiritually strong so they can become agents of change in the world in which we live. With this in mind, two classes were created: Couples Life Group for the parents and Bible Explorers for their children; the children participate in Sunday worship and then are excused to explore the Bible with their own special curriculum. The Couples Life Group meets Sunday mornings at 9:40. It was created with the purpose of studying specific topics related to marriage and family. We use books and materials that serve as a study guide for practical and specific issues of marriage and family life. These materials are alternated quarterly with the regular Lifeway materials used in the other adult classes.

Additionally, the Couples Life Group maintains online contact with its members during the weekdays by sharing devotionals, holding prayer times, and promoting different fellowship events. All of this has fostered strong relationships, and the Life Group has become an accountability support group. One class member said: "The Couples Life Group has helped us understand how to be better parents and how to fulfill the responsibility of raising our children."

In February of each year, with a nod toward Valentine's Day, we hold a conference with a formal dinner. The women of the Life Group decorate the Fellowship Hall tables and create a festive backdrop for photos of couples and groups of friends. Guest speakers, usually a husband and wife pair of pastors or counselors, are invited to share professional advice, as well as personal insights into healthy, spiritual marriage and family life. It is a special evening of fellowship, laughter, education, and of course, worship.

The Couples Life Group is a dynamic and vibrant group that supports one another and shares the Gospel and their experiences of being a great family of faith.



Bayron Mosquera is originally from Ecuador. He has been at Dawson for 28 years as the Hispanic Pastor. He loves to work with people, helping those in need, and sharing the Gospel with non-believers. Bayron is married to Maria, and they have two children, Evelyn (Marco) and Byron Jr., and one grandson, Benjamin James "Benji." In his free time, he enjoys playing soccer and ping pong.

GOD

AT WORK

KIDLIFE 2023
JUNE 5-8

KIDLIFE, OUR VERSION OF VBS, IS DAWSON'S LARGEST GOSPEL-CENTERED OUTREACH EVENT OF THE YEAR.

Each year, Dawson's Preschool Ministry and Dawson Kids Ministry partner together to create a fun, relevant, exciting week of Bible teaching, worship, and activities. This year's theme is God At Work! Preschoolers and children will share this theme, daily mottos, and the key Bible verse from Philippians 1:6.

He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:6

Bible lessons and activities during KidLife Week are specifically designed for each age group. Kids will see "God at Work" as they explore the truth of God's word through the stories of Jesus.

Participants will learn that the God who made and loves them is at work in and through their lives every day, and that He has good work planned for them to do as well. Both kids and preschoolers will focus on these daily main points:

- God made us to **GROW** in His Word.
- God made us to **SHOW** our love for Him.
- God made us to **CARE** for others.
- God made us to **SHARE** the good news about Jesus with others.

Dawson's KidLife is for children who are age 4 by September 1, 2023 through 5th Grade completed.

Participant registration is now open online at dawsonchurch.org/KidLife. **Online Registration will close at noon on May 26.**



For more details on how you can get involved at KidLife, please contact:

Brooke Gibson | Preschool Ministry
 bgibson@dawsonchurch.org

Meg Brown | Kids Ministry
 mbrown@dawsonchurch.org

CHILD SAFETY

Protection and Prevention

By **Liz Cuenin** | Minister of Outreach and Assimilation

EACH WEEK AT DAWSON, OUR HALLWAYS, LIFE GROUP ROOMS, AND SANCTUARY PEWS ARE FILLED WITH FAMILIES. IT IS A JOY TO SEE CHILDREN OF ALL AGES EXCITED TO COME TO CHURCH TO LEARN ABOUT AND WORSHIP GOD!



The safety of our children is something we take very seriously at Dawson. More than ever before, there is a growing awareness that those who seek to take advantage of the young and vulnerable target places where there is access to large groups of children—like churches.

Dawson's Child Protection Policies and Procedures have been implemented to protect your children and families. Though not necessarily a favorite topic of conversation, the benefits of continued awareness and training surrounding child abuse prevention are a priority for us as adults.

In 2019, Dawson made the decision to undergo a large overhaul of our existing Child Protection procedures. More than 1,000 adults—including staff, deacons, and volunteers—underwent the new, multi-step process. Taking about an hour to complete, these new steps included an overview and agreement of *Dawson's Child Protection First! Policies*, an online background check, and an online video training class called

MinistrySafe Awareness Training.

For any brand-new volunteers, two additional steps were taken that included a volunteer interview by a staff member and obtaining two character references on behalf of the volunteer.

MinistrySafe and Abuse Prevention Systems

is a well-known and well-trusted leader in the fight toward abuse prevention. Gregory Love and Kimberlee Norris, who are both civil trial attorneys and sexual abuse experts, lead a nationwide litigation practice representing victims of child sexual abuse in the United States. Both Love and Norris had many years of volunteer experience inside the church, which made them the perfect pair to create MinistrySafe, which is solely dedicated to aiding churches, camps, nonprofits, and seminaries in sexual abuse awareness and prevention.

My role as Minister to Outreach and Assimilation means I oversee Dawson's Child Protection process. I have (and I am guessing you have as well) been heartbroken to read the stories of abuse within the church that have surfaced from brave survivors who have come forward to share their stories. Far too many abuses have taken place within a church context or have involved a church leader or volunteer.

When a child is sexually abused in a church setting, the church has failed to provide a safe environment for the victim. And if the Church has failed to adequately train, screen, and supervise the abuser, the church is at fault, both legally and morally—not just the abuser. In the past, there have, oftentimes, been an unfortunate trend of churches being “behind the times” with current standards of care and prevention concerning sexual abuse, reporting, and response.



This is not only unacceptable and unsafe for the minors in our churches, but it is also a horrific stain on the Gospel witness of the Church at large. We can and must do better to protect the children within our care.

Dawson has made a commitment to proactively prevent sexual abuse through comprehensive training, thorough policies, background checks, and an up-to-date online database of staff and volunteers' Child Protection status. The MinistrySafe Awareness Training is essential in making Dawson the safe place we all want it to be. The more adults who are trained and educated to understand the characteristics and “grooming signs” of an abuser, the better. The more who have “eyes to see” what should not be taking place, the safer our church is.

We cannot address or prevent a risk we do not understand. We must educate and train ourselves to understand the evil we are committed to prevent.

The church needs to be a place of safety for all to come and learn and grow in their faith. And by partnering

with us through completing these Child Protection steps, you become a vital part of what is making our church safe. So, thank you! I know so many of you have already completed your first Child Protection Certification or begun your Recertification Process (which will occur every 3 years). By keeping your personal Child Protection status up to date, you are not only doing all you can to personally be trained and equipped for abuse prevention, but you are also showing our church families that you are on their team! Each child at Dawson is worth our time and effort when it comes to being fully trained and certified.

If you have further questions about our Child Protection policies or procedures, please let us know.

Contact Liz Cuenin
Minister of Outreach
and Assimilation at
lcuenin@dawsonchurch.org
or 205.871.7324.

CONGRATS 2023 SENIORS



Rana Abawi



Thomas Bailey



Maddie Bemby



Andrew Bevill



Adele Brandrup



Parker Burnham



Kyle Coalson



John Crawford



Katie Culbertson



Scarlett Daibes



Linlee Dunn



Mary Britt Garlington



Mary Gray Giardina



Matthew Grissom



Sandy Holmes



Crawford Hurst



Ella Jayne Hyde



Isabelle Jackson



Alex Jones



Kate Kaiser



Allie Kirkpatrick



Charlotte Lee



Sophia Lindsey



Sara Kate Lynch



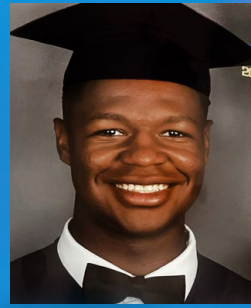
Becca Maddox



Helen Marlin



Laura Matthews



Amar McCaslin



Caleb Mullis



Emily Odom



Livi Cate Osborne



Reid Patterson



Ava Pepper



Elizabeth Rohdy



Maddie Roberts



William Robinett



Jackson Shows



Tanner Smith



Ethan Sparks



Hayden Speigner



Walker Stephenson



Macy Stoffregen



Sam Sutton



Anna Towry



Lotte Wambsganss



Clara Williams



Hannah Wright

NOT PICTURED

Bryce Allphin-Wilson
Michelle Batarseh
Parker Blakeney
Brodyn Cheesman
Julia Claire Crouch
Owen Davis Isenhower
Cannon Delionback
Asher Duncan
Cannon Gaiser
Olivia Garibay
Ella James

Parks Jenkins
Gilder Johnson
Caroline Kopecky
Carolyne Kuria
Nathan Lavender
Jud Lyons
Kadence Moss
Becca Pearson
Abby Roberts
Della Tarn
Anne McKinley Walker
Gracie Walker



STRONG TOWER

By Ben Hale
Evangelism & Missions
Pastor

DAWSON'S NEWEST MISSION PARTNER

The financial faithfulness of Dawson's church family has resulted in the development of multiple ministry partnerships that continue to bear fruit. Nowhere is this more evident than Dawson's newest partnership with Strong Tower Church in the historic Washington Park community of West Montgomery, Alabama.

In 2011, a new multi-cultural congregation, with a strong calling to serve Montgomery's inner-city, began ministering in the under-resourced neighborhood of Washington Park. Under the leadership of pastors Terrence Jones and Alonzo Brown Jr., a new beacon of hope became a reality in the historic Washington Park community.

Washington Park is known as the last resting stop for the Selma to Montgomery Civil Rights March. Rosa Parks lived in this community and many of the local churches during that time served as makeshift bus stations during the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Unfortunately, the community has since fallen on hard times. Its current condition shows no evidence that those historic events ever happened there. Today, 32,000 people live within a three-mile radius of the center of Washington Park. The daily challenges are many. Fifty-seven percent of household incomes are below \$35,000 and twenty-four percent of adults over the age of 25 have no high school diploma.

The broken education system, which began during the desegregation of schools in the 1960s, has left Montgomery with more private schools than public schools. Those with the means to go to private schools do so while those without means are largely left with underperforming public schools. Graduation rates are low and college graduates are few. Hopelessness permeates the air. As a result, drug use, prostitution, and violence have become some of the everyday coping mechanisms. People are either unchurched with no knowledge of the Bible, or have experienced a lot of hurt from their past church experiences.

In response to the physical and spiritual challenges faced by the residents of Washington Park, Strong Tower began launching ministry initiatives. The first was an intense discipleship program, Fisher's Farm, that was created to help men overcome life-dominating issues. Soon after that, Strong Tower multiplied its ministry outreach by training and sending three church planters to establish new churches in other underserved areas of Montgomery. More new ministries continued to develop as Strong Tower launched college ministries at both Alabama State University and Tuskegee University.

In April of 2021, an amazing dream became a reality when Strong Tower Church moved into its permanent home and established a visible witness of the church's commitment to serve the people of Washington Park. The newly renovated community center, formerly known as the "William 'Kid' Franklin Boys and Girls Club" became the church's home, and once again, a beacon of hope for the community. The 14,000 sq. ft. building originally opened in the 1960s as the Capital City Boys Club and served the community until it closed in 2009 when the tenants of Highland Village, the public housing projects that surrounded the center, were forced to vacate their apartments. Strong Tower Church purchased the facility in 2017 and invested \$1 million with plans for their church to minister to the spiritual and physical needs of the people in Washington Park.

Following the renovation and the opening of the community center, Strong Tower found themselves in an unusual position. God's blessing on their efforts in the Washington Park community were evident, but the costs of developing



Pastor Terrence Jones with his wife, Thais Jones, and children, Mataya (14) Sophia (13), Anani (11) Terrence Jr. (10) and Malachi (8).

ongoing ministries were larger than they had anticipated. Here is where Dawson's passion for missions and Strong Tower's visionary ministry found common ground. At the exact same time the need for additional funding was becoming evident to Strong Tower, Dawson's mission team was seeking a ministry partner that was focused on church planting and multi-cultural ministries.

In March of 2023, a multi-year partnership between Dawson and Strong Tower began that will provide financial support for two community ministries, one for kids and one for senior adults. Specifically, those include an after-school program that will provide consistent development educationally, spiritually, and recreationally for the children of Washington Park, and a Senior Citizen Program that will provide Bible Study, physical exercise, fellowship, and life skill training. These resources will begin the process of providing a haven for the youth to enjoy a space where they can simply be children in a safe environment. Both tutoring and Bible learning activities are planned. Senior citizens are largely forgotten in Washington Park. Dawson's partnership funds will be used to hire a part-time director who will organize the program. The program will provide helpful services, a place for fellowship and interaction, and an opportunity to hear the Gospel on a regular basis.

"WE WANT TO BOTH DEMONSTRATE AND PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL WITH COMPASSION."

Pastor Terrence Jones





*THE NAME OF THE LORD IS A FORTIFIED TOWER;
THE RIGHTEOUS RUN TO IT AND ARE SAFE. Proverbs 18:10*

Terrence Jones' calling to plant a church was unlike most. While in seminary, friends from college who were ministering in the historic Washington Park community of Montgomery, asked Terrence and his wife to join them and help expand their ministry. The Jones family began 40 days of prayer and fasting to discern if this was where God wanted them to serve.

The following is Pastor Terrence's account of how the Lord brought him and his family to serve as Lead Pastor at Strong Tower, and their hope for the future:

CALLING

As with most potential church planting opportunities, a vision trip was planned for us to see the community and meet the people. During our week there, I met many wonderful people from this community. I also saw, face-to-face, how difficult life could be in Washington Park. While we were there, someone was murdered on the Friday we arrived and another was murdered on the Sunday we left. Amid those circumstances, we were convinced that God had called us here. On the plane ride back home my wife and I asked each other, "How could we not go back and help bring hope to a hurting place?"

CHALLENGES

The daily challenges are many. Even though there are several churches in the community, many of the members who grew up here have relocated. They simply commute back here for church attendance. Many of the kids have no clue about the story of Christ or know what communion represents. There is also the broken education system. Our graduation rates are low and college graduates are few. This also causes a lot of residents here to live at or below the poverty line.

MINISTRY

There is much work to be done. We now have three nights a week that adult males play basketball. We had one company CEO come to the basketball outreach and offer jobs to young men in our community. Even during Spring Break, we are open for community kids to come in and have a safe place to play basketball. We also have annual dental fairs. We just finished one last week in partnership with Maxwell Air Force Base Dental Office, The Church at Liberty Park in Birmingham, and the North American Missions Board (NAMB). We were able to provide 80 extractions, 19 fillings, 3 cleanings, and 62 x-rays. We saw a total of 65 patients

in three days. The total cost of services rendered was \$27,733. We had one lady to profess Christ from that event. Two households have since attended church with us, and we have a list of all of the patients for follow up within the upcoming weeks. We have also hosted a few real estate seminars, back-to-school giveaways, fall festivals, Vacation Bible Schools, and such. We are trying to use the facility as often as possible to be a blessing to the community. We have had several kids from the community attend church and Wednesday night Bible study as well.

SENIOR ADULTS

Senior adults are largely forgotten in our community. There are some good programs in the city, but they can cost. The only free senior program in our community (that I'm aware of) shut down because the building was in bad shape and the director was leaving town. These resources that Dawson is providing will allow us to hire a part-time director who will help organize the program. Our goal is to provide all of them with helpful services and a place for fellowship and interaction. Our senior citizens deserve and desire that. It will also provide an opportunity for them to hear the Gospel consistently.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The children are the future. With Dawson's partnership, we can now begin the process of providing a safe haven for our youth to enjoy a space where they can simply be children. We hope, as we expand, we will also be able to offer specialized tutoring and more Gospel opportunities. This is the only community center open to all kids in our community, so we are looking forward to building more lasting relationships with the kids and their families.



Associate Pastor Alonzo Brown Jr., with his wife Antoinette, and children, Alaiyah (20), Alonzo Brown III (18), Ayden (16), Adrian (11), Anthony (10), and Miles (4).

A CHANGED LIFE

A few years ago we met a lady during our annual Thanksgiving giveaway. She received Christ through that outreach and continued to be a vital member of our church. She attended prayer meetings, Sunday worship, and our weekly Bible studies faithfully. We were also able to meet some tangible needs for her such as food and help with a couple of housing relocations. Before coming to Strong Tower, she was involved in alternative lifestyles—among many other things. Yet, we personally saw God completely change her life. Unfortunately, she died during COVID, but her funeral was huge. We had the opportunity to witness to several of her family members while she was living and also during her home-going service.

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

We want to be known as a ministry that sees people where they are. We want to both demonstrate and proclaim the Gospel with compassion. We most definitely want to continue our church planting efforts. Having already planted two successful church plants, we will continue to do this at the right times. It reminds us of our need to trust God, and that we are not building our own kingdom, but God's.

We want to have the best community center in the city. We want a thriving senior program from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on weekdays. We want a thriving after school program for youth from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. We also would like to have an 8-week summer camp to keep kids safe and out of trouble in the summertime. We are trusting God for sports leagues as well as for financial literacy courses. As long as the Lord allows, we want to be a Strong Tower where people run towards God and away from the world. We hope all of these things will happen over the next five years. Beyond that, I can even see us starting a Christian School and addressing our food desert issues by providing a grocery store. For now, we are content to be faithful with what we have, and in making the most out of every day and continue to have a Gospel impact in all that we do.

OUR PRAYER NEEDS

These last four years have been the hardest of my life. COVID was hard on all of us. On top of that, my wife and I are now caring for both of my parents and for her mom. My dad was diagnosed with dementia four years ago and it changed everything. Almost

overnight he went from being the one who solved everyone's problems to the one needing the most help. Recently, my mom had two stents put into her heart due to a 70% blockage. We are also caring for a young man with mild autism whose mom died from COVID. He is 16 years old. Not to mention trying to love our own five children well, while tending to the normal ministry needs and concerns of the church. By God's grace we are still here. We are still standing. We feel grateful that the Lord has entrusted us with so much. Please pray for our strength and balance.

Pray also for our pastors and leaders. Pray for Alonzo Brown, our Associate Pastor, and for his family. He and his wife have three biological teenage/young adult kids and adopted three younger boys. Parenting the young adult kids has not been easy. They need wisdom and strength to train all their kids and continue to lead the church. Washington Park is a difficult place for families to live.

And please pray for our church and its ministries. We are asking God to make us bold in our Gospel witness, to bring many souls to Christ. We are asking that He gets all the glory and all the credit. Apart from Him we can do nothing. We want Strong Tower Church to be seen as a blessing from God to the community. So please pray for all these things!

Learn more at strongtowerawp.com.

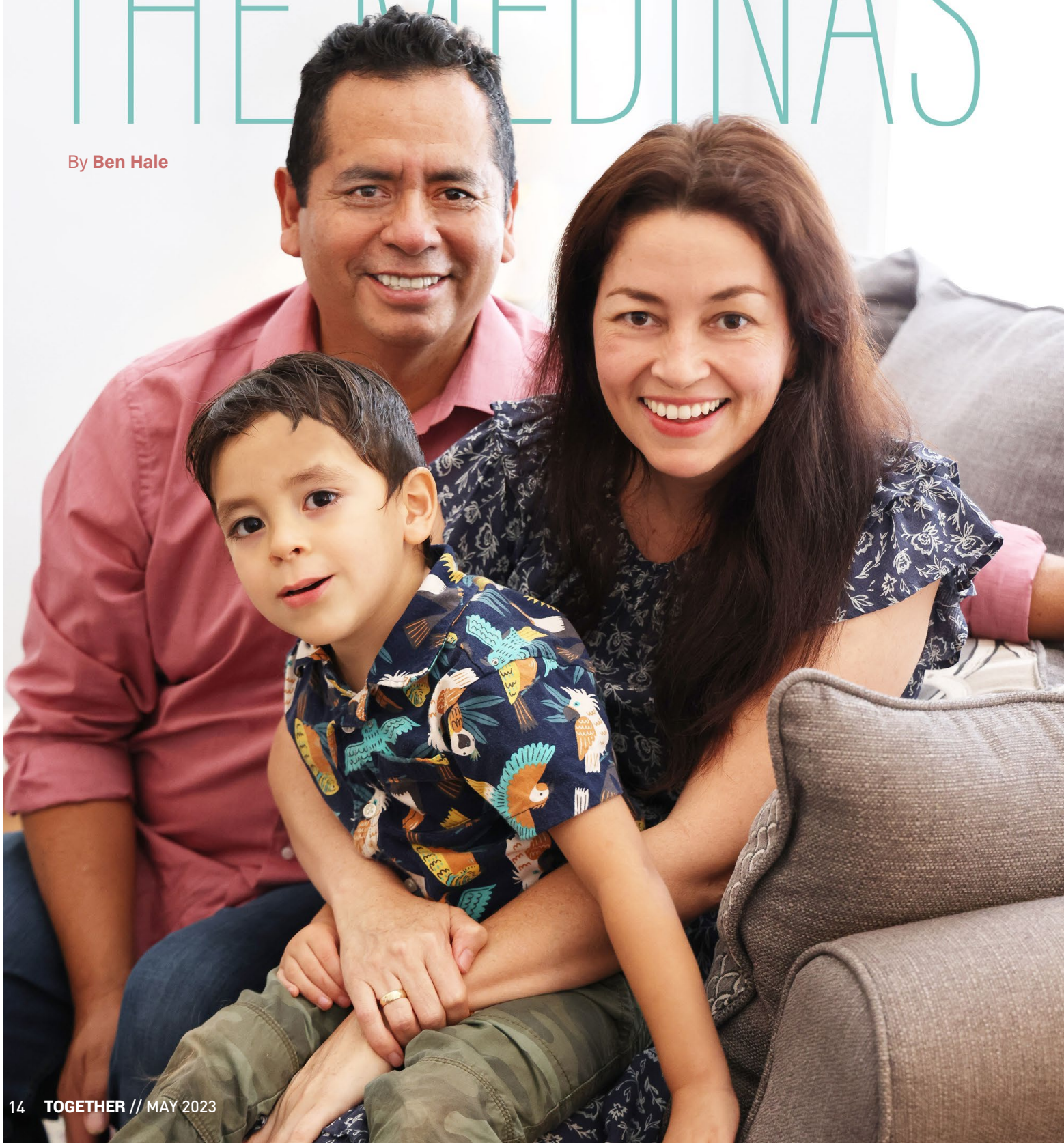


Ben Hale Dawson's Evangelism & Missions Pastor since 2000, has been married to Lindy for 36 years. They are parents to three adult children and grandparents to three grandchildren. Ben is passionate about providing people opportunities to serve beyond the walls of our church buildings.



A PLACE CALLED HOME FOR THE MEDINAS

By Ben Hale



Do you remember how you felt the last time you and your family boxed up everything you owned and loaded it into a moving van? Few things in life are more stressful than moving, especially when it involves moving to a new city to start a new job and you don't know anyone. The Medina family, Humberto, Anjelica, and Daniel, did this just a few months ago when they left their home in Louisiana and moved to Birmingham to begin Dawson's Hispanic Church Planting residency. Now, just 10 months later, they are doing it again. When Humberto arrived last August to become Dawson's first Hispanic Church Planting Resident, he knew his stay with Dawson would be brief and that as soon as he arrived, he would begin preparing to plant Iglesia Bautista Familia de Fe (Family of Faith Baptist Church) in Huntsville.

In 2020, Dawson's Mission team made the decision that the planting of Hispanic churches in Alabama would be its next major effort. The primary factor that played a part in this decision were the success of Dawson's two Hispanic congregations. Under the leadership of Pastors Bayron Mosquera and Joshua del Risco, these churches have grown into mature ministry-minded congregations. The goal was to multiply these two success stories across Alabama in order to reach Alabama's growing Hispanic population. To get things started, a Church Planting Residency Program was created to train church planters. Huntsville, Alabama's largest city, was selected as the site for the first church plant. An estimated 15,000 Hispanic people now live in Madison County, and the number of evangelical churches is very small.

Now, as the Medinas are preparing to move, things are beginning to happen in Huntsville that indicate doors are opening. University Baptist Church, which is located near the center of Huntsville's Hispanic population, has opened its doors to use as the location for initial worship services and for the new church's office space. Additionally, several local church pastors have expressed support for the effort and initial contacts with local Hispanic people have been made.

The effort to plant a Hispanic church in Huntsville will enter a new phase when the Medinas relocate at the end of May. Dawson's financial support will continue, but the need for our encouragement and prayer support will grow. Now is the time for all Dawson members to begin praying for the Medinas. As you pray for them, please consider praying for:

- **A place to call home.** Pray that the Medinas will find a house that will meet their needs as a family and serve as a significant tool in their church planting effort.

Now is the time
for all Dawson
members to
begin praying
for the Medinas.

- **Expansion of the vision.** People in a growing community like Huntsville are aware that their community is changing, but oftentimes they fail to see God's hand working in those changes. Pray that the new friends the Medinas make will view the growing Hispanic population as an opportunity to reach the nations with the Gospel. God has brought the nations to our doorstep. The United States is now the second largest Spanish speaking country in the world!

- **Gospel conversations.** Pray for the spiritual growth and maturity of the new believers that will be a part of the Iglesia Bautista Familia de Fe. Hispanic churches are often planted with new believers rather than members from other churches.

- **Mission teams.** Once the Medinas have settled into their new home and small groups are started, short-term mission teams from Dawson's Hispanic congregations will go and help launch the church's first public worship service. Pray for the block parties, cookouts, soccer games, and canvassing efforts that will penetrate the community.

▪ **Additional new Hispanic churches.**

The Iglesia Bautista Familia de Fe church plant is the first that will come out of Dawson's Residency Program. A second church plant will start in Alabaster thanks to Westwood Baptist Church's initiative and vision. Dawson is currently searching for our next two Church Planting Residents. We are exploring church partnerships in Albertville, Athens, and Shelby County, which may become the

locations of additional church plants.

Moving to a new city two times within one year would be tough for any family, but the Medinas are confident that they are in God's will. They know that God has called them to step out in faith, and that He will give them the endurance needed to make this next move to further His kingdom.

To God be the glory! Amen.



**Iglesia Bautista
Familia de Fe**
809 Jordan Lane
Huntsville, AL 35816
hmedina@dawsonchurch.org

Caring in KENYA



IN MARCH, DAWSON SENT FOUR VOLUNTEERS TO NAIROBI, KENYA, TO HELP WITH A HOMESCHOOL CONFERENCE FOR IMB MISSIONARIES. BELINDA STROUD, BROOKE GIBSON, JESSICA ORSO, AND LIZ CUENIN SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES IN THEIR OWN WORDS.



Because our flights were so lengthy (16 total hours to get there), our team decided to fly into Kenya early and use some vacation time for a Safari at Maasai Mara. Our time on safari was a helpful and refreshing way to let our bodies catch up on sleep and adjust to the new, slower African pace. The Brakenhurst Retreat and Conference Center, where we served for the week, appears like an oasis in the midst of dusty Kenya. Sitting high above Nairobi at an elevation of 6,500 ft., and surrounded by green tea fields, the whole retreat center feels like a garden paradise. Originally built in 1914 by an Englishman with the aspiration of being a coffee farmer, Brackenhurst quickly became known as a retreat center for battle-worn soldiers after World War I. In the mid 1960s, the Baptist Mission of Kenya purchased Brackenhurst with the intent of using it for conferences, team building, and mission group

gatherings. Since this was a homeschool conference for those on the field in Africa and the Middle East, the majority of the attendees were moms (or whoever was the primary homeschool parent) and all of their school-aged children. We were joined by a large team of senior adults from Texas and a group from Florida. Everyone arrived with teaching supplies for the kids and tons of "American goodies" (like taco seasoning, candy, and flavored drink mixes) for the families.

Professional educators came from around the world to help put on this conference for the parents, including Candi Williams (whom Dawson commissioned to the mission field along with her husband, Ben, many years ago). One of the goals for the week was to have all the kids in grades 3-8 complete their grade level standardized tests. These testing results were helpful in letting the parents know if the curriculum they have been using was working well for their children. Speech Therapists and Children's Counselors were also available to meet one-on-one with students as needed.

[Due to the sensitive nature of the locations of some of the missionaries in the field, pictures of the conference are limited.]

Our days were full as we kept the kids from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. while the parents were in their conference sessions. We all enjoyed the moments of connection with these precious kids and the chance to get to know their moms. On Wednesday, everyone had the day off to rest or explore Nairobi. Most of the families chose to spend the day touring the local Nairobi boarding school. Since there are very few quality school options in the countries where these families serve, this boarding school is a potential option for families who need their teenagers to receive a more traditional school education.



We were struck by the bravery of these parents as they wrestled with the thought of sending their 14- or 16-year-old off to a school possibly located multiple countries away from home. That day, the four of us were able to visit an elephant orphanage where we learned about the efforts made to save abandoned baby elephants in Kenya. One of my favorite things was getting to feed (and hug!) the giraffes at the Nairobi Giraffe Centre.

A highlight of the week was the Tuesday and Thursday night Talent Shows. I was randomly selected to help put this together, and I really enjoyed getting to cheer for the excited kids who performed. We had multiple piano, guitar, and ukulele players, group dance numbers, monologues, a magician, and an extreme unicyclist! Since these kids are spending their formative years in far-off places, they really enjoyed having an outlet to perform and show their talents.

Our time in Kenya was truly a sweet one. I walked away humbled by the sacrifice these families are making to forego the comfort and convenience of a typical American life for the sake of reaching the nations with the Gospel. What a privilege it was to play a small role in the lives of these kids and their parents on such a fun and memorable week. I was reminded of the Apostle John's urging at the end of the book of 3 John that says, "Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth." I pray we, as Dawson members, can continue to be a church who supports and encourages these "workers of the truth" living out the Great Commission on the mission field.

Belinda

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" (Isaiah 6:8). I was perhaps a bit too eager to "go" to East Africa, assuming I would have an easy week doing what I was familiar with and comfortable doing, which was teaching children. But God had a different plan, like He so often does. Our high school teaching team consisted of myself and four men from churches in Florida and Texas. We were given the assignment to teach about the continent of North America to 15 high school students. Looking at it on paper, we were quite an unusual team, but as our week progressed it was obvious the Lord had purposefully placed each one of us there for a specific reason.

As we met the members of our class, it struck me as how ordinary they all seemed, much like any group of teens back home. That first day was like the first day of school that we all remember so well: looking for a familiar face or finding a new friend. One young man entered the room and introduced himself to everyone, completely comfortable with meeting new people, while a reserved young lady was hesitant and anxious. By the end of the week, we were all like old friends. Each placed there for a specific purpose, all in God's plan. Lessons were taught, God's Word was studied, games were played, friendships made, and a great deal of fun was had by all of us. I quickly realized these students were not so "ordinary" as I originally thought. In fact, they are doing quite extraordinary things as they participate in their parents' call to share the Gospel.

Before our trip, we were asked to bring some items that are unavailable where these missionaries serve. Our Dawson Professionals Life Group jumped right in and helped with this request. Their generosity overwhelmed me. We filled an entire suitcase full of things like cupcake sprinkles, taco seasonings, gatorade mix, and baking supplies. What a wonderful surprise it was to receive a text on Easter morning from a mother of one of the high school girls thanking us for the supplies. She had even included a picture of the cake pops that they had made with the items given them. A simple thing that we often take for granted was a special treat for them.

Throughout the week, I saw these high school students enjoy spending time with others their same age while really participating in learning. They came each day with a positive spirit and were so encouraging to one another and to us leaders. Life as a missionary child is not always an easy road and isn't without struggles, but these students have embraced the call. It was a real blessing to see how God is also using them on the mission field in addition to their parents.



Brooke

Having grown up at Dawson, I'm thankful for a lifetime of missions education and opportunities. I know how Dawson faithfully supports IMB missionaries through our offerings and have prayed for countless servants by name. But this week in Kenya gave me a front row seat to the personal stories and sacrifices of these missionaries and their families. The Brackenhurst staff served us breakfast, lunch, dinner, and tea two times each day. We looked forward to these meals, not just for physical nourishment, but for opportunities to spend time with the missionary families. Our team was humbled and inspired to hear how God called each of them to the mission field. I was surprised by how many were well-rooted in secular careers and enjoying access to extended family when God led both husband and wife to answer the call. They gave up their comforts to learn new languages, leave their homes and families, and move to relatively remote areas of Africa. They asked us to pray for them as they make additional difficult decisions about what is best for their children's spiritual and emotional well-being including their educational paths. I was amazed at their faith in God's sovereignty and their sense of peace about these major life choices.

The conference met the goals of equipping parents for the practicalities of homeschooling and administering standardized tests, but more than that, it gave these parents (mostly moms) a chance for some much needed times of worship and for conversations in their own language with other women with similar challenges and experiences. We saw reunions of families who already knew each other as well as new connections and relationships being built. It was a gift to watch the transformation over the week of each mom who, for the first time in a long time, felt less isolated, experienced community, and was spiritually refreshed.

Liz and I served with the babies, ages 6 months–15 months old, and it was such a joy! Our time in “the baby house” included many walks with strollers around the beautiful Brackenhurst campus, baby-friendly Bible lessons and praise songs, fun with toys, and prayers for these precious children living halfway around the world. Thanks to the generosity of Dawson and other churches, we were able to send home diapers, supplies, and all the toys we used that week with the babies. Their parents were so grateful.

I loved having the opportunity to serve and encourage these women who faithfully share the Gospel on the front lines, but I was unprepared for the magnitude of their appreciation. At pick up time on the first day, one mom started crying and said, “I cannot believe that you came all this way just to keep our babies. Thank you.” Another mom gave us a kind, 3-page hand-written note that included these lines, “We know how crossing the ocean and stepping outside of norms and comfort zones is no small feat! And we often reflect as a family we are so filled with heartfelt gratitude at the sacrificial love that U.S. teams, like you dear ladies, poured out on our family. We have a family motto that says that if we are asked to suffer for His sake, we ask for His strength to suffer well for the advancement of His glory. I am also praying over all of you this week that you too would suffer well while asking for His strength to give Him all the glory. For as His beloved Word says, in our weakness He truly is strong.”

As is often true of mission experiences, while I pray that my efforts brought glory to God and encouragement to His people, I am confident that I gained more than I gave. It was good for my soul to take a pause from my regular routine, be immersed in God's amazing creation in Kenya, and gain inspiration from these women who have left everything behind to serve God in the far corners of the earth.

Jessica

All week I tried to take the best mental pictures of the missionary families we were there to serve. Officially, my group of kids were kindergartners through the 2nd grade. We had 23 kiddos with us learning about animals, geography, reading books, and doing crafts. This group of kids had a large range of friends. We had the tiniest kindergartner who couldn't yet write his name, but played hard to keep up with the bigger kids. (He fell fast asleep in his chair one afternoon while we were wrapping up.) There was a first grade boy who was taller than all the other kids and would rather write lists on a pad of paper than do anything arts or crafts related. We had 2nd grade girls who wrote their name in cursive and wanted all of their art to be in the same color palette as their neighbor's. We even had 3rd and 4th grade kiddos who would come and visit us because they didn't participate in standardized testing, so we gave them jobs as "co-teachers" and helpers.

Of all the things for the kids to do, their favorite part was playing outside. They never needed a game idea. Each one of them had just become best friends with each other and they were just so thrilled to play together. Some of the kids opened a pretend outdoor restaurant, others ran around with balls or balloons, while still others climbed trees. It was wonderful. What a joy it was to be in the presence of their tiny world of unbridled play amongst new friends from all over the continent.

However, when they weren't playing outside, they were the most joyful during our music and worship, time which easily flowed into dance party situations. I loved watching these missionary kids singing, "From the Rising of the Sun" the same sweet way that the preschoolers at Dawson do. I found a precious 1st grade boy from the other side of the world who knew all the words to the "Books of the Bible rap" that we adore listening to in Dawson Kids. What an absolute privilege it was to worship with these kids who are literally the tiniest hands and feet of Jesus in Africa.



If you have never experienced an African Safari, it is hard to put into words. The Maasai Mara is a large national reserve of savanna wilderness in southwest Kenya that continues into Tanzania. The Maasai people are one of the few remaining tribes in Kenya who have retained their traditional way of life. They are semi-nomadic cattle herders who still dress in their distinct, traditional plaid blankets and carry around spears. Our safari basecamp lodgings consisted of large canvas tents complete with beds, running hot water, and electricity. Monkeys could be heard outside of our tents all night long (and would help themselves to toast off our tables at breakfast!). After dark, to protect us from any unwanted visits from monkeys (or other larger animals), we had to be escorted by a Maasai warrior anytime we left our tents.

Each day of our safari, we explored the Maasai Mara with our game driver, Meta. He was an expert at knowing the best times and places to look for elephants, giraffes, zebras, and lions. We were amazed at how many animals we were able to see! Did you know that female elephants live together in herds to raise their young? When we would come upon a lone elephant, Meta would always say, "There's the loser," to let us know we had found a male elephant.

Each morning we were able to drink our coffee while watching a "parade" of animals walk to a nearby watering hole. We were stunned as we saw two female lions stalk antelope. We laughed at baby elephants who did not know how to control their trunks, and we marveled at how well cheetahs were camouflaged among the high grass. The best was anytime the words on the other end of our driver's walkie-talkie sped up. Meta would then take off to make sure we did not miss something great. As we traveled back to Nairobi after this three-day adventure and arrived at the Conference Center where we would be serving, we felt ready to embrace the week ahead.

Jonathan Proff

meet



My Call To Follow Christ

By **Jonathan Propes** | Discipleship Pastor

On a cold, snowy day many years ago, I came into this world three months before my due date weighing a few ounces over two pounds, the hospital staff at a rural county hospital put me in the back of an ambulance and sent me to Vanderbilt University Hospital. It is not uncommon to hear about premature babies today, but five decades ago, this was unusual. The doctors and nurses at Vanderbilt took great care of me, and my mom made the decision to move from her hometown in South Central Kentucky to East Nashville.

During this time, my biological father left. He did not want anything to do with raising a premature baby, a large pile of hospital bills, or living in a new community. Because of this, I found myself searching for someone to be a father figure for me. I was involved in numerous sports during my childhood and preteen years, and my coaches temporarily filled this role in my life.

While I enjoyed playing sports and spending time with my coaches, I was still looking for something more meaningful.

My grandparents stepped up and filled a giant void in my life. My mom needed to work extra hours to provide for me so I spent the summers in Kentucky with my grandparents. They took me to their church every time the doors were open. At the age of 12, I heard the life-changing good news of the Gospel during the last night of a revival. During the invitation, I walked forward, repented of my sins and trusted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. Because the church that my grandparents attended was small, there was not a baptistry, so I was baptized on a cold Sunday in October at the city lake.

My grandparents began to teach me the elementary things of the faith. I learned how to read the Bible and pray. They answered so many questions that were foundational to my new life in Christ and modeled for me the disciple's life. A few months later, a significant event took place in my life.

I walked over to a neighbor's house with several friends for a birthday party. As I was entering the fenced backyard, I was attacked by a pitbull.

Over the course of several minutes, I can vividly remember thinking I was going to die. As a result of divine providence, the owner of the dog had taken his first day off from work in over two years to paint some interior walls at the house, and he was able to remove the dog from me after she had attacked me twice. If the owner had not been home that day, death was almost certain. Through that traumatic event, I knew that God had a purpose and plan for me. For the first time in my life I also experienced the peace of God that if I had died during the dog attack, I would spend eternity with God in Heaven.

Growing up in a single parent home presented several challenges, but as I look back to those days, I am confident that God placed specific people in my life at strategic times to provide me with knowledge, guidance, and wisdom on how to live out the Christian life. During high school, I participated in a Bible study before school began sponsored by the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. The school sponsors began to see in me something that I could not see for myself. They encouraged me to continue to discover how God had gifted me to encourage, lead, and instruct others, while providing me with opportunities to use my gifts for the glory of God.



Jonathan at 10 years old.

My Call to Ministry

At the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, I was introduced to an international organization called the Navigators. The ministry began in the 1930s, when a young California lumberyard worker caught a vision. After seeing the benefits of basic discipleship principles in his own life, Dawson Trotman wanted to teach them to others, echoing the call of *2 Timothy 2:2: And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.*

During my first semester, I met Paul Slay who was leading the collegiate ministry. He invited me to meet with him every Wednesday so that I could learn more about what it meant to be a disciple. He taught me how to read, interpret, and apply the Bible, how to pray, to memorize Scripture, and how to build meaningful relationships with others. He would allow me to tag along when he met with other students who were far from Christ. I watched as he would share the Gospel and invite others to pray to receive Christ.

During my junior year, Paul invited me to spend a summer working at Eagle Lake Camp in Colorado Springs, Colorado. College students from all across the nation converged on Eagle Lake for a summer of serving others. It was so encouraging to see other college students who wanted to grow in their faith. Each Sunday, the camp staff would have the opportunity to participate in chapel and learn from some of the NavPress authors. One Sunday, author Jerry Bridges shared a message with the camp staff and challenged us to discover God's will. Later that day, as I was spending time in God's Word and prayer, I sensed that God was calling me to serve Him.

When I returned home from camp, I met with my pastor, Dr. Glenn Weekley, to share with him what God was doing in my life. During this meeting, he guided me to think through my call to ministry. My dilemma was centered around whether to go to seminary and serve the local church or to stay at the University of Tennessee for two years and serve with the Navigators.

After much prayer and counsel, Brother Glenn encouraged me to come forward during the invitation time and share my call to ministry with the church. Through this experience, God made it clear that I was to serve Him through the local church. He provided me with a passion and desire to help others know what it means to follow and obey Christ and His Great Commission.

My Call to Make Disciples

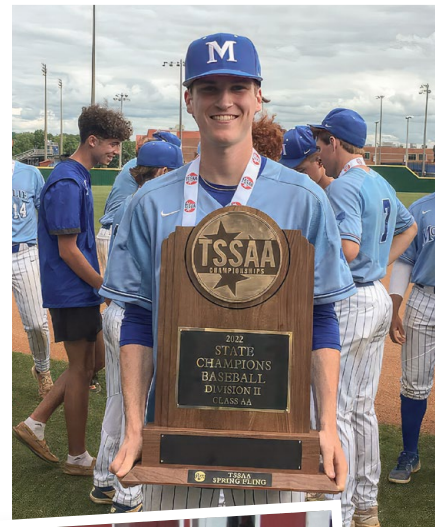
In order to prepare to serve the local church, I decided to attend the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. During my first semester, I connected with Ninth and O Baptist Church. Ninth and O was a special place because it afforded me an opportunity to serve while taking classes. My pastor took me under his wing and taught me how to conduct weddings and funerals, make hospital visits, and serve the body of Christ. Ninth and O was also a special place because I met Elaine while attending the single adult ministry. Elaine came to Louisville to start her career in the long-term health care industry. She had recently graduated with her undergraduate and graduate degrees in healthcare management. We began dating and were married after I completed my degree at Southern.

After our wedding, we continued to serve the church until God called us to move to Illinois to serve Tabernacle Baptist Church. By this time, God increased my passion for discipleship. It was exciting to see believers growing in their faith through the different ministries of the church. While serving in Illinois, we were blessed with our first child, Mary Beth, in 2002.

In 2005, while serving Little Flock Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky, we were blessed with our second child, Benjamin. At Little Flock, I had the opportunity to succeed one of my mentors, Ken Lupton. Ken was one of the first discipleship pastors I met at the local church expo at Southern Seminary, and we have been friends ever since.

For the past 15 years, God has been gracious to our family by allowing us to call Chattanooga home. During this time, we made so many family memories in the beautiful scenic city. We were able to serve and worship with Red Bank Baptist Church. I was also able to serve Lifeway Christian Resources as a church partner, acting as the face of Lifeway to the local church. In this role, I was able to assist churches in their desire to make disciples who make disciples.

It is amazing how quickly time passes. Mary Beth is currently in her third year of studies at Union University in Jackson, TN. She is a double major in Psychology and Criminal



Clockwise from top left: Mary Beth, Ben, Jonathan and Elaine at Easter, Jonathan and Ben playing disk golf; State Champ Ben; Jonathan and his grandfather J.C. Carlock; Mary Beth ready for college; Ben, Mary Beth, and Jonathan's mom, Pam Propes.

Elaine and I are excited to start a new chapter of ministry following God's call to make disciples with the wonderful people at Dawson.

Justice with a minor in French. Ben is looking forward to graduating high school and heading to Asbury University in Wilmore, Kentucky, to play baseball this fall. We enjoy spending time together as a family. I love playing golf and disc golf with Ben even though he wins every time we play. Mountain biking continues to be one of my favorite past times, dating back to my days in Colorado Springs. Elaine enjoys reading and spending time outside working in the yard, planting flowers and making our house a home.

As we prepare to be empty-nesters, Elaine and I are excited to start a new chapter of ministry following God's call to make disciples with the wonderful people at Dawson. During my time at Lifeway, I was able to learn so much from other church leaders. I gained insight on strategic ways to develop people and accomplish the Great Commission. I had shared with Elaine my desire to take the knowledge gained from consulting with hundreds of churches over the course of almost seven years and pour my life back into one local church. God provided the

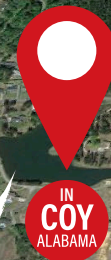
desires of my heart by allowing me the privilege of serving at Dawson.

As I begin my role as Discipleship Pastor, my prayer for you is the same as the one given by the Apostle Paul in *Colossians 1:9-11*: *And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.*



Jonathan Propes was born in Kentucky and grew up in Tennessee. He holds a Master of Divinity from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and has previously served churches in Kentucky, Illinois, and Tennessee. He is married to Elaine and has two children, Mary Beth and Ben.

The Soil is (still) Fertile



By Tracy Hanrahan

STRETCHING FROM BORDER TO BORDER ACROSS THE STATE LIES A SWATH OF DARK, RICH, FERTILE SOIL KNOWN HISTORICALLY AS THE BLACK BELT OF ALABAMA.

Different criteria leads to different totals, but somewhere between 12 and 21 central Alabama counties make up the Black Belt. During the early 1800s, farmers took advantage of the land's suitability for growing cotton and set up a network of plantations across the area. Identified today as "Alabama's poorest region," the counties that are located in the Black Belt area are many of the counties with the highest poverty rates in the state.

THE HARVEST IS GREAT

Lifelong Dawson member David Bivin first took an interest in the Black Belt region after reading a Birmingham News series on Alabama's Black Belt in 2002. Desiring to make a difference in this area, David and his wife, Denise, volunteered to lead Dawson's outreach efforts. Along with their children, Jake and Carley, David and Denise were able to partner with leaders in the Wilcox County community of Coy to provide school supplies, a clothing ministry, financial support, and most importantly, friendship, prayers, and

Christian fellowship. Over the years, numerous Dawson volunteers have been able to be a part of this wonderful ministry in a variety of ways.

One of Dawson's key ministry partners in the Black Belt region is the Reverend Dr. Stanford Angion. Dr. Angion was born and reared in Coy. He left his hometown long enough to attain numerous academic degrees and serve 13 years in the United States Army before accepting a call into the gospel ministry. In July 2003, Dr. Angion was installed as pastor of his childhood church, Mt. Gilead Missionary Baptist Church, where he continues to serve today as its Senior Pastor. In addition to his pastorate, he serves as President of Selma University, which has many duties of its own.

Clearly committed to the betterment of the Black Belt region, Pastor Angion sees his work as planting seeds—particularly in the lives of young people. He believes encouraging young people to build a strong foundation on Christ is the key to their future.

GROW YOUR OWN

When Pastor Angion returned to Mt. Gilead as Senior Pastor, he had childhood memories of a vibrant music ministry with a wonderful choir and many singers and instrumentalists, most of whom were from the same family. That particular family moved

away from Coy, leaving the community without a regular church musician. Pastor Angion searched diligently within a 75-mile radius of his small hometown in hopes of finding a dedicated musician to lead the musical elements of worship at Mt. Gilead. After several unsuccessful years of looking for a regular, reliable musician, someone suggested to "grow your own."

Pastor Angion began doing just that, starting first with his own young daughters, Ivana and Kendra. He enlisted the help of Walter Roper, a student at Concordia College and a dedicated musician who loved teaching piano. "In the fall of 2009, Walter began teaching my daughters basic piano lessons, and before long they had learned to play congregational songs," Angion said.

The "grow your own" concept itself began to grow in the summer of 2010. Pastor Angion invited Mr. Roper and other musicians to conduct a three-day workshop to introduce additional Mt. Gilead youth to music lessons. The workshop was well-attended and sparked continuing interest from members of Mt. Gilead and other churches in the Coy community. In 2011, the workshop expanded to include even more participants, and it was clear to Pastor Angion that God was blessing the idea and meeting important needs in his part of the Black Belt.

Dawson members joined Mt. Gilead members and other Black Belt partners to present a full two-week arts and academic camp in the summer of 2012. The curriculum expanded to include not only a variety of performing arts classes, but also academic instruction. By the fall of 2012, the idea born in the heart of a hometown pastor had grown into a year-round ministry to the Coy community and officially incorporated as Mt. Gilead Scholastic and Artistic Institute, known locally as MGS&A. Its programming has continued ever since, even maintaining consistency of lessons during the difficult years of COVID-related challenges.

CELEBRATING GOOD FRUIT

The fertile soil of the Black Belt is producing a rich harvest today of eternal significance, thanks to the steadfast love of God and the faithful service of God's people. Dr. Angion's "grow your own" experiment continues to reap benefits in the lives of MGS&A students and the greater Christian church community. Here is one of many testimonies from participants in the MGS&A programs:

"MGS&A had a great impact on my life when I was in elementary school. Now I am a high school graduate playing and teaching percussion. I started playing through a teacher at MGS&A Summer Camp."

—Antwuann James
Church Percussionist & MGS&A Instructor

Pastor Angion regularly expresses gratitude for the faithful support that the Dawson Family of Faith offers to the ministry efforts of MGS&A. Recent gifts from Dawson have provided school supplies and bookbags for community students, instruments for use during performing arts lessons, updated computers and tutoring programs, and assistance with the church's internet service. Mt. Gilead will be hosting a community-wide choir festival this spring thanks in part to financial support from Dawson.

While financial support is certainly helpful and greatly appreciated, Pastor Angion recognizes an even more personal gift in the partnership between Mt. Gilead and Dawson. "Our children don't have the opportunity to work in diverse environments," said Angion. "The Coy community is predominantly black—which is not bad—but it's good for the students to have exposure to different people who genuinely want to be here. People who look like those they'll go to college with or work with in the future. We're able to have a part in helping diversify their life experiences and share the love and unity of Christ in that diversity. I think that's awesome."

Dawson's ministry partnerships in the Black Belt have been established for many years, and God is growing the seeds of faithfulness in ways that no one could have ever foreseen. The Church has been strengthened through the training of musicians and the academic support of students whose efforts would otherwise be under-served. The meeting of physical and financial needs has led to mutual relationships of love and respect and opportunities to worship the one true God in the unity of diversity through the Lord Jesus Christ and in His Spirit. As Dawson continues to labor together with Mt. Gilead and others in the Black Belt for the sake of the Gospel, may God remind us regularly of the truth of his Word:

There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all . . . Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

[Ephesians 4:4–6, 3:20–21 ESV]

Since its inception in 2012, **Mt. Gilead Scholastic & Artistic Institute's** mission, vision, and partners have remained firm. The programming has expanded to include four main components:

Performing Arts Academy

The Performing Arts Academy provides instruction in piano, guitar, drums, and choir. Students play in worship regularly even as they continue to learn to play their instruments. Four of the five MGS&A instructors received their musical training through the Institute.

In-Stride Mentoring

The In-Stride Mentoring Program pairs each participant with a mentor who meets the Institute's qualifications. The mentor/mentee relationship continues throughout high school and college, into adulthood.

On-Track Learning

On-Track Learning is a tutorial program designed to help elementary through high school students stay on track with grade-level academic work. Students are provided access to computers and internet services, which make a wealth of tutorial information and instructional classes available.

Summer Camp

MGS&A Summer Camp is a two-week program hosted each July at Mt. Gilead Baptist Church for pre-K through 12th grade students. Camp goals are to improve students' basic academic skills, expose them to different kinds of performing arts and social skills, and teach various biblical techniques for dealing with ethical dilemmas.

Now in its 12th year, Mt. Gilead Scholastic and Artistic Institute regularly serves about 30 students year-round. It hires graduates of the program to train the next generation of musicians and worship leaders who love the Lord and are well-rounded academically and artistically.



Tracy Hanrahan is Program Manager of the Center for Worship and the Arts at Samford University. She and her husband, Tom, joined Dawson in 1994. Tracy has served as a KidLife curriculum creator, Preschool and Children's Choirs Coordinator, Dawson Music Academy instructor, DMA summer camp worship coordinator, and various other roles within the Music and Worship ministry. She is a student at Beeson Divinity School.



WORSHIPPING AS ONE

By Dr. Bob Terry

Nervous energy seemed to fill the buses that Sunday morning. More than 70 members of Dawson's Sanctuary Choir were on their way to Iglesia Bautista Vida Nueva (New Life Baptist Church) in Fultondale to help lead the morning worship service and enjoy a fellowship meal with members of the host Hispanic church.

New Life Church was no stranger to the choir members. Many had been present in February 2017 when a group from Dawson's Hispanic Church, led by Pastor Bayron Mosquera, was commissioned to start a new church in Birmingham's Fultondale area. Since 2011, a group from Pastor Bayron's congregation had worked largely with Hispanic people in a mobile home park where North Jefferson Baptist Association had a ministry center. Leaders had identified that between 6,000–7,000 Hispanic people lived in the area and believed God was leading them to start a church there.

In September of that year, the new church held its first service, and a few months later, Dr. Josué (Joshua) del Risco was called as pastor. He had previously served with the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention and with the Baptist General Convention of Texas in Hispanic work.

Helping lead worship is the primary role of Dawson's Sanctuary Choir. The choir has led worship in churches across the United States and in several nations. But this

time the choir was to lead worship in Spanish. Even familiar hymns sound different when sung in other than one's native tongue. Rhythms can be slightly different. Variations in pronunciations and emphases of syllables exist. Singing in a second language can be challenging.

For six weeks, choir members practiced the congregational songs to be used in the service and the special music the choir would offer in worship. Spanish speakers helped choir members improve their pronunciation until the songs were memorized and pronunciations refined.

Still, nervous energy poured out as choir members joked about the challenges of singing in a second language and asked last minute questions about the day's music. Some practiced phrases they might need during the fellowship meal as they interacted with members of the New Life Church—phrases like “Mi nombre es _____” (My name is _____) or “La comida estaba deliciosa” (The food was delicious).

Alabama accents produced an array of pronunciations. Whatever initial unease choir members may have felt seemed to melt away when John Woods, Dawson's Music & Worship Pastor, encouraged us to introduce ourselves to New Life members and to get to know something about the people with





whom we would soon be worshipping with that day. So, we spread throughout the auditorium and into the hallways taking the initiative to introduce ourselves. Many of us tried to use "Mi nombre es" or something very similar to begin.

But most conversations quickly resorted to English. When the service began, choir members were no longer strangers, but fellow believers gathered to worship God. They sang with strong, enthusiastic voices.

Afterwards, some members of New Life Church expressed surprise the choir had sung in Spanish. Around tables during the fellowship lunch, more than one asked if choir members spoke Spanish. One even said he watched the lips of singers to see that they really were singing in his mother tongue.

During the meal, Dawson choir members mingled with many New Life members. A buffet line offered a variety of salads and desserts. Homemade entrées were served plated. Conversations were warm as participants continued to learn more about one another and express appreciation for the worship service they shared.

Before the meal was over, some Dawson members who had lived in South America and spoke Spanish found their way into the church kitchen to visit with the ladies responsible for the fellowship meal. Pastor Joshua noted this was the first time the Dawson choir had participated in worship at New Life Church. He said the experience had encouraged members and promoted fellowship between the two groups. Going forward, he said, he hoped more opportunities will be found for interaction between the Dawson groups and the New Life congregation.

John called the time of worship and fellowship a "gift." "We left full in so many ways," he said. "What we wanted to say, but sometimes didn't have the words, was that we are so very thankful for the New Life

congregation. Their hospitality showed us Christ's welcome for all. We continue to pray for them as they share with their community," Woods added that the experience had provided "a bigger, more accurate view of the kingdom of God."

Today, Dawson continues to undergird the work of New Life Church. Pastor Joshua is part of Dawson's Mission Team led by Ben Hale, our Evangelism & Missions Pastor. He also directs Dawson's Hispanic Church Planting Residency Program, which is a part of Dawson's Go Love Tell ministry. Participants train under Pastor Joshua's mentorship for 12 to 18 months before leaving to plant a Hispanic church in North Alabama. Pastor Joshua shared that candidates are currently being reviewed for the next class in Dawson's Hispanic Church Planting Residency Program.

New Life Church meets at Fultondale's First Baptist Church (FFBC). The home congregation meets for Bible Study at 9:15 a.m. and worship at 10:30 a.m. New Life then meets for Bible Study at 10:30 a.m. and worship at 12:00 noon. A spokesperson for the church said that the arrangement works well and that there are no conflicts about schedules or use of facilities on Sunday or during the week because the churches have partnered together to reach the Fultondale community for Christ.

The partnership appears to be working. New Life now averages about 125 in attendance with a full program of Bible Study, Vacation Bible School, and several local mission outreach activities. FFBC's willingness to work with New Life is drawing people as well. One couple said they chose FFBC because they wanted to be a part of a church that was reaching out to everyone in their community.

**WE
LEFT FULL
IN MANY
WAYS.**



Dr. Bob Terry is Editor Emeritus of The Alabama Baptist newspaper, a ministry he led for more than 23 years. Together with his wife Pat, he is active in Dawson's music ministry. Both Bob and Pat work with Baptists around the world through Baptist World Alliance.

DAWSON CHURCH TROOP 83



HAMPTON HOLLIFIELD

Eagle Scout / Dawson Church Troop 83



Hampton Hollifield achieved the rank of Eagle Scout on March 9, 2023. Hamp began his scouting career as a kindergartner. He earned the Arrow of Light as a Cub Scout. Since joining Troop 83, Hamp has earned 25 merit badges and held numerous leadership positions, including Senior Patrol Leader, Chaplain's Aide, and Patrol Leader. He is a member of the Order of the Arrow and has earned the Triple Crown by participating in three high adventure trips through Scouting.

For Hamp's Eagle project, he replaced more than 300 feet of fencing at a local dog park in Hoover, Alabama. He raised

the funds for the project and built the fence with the help of family and fellow Scouts during Christmas break. The fence serves as a visual safety barrier to prevent kids and animals from entering the street.

Hamp is a Senior at Vestavia Hills High School. He looks forward to attending the University of Alabama in the Fall.

His parents are Erin and Todd Hollifield and Kathryn Hollifield. Hamp and his family attend All Saints Episcopal Church in Homewood.

Congratulations, Hamp, on this enormous achievement!

Summer Schedule

Church-Wide Events

June 14	Adult Summer Bible Study and Lunch (11:00 a.m.) (June 14, 21, 28; July 12, 21, 28)
June 25	Chapel Choir Mission Tour Home Concert
July 5	Women's Summer Bible Study (9:30 a.m.) (July 5, 12, 21, 28)
August 13	Kickoff Sunday

Preschool

June 5-8	KidLife (age 4 by September 1, 2023 through K)*
June 12-15	Day School Summer Camp (Age 18 months through 4K)*
June 19-23	Ballet Camp (Age 4 by September 1, 2023 through K)*
July 17-20	Preschool Music Camp (Age 4 by September 1, 2023 through K)*

Kids

June 5-8	KidLife (Grades 1-5)*
June 12-15	Day Camp 1 (Grades 1-5)*
June 19-22	Basketball Camp 1 (Grades K-6)*
June 19-23	Ballet Camp (Grades K-2)*
June 26-June 30	Day Camp 2 (Grades 1-5)*
July 17-21	Kids Music Camp (Grades K-5)*
July 10-13	BIG Art Camp (Grades 1-5)*
July 24-27	Basketball Camp 2 (Grades K-6)*
July 24-28	CentriKid Camp (Grades 3-5)*

Students

June 14	DSM Summer Nights (June 14, 28; July 19, 26)
June 16-25	Chapel Choir Mission Tour (Wales)
July 10-14	Breakaway

College

June 7	Summer Village (June 7, 14, 21, 28; July 5, 12, 19, 26)
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Missions

July 8-15	Grandview Church Sports Camp (Mead, Colorado)
July 29-Aug. 4	Guatemala Medical Mission Team

*All grades denoted are the school grades completed by this summer.

like = mike

By **Ryann Mitchell**
Program Manager

When a student comes to The Learning Center, they are usually in one of two camps. They're either certain they can do this or they're not really interested in being there at all and something or someone has compelled them to come to us. In June of 2021, we had an interesting case where a prospective student, Mike, fell into both of those camps. He was overly confident that he could get his GED, but he just didn't see the point.

Mike had come to us because he was staying at Brother Bryan Mission. The Education Director from the Mission thought it would be a good idea for him to work with us and try to get his GED. Again, Mike was not sure he saw the point in that, but he followed the process and came to see us anyway. He took his initial assessment and it showed he was right. He should, in fact, have no trouble passing at least the first section of the test and probably the next two. (Typically, those are Language Arts, Social Studies, and Science.) The fourth section, however, was Math, and that might give him a little trouble.

His initial assessment was on June 2. By June 16, he had passed the Language Arts section. He passed both Social Studies and Science the next month. He was, in fact, on the fast track to finish his GED. Then came the Math test. Mike studied off and on with us and took his first practice test in September. He scored a 144. That's one point shy of passing. He studied for a few more weeks and took the practice test again. 144. Again. The practice test is an actual GED test, just half the number of

questions and half the amount of time. With a score as close as a 144, there's always a chance students will pass the actual test, and Mike was ready to be done with this process. So, he took the actual test. Guess what he scored? A 144.

Mike didn't love the process of working on his GED, but at this point it was more of a challenge to be conquered. So he studied some more and took another practice test. He got the extra point and had a 145. He felt more ready than ever, so in October, he took the Math test again. He scored a 142. Still, so very close. Just not there yet. Then, after that day in October, Mike went radio silent. We didn't see him or hear from him. We didn't get his books back, we couldn't get him back to class. He was done. But God had other plans for Mike.

Fast forward to April of 2022. It had been six months since we had seen Mike. He was, for all purposes, off our radar. Then one Wednesday he called. He told me on the phone, and again in person when he arrived, that he'd woken up that morning with just three letters on his mind. GED. He couldn't explain it but he felt the Lord telling him it was time to finish this degree. Could he come in and take the test again? I said, "of course!" But I was a little nervous for him because after a third attempt at the test—if you don't pass any of the three times—you have to wait 60 days to take it again. We had already not seen him for six months. I knew he could pass the test, but if he didn't for some reason, would it deter him for good?

About an hour later, he came in our front door and confidently sat down and took his test. Wouldn't you know? He scored a 145. Just what he needed to pass and complete his GED. There was a good bit of excited yelling. He asked a few times if I was serious when I told him he'd passed. I assured him I'm not so cruel as to have told him he passed when he didn't. After an unbearably long wait, his diploma still wasn't sent. So, we took a photo with someone else's diploma so he could get back to the mission. He was so excited and ready to share his news.

Mike's story didn't end there, however. The next week I got a call from the Education Director at Brother Bryan. He told me he had accepted a new job and that they had hired Mike to take his place. Mike had already been working with other residents on reading and math in his time there. The Brother Bryan employees had seen his passion and skill for helping people succeed and knew that since he had been where the other residents were, he would be able to help them in a more unique way than most anyone else could.

Mike is now my contact at Brother Bryan. Any time they start a new class, he sends guys to us. We currently have nine residents from the Mission regularly attending classes. Sometimes they try to get out of it—which Mike can relate to—but then he sends them anyway. Sometimes they're confident that they will be done within a month, but it usually takes a little longer. Mostly, they find that between Brother Bryan and The Learning Center, they are developing a community of people who care about them and want to see them succeed. For their own good, but ultimately, for God's glory, we hope guys will be like Mike. That they will persevere, be open to hearing God's call, and be willing to serve when the opportunity comes along.



Ryann Mitchell loves working in a ministry with so many eager students and servant-hearted volunteers. She and her husband, Will, spend their free time wrangling their two daughters, Olivia and Elizabeth.

TEN MINUTE TALK

A Series of Rapid-Fire Questions With Dawson Staff Members

You probably know Andy Cartee as our gregarious and ministry-focused Minister of Recreation, but did you know he was so handy around the house? He also harbors a love for a particular furry animal who makes an appearance every February 2. Read on to learn more!

Early bird or night owl?

Night owl.

What time do you wake up every day?

Typically 6:00 or 6:30 a.m.

Favorite exercise?

Bootcamp-type classes.

Playlist or podcast?

Playlist.

Best thing about working at the FRC?

The people.

If you could make one food calorie-free for life, what would it be? Cheesecake.

Favorite local restaurant?

The Cheesecake Factory.

On an airplane: aisle or window?

I'd pick a window.

What's the furthest you've ever been from home? Indonesia.

Weirdest thing you've ever eaten?

Cow tongue and fish eyeballs.

While in Indonesia? Yep.

Do you cook at home?

Yes, I do. Normally I cook HelloFresh or EveryPlate meals. I have a few go-to things that I'll cook on my own as well.

What fictional movie world would you like to live in?

The wizarding world of Harry Potter.

Do you have any pets?

Pebbles, our long-haired dachshund.

How did you meet your wife, Keri?

I met her at church when I was a new youth pastor. She was with a bunch of high school students, and I asked, "What grade are you in?" And she said, "Kindergarten. I teach it."

You guys have two kids.

Any advice for new parents?

Love them well and for who they are.

Go-to snack while watching a movie?

Probably popcorn.

Who would play you in a movie?

Matt Damon. People have said we look alike, but I don't see it.

Yes or no to movies that are remakes?

Hmm. Depends on the actors.

What did you want to be when you grew up?

A doctor. In fact, I was initially a pre-med major.

What's a family holiday tradition?

The kids open one present on Christmas Eve.

What personal accomplishment makes you proud?

Renovating my 1967 Ford F100 truck. Keri named it Hamilton. She names all of our vehicles after characters from *Gone With The Wind*.

How long did it take you to restore it?

It took me a little over a year.

How did you get into car maintenance?

I just decided I wanted to try to learn how to do that and take care of our vehicles. I enjoy fixing things, so it just fit in with my personality.

Favorite Halloween costume?

A caveman.

Tell us a little-known fact about yourself.

I jumped out of an airplane one time, and my parachute didn't open. It eventually did open, but it was very close to the ground.

Most famous person you've ever met?

Phil Jackson. He was the head coach of the Chicago Bulls and the Lakers.

Who's the G.O.A.T., Michael Jordan or LeBron James?

Michael Jordan.

Favorite Scripture?

Psalm 63:3

What's something on your bucket list?

I would like to go to Italy.

Hot take you'd like to share?

My favorite color is clear, and it should be everyone else's too. Because then it's all the colors!

You really love Groundhog Day.

Is there a reason why?

Well, it's a forgotten holiday that is just very meaningful in my life (ha ha). No, actually, it came up as a joke one day. Our staff was working on our church calendar, and everyone was so quiet and focused. So Groundhog Day pops up on the screen as a national holiday, and I said, "Hey everybody, let's not forget this is Groundhog Day," and people thought I was serious. I remind people regularly about it now because I think it's funny. The FRC staff even got us decorations for it this year.

What were you like in high school?

I was pretty wild and rebellious until I came to know the Lord, and then that all changed.

Was that before or after you jumped out of the airplane?

Thankfully it was before.

Wildest home or car renovation mishap?

It was the first home renovation project I did. I cut out a big section of our brick wall on the outside of the house, and I cut a little too far over, so we just made the room bigger.

What do you do to relax?

Watch T.V. I like sci-fi and action.

Who or what inspires you?

The people I work with.

Just sharing life together and seeing ways that people work together and grow and share struggles and the realities of life.

Do you believe in Bigfoot?

No, but he believes in me.



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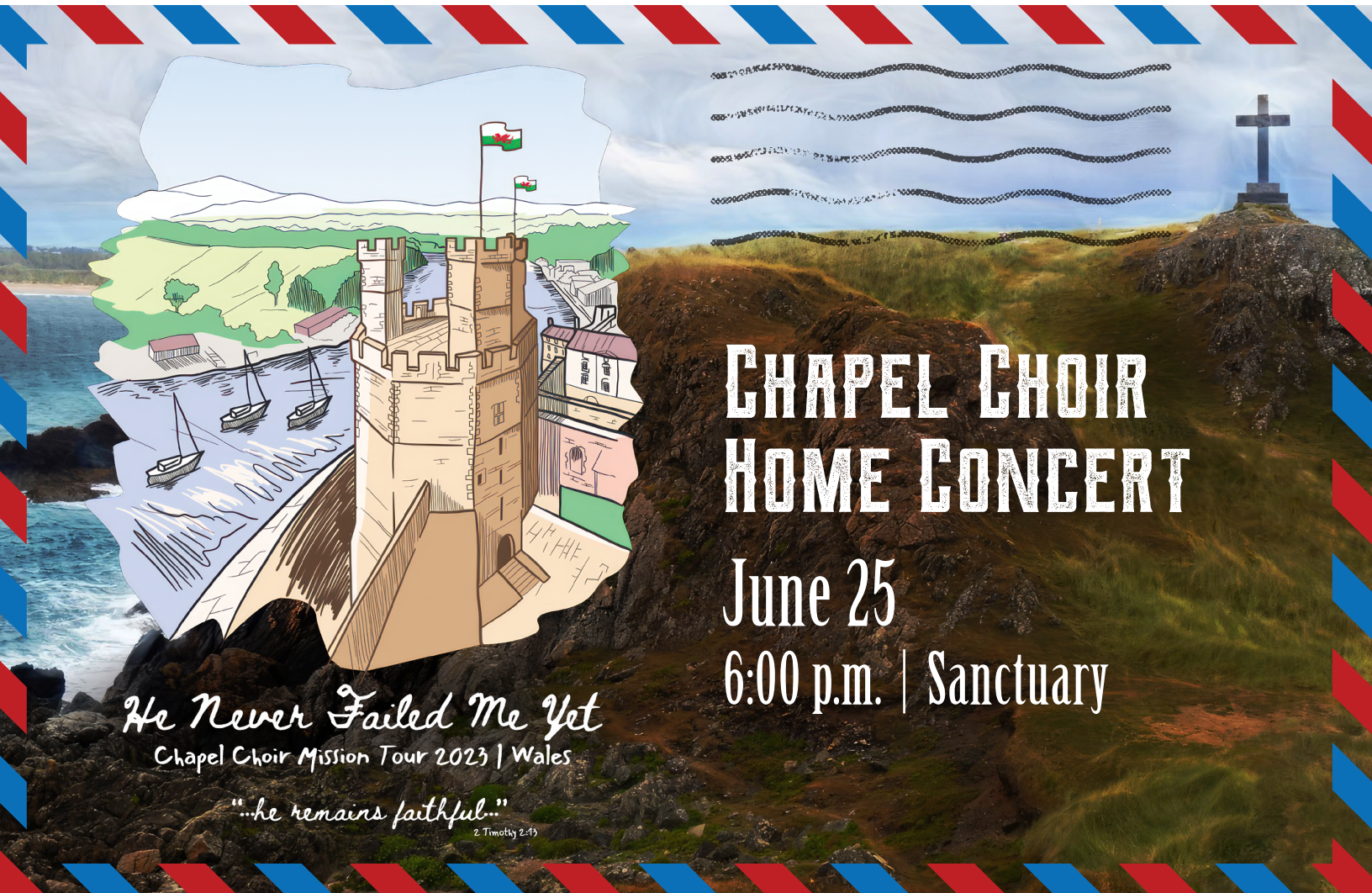
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CHAPEL CHOIR HOME CONCERT

June 25

6:00 p.m. | Sanctuary

He Never Failed Me Yet
Chapel Choir Mission Tour 2023 | Wales

"...he remains faithful..."

2 Timothy 2:13