

Together

Spring 2021

AT DAWSON



2020
IN REVIEW

Meet
Tommy
Minister To Senior Adults

ONE Faith
ONE Family
DO JUSTICE. LOVE MERCY.
Micah 6:8

RADICAL
Love
PARTNERING IN MISSIONS

18 WAYS
to love your
neighbor



AUXANO

COLLEGE + YOUNG ADULT SERVICE

TUESDAYS | 7:00 P.M.
SANCTUARY @ DAWSON

DAWSONCHURCH.ORG/AUXANO

Together

AT DAWSON



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JOIN US

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

WATCH LIVE

live.dawsonchurch.org



dawsonchurch.org/AfterThoughts

From



Dr. David Eldridge
Senior Pastor

Pastor David

Valentine's Day has come and gone by the time that you are reading this edition of the *Together At Dawson* magazine. I imagine that many of you contributed to the lucrative Valentine's Day industry in some special way. I read a recent study that found that Americans spent 18.6 billion dollars on Valentine's Day—1.6 billion dollars on candy, 4.4 billion on jewelry, and over 224 million roses were purchased to celebrate this day of love. That's a lot of Hallmark cards, flowers, and boxes of chocolates.

The origins of our Valentine's Day celebrations are far removed from the third-century priest named Valentinus who was imprisoned for his faith. While much of his story is shrouded in lore and legend, Valentinus fell in love with the blind daughter of his jailer. God supernaturally cured the jailer's daughter's blindness. Prior to his execution, Valentinus sent his love a note that her cured eyes could read signed, "From Your Valentine."

While it's impossible to be certain of what is fact and what is fiction in tracing the definite origin of Valentine's Day, what we can all agree upon is that true love costs. True love isn't primarily an emotion but a sacrificial commitment given to the object of one's love.

It's not surprising that when God would show us the extent of His love, it would be the sacrifice of His only Son. While we might not be able to verify all the details of the origins of Valentine's Day, we can be sure that the cross of Christ isn't the product of lore or legend. The cross of Christ is the ultimate love letter for all who would trust and believe.

I pray that as you read the ministry highlights contained in this edition of the *Together At Dawson* magazine that you would be reminded that true love always costs, and that cost has been fully displayed on the cross.

"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."

John 15:13

Blessings,

Pastor David

Life Groupstories

By **Jim Gifford**
Discipleship Pastor



In his book *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam claimed that the greatest epidemic in American life is not a disease, but loneliness. New technology often makes communication easier, but connection more rare. It drives us to screens instead of to other people. It facilitates entertainment, but, at the same time, it can bring isolation and loneliness.

We are not designed to live in isolation. God created us for community—both with Himself and with each other. When we create true biblical community, we step into God's design for how we are to live, and for how He planned on spreading His name throughout the nations.

There are more than two billion people on the planet who claim to be Christians. This is an astounding fact, considering that Acts 1:15 tells us that the number of Jesus' disciples around the time of His ascension was about 120. These people who made up the early Church continued the movement that the Master started, which spread over the next 2,000 years to every continent on the Earth through true, life-changing community.

Biblical community is more than a Bible study or a hangout with friends; it's what happens when the people of God come together to be His Church. At Dawson, this life-changing biblical community is best found in a Life Group. We believe this so strongly that we have a Life Group for every person, from infants to 90+ year-olds. Life Groups are the place to make friends with fellow believers and people from all walks of life, experience God-guided transformation, and continue the work of Jesus' disciples in Matthew 28.

Reflecting upon how my story and God's story have intertwined through 60+ years, some of my most vivid memories of life transformation in biblical community happened in Sunday School.

In Mrs. Bader's preschool class, as we sang *Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so...* That's how I learned about God's love for me.

As a young boy in Reid McLellan's sixth grade class, I came to understand that Jesus was inviting me to trust and follow Him with my heart and my life. While on a mission trip to New York with some of my tenth grade Sunday School class members, I came to fully understand what being on mission for Jesus was all about. I was engaged in a Sunday Morning Bible Study discussion with a group of LSU students when God first planted the seed in my heart for vocational ministry. And it was during a College Sunday School class' Valentines progressive dinner that Dorinda and I were paired up for a game, and the rest is history!

Time and time again during our forty-two years of married life, living in seven different towns or cities, and serving in eight different ministries, it has been within a Life Group of adults where we have experienced biblical life-changing community. A community of believers that have become lifelong friends, cared for one another through seasons of joy and crisis, and have grown spiritually as we studied God's Word and pursued Jesus' mission together.

Our desire is that every person be connected in a Life Group. There are groups that meet on Sunday mornings and also on weekdays at the church and in the community. These groups meet virtually and in person, by life stage, gender, or by special interest. If you are not already involved in a Life Group, we invite you to explore the different options available. If you would like assistance in finding a Life Group that's right for you, please contact any of Dawson's Adult Discipleship Team or contact Liz Cuenin at lcuenin@dawsonchurch.org.



Jim Gifford serves as Dawson's Discipleship Pastor. His life verse is 2 Timothy 2:2, which reminds him to be steadfast in teaching and discipling others. He and Dorinda are parents to three adult children, and Pops and Dinda to Moses, Birdie, and Loxley.



NEXT STEPS

By **Liz Cuenin**
Discipleship Ministry Associate

The Christian faith has long been described as a journey, a walk of faith that includes many unique milestones along the way. At Dawson, our hope is to be a faith family that encourages, aids, and comes alongside each guest and church member on their personal journey with Christ. In fact, at the very core of discipleship is an emphasis that all believers—whether a brand new follower of Jesus or a seasoned saint—are on a continual path of growth and sanctification. We all are journeying toward our next step.

Dawson's new Next Steps area, which is located in the Foyer behind the Sanctuary, was recently renovated and reimagined with the hope that everyone will feel welcome to explore his or her right next step. Whatever your questions—whether it be about your faith, church membership or baptism, finding a Life Group, or the book Pastor David referenced in the sermon—the Next Steps team is ready and able to help you find the answers you need.

Speaking of books... We invite you to take some time on Sunday mornings to peruse our Resource Center, which is located on the wall of our Next Steps area. There are a variety of carefully chosen books for sale to aid you on your faith journey.



Want to dive into learning about the communicable and incommunicable attributes of God? (Or what those words even mean!) Then you will want to pick up books from Jen Wilkin, *None Like Him* and *In His Image*. Are you interested in learning more about social justice from wise pastors and civil rights leaders—past and present? Then we encourage you to read *Let Justice Roll Down* and *One Blood* from John M. Perkins or *Oneness Embraced* by Tony Evans. If you are just looking to deepen your love and understanding of God, We have classics, like J.I. Packer's *Knowing God*, and new releases, like Dane Ortlund's *Gentle and Lowly*, to recommend to you.

Our Resource Center also includes a variety of helpful Christian counseling resources. These mini-books from the Christian Counseling & Educational Foundation are free for you to take. The topics of the mini-books range from stress and grief to parenting and addiction. We hope you will take advantage of these useful resources.

So what is your next step? It may be that you have been visiting Dawson for a while, carefully observing the rhythms and heartbeat of this church and are now ready to take the next step toward becoming a member.

It may be that you have been feeling disconnected from others and are now ready to take the next step toward community, fellowship, and accountability through joining a Life Group or a Discipleship Group. Perhaps you have been a faithful group participant for many years and are now ready to step into a leadership service role with children or adults. Or it may be that you have sensed a stirring deep inside you—something that cannot be explained other than that it is the prompting of the Holy Spirit—urging you toward the open arms of Jesus and to take the next step in committing your life fully to Christ and accepting His free gift of grace and mercy.

No matter which step is your next step, we are here to walk with you as you prepare to take it.



Liz Cuenin is Liz Cuenin is Dawson's Discipleship Ministry Associate. She is an avid reader and a big fan of exploring new places. She currently leads a women's Life Group and is pursuing her Masters degree through New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

2020 IN REVIEW



38

Baptisms Including
10 Hispanic Baptisms



32

Births



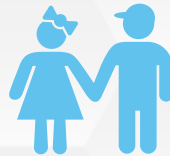
35

Family Dedications



10

Senior Adult Life
Groups Zoomed
Classes Online



119

Dawson Day School Students



150

Gifts Hand-delivered
To Widows



100

Women Studied The New Testament
Together Online



73

Couples Registered | Together For Life



1932

New FRC Memberships

400

Notes Of Appreciation
Written To Senior Adults



166

Ballet and Gymnastics
Students Enrolled



70

Yard Signs Placed Recognizing Veterans



484

Average Weekly Live Stream Viewers



2327

Social Media Posts



WEDNESDAY DSM FELLOWSHIP GROUPS

7 Homes

97 High Schoolers

109 Middle Schoolers

40 Adult Leaders



291

DNOW Students



78

DSM Life Group Leaders & Hall Coordinators



37

DSM Student Leaders



243

Students Attended Conferences & Retreats



Dawson
Music & Worship



100

Backpacks Filled By Chapel Choir With Supplies Collected During KidLife



4000

Pounds Of Food Collected By Chapel Choir



9

Virtual Choir & Orchestra Projects



34

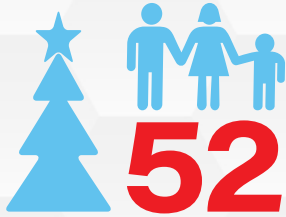
Outdoor Rehearsals



280

Active Dawson Music Academy Students

2020 MISSIONS



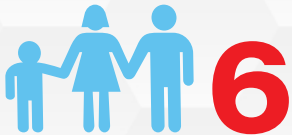
52

Foster Children Sponsored



10

Church Plants Supported



6

Families Stayed In The Missionaries Houses. Areas They Have Served Include: The Middle East, Indonesia, Israel, and Ethiopia.



\$119,991

Given To The Lottie Moon & Annie Armstrong Offerings



308

Operation Christmas Child Shoeboxes



208

Gift Cards & Notes Of Encouragement Sent To Local Hospital Staff



11

International Career Missionaries Who Are Dawson Members



130

Backpacks Given To Children In Coy, AL



\$49,596

Given To Disaster Relief



*Open 38 days for clients in 2020.



842

Total Children Served



46

Foster Families Served



400

Christmas Stockings Given



380

Pairs of New Shoes



325

Coats

2020 FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Because of your faithful giving, Dawson was able to reduce our debt balance to **zero** in 2020. We were also able to give an additional \$110,691.48 to Missions from budget contributions, which was more than ever before. Thank you for being found faithful as God's people!



TITHES &
OFFERINGS



EXPENSES



RESERVES



Missions/Ministry/Music

23%

Operations

16%

Facilities Support

18%

Personnel

43%



COLLEGE MINISTRY

A YEAR IN REVIEW

By **Blake Jenkins**
Minister to College Students


If you had told me in March or April that we would have our strongest fall semester yet, I would have bet all of the Charmin in my house that you were wrong. But that is exactly what we have seen happen over the course of this aberrational academic semester.

There are 4 main components of the Dawson College Ministry:

1. College Life Group: Sunday morning lessons in a large group (FRC)
2. Village: weeknight small groups (in homes)
3. AUXANO: Tuesday night worship service (Sanctuary)
4. BETA: church-wide intern program

When seeking to describe what God is doing in our ministry, I find it helpful to take a page from the book of Acts. In this account, we see the picture of the early church coming together through sharing numbers (Acts 2:47; 4:4; 6:1; 6:7; 11:21; 14:1; 16:5; 28:23) and stories (Peter's sermon at Pentecost and Solomon's Portico, the lame beggar healed, the stoning of Stephen, the conversion of Saul, etc.). Stories don't show the whole picture, but they do show part of it. Numbers don't show the whole picture, but they show part of it. And every number has a name, and every name has a story. So here are some numbers and stories:


This semester, we have seen the highest and most consistent weekly attendance since we started keeping track.



LIFE GROUP
2019: **58**
2020: **76**
Change: **+ 31%**



VILLAGE
2019: **17**
2020: **46**
Change: **+ 171%**



AUXANO
2019: **56**
2020: **86**
Change: **+ 54%**



BETA
2020: **12** interns
across **7** ministries

We are thanking God for the growth that we have seen in each of these areas – both in depth and breadth. We have been able to learn more of our students' stories and walk alongside them as God continues to write their stories.

We have seen students...

- Go from spiritual death to life
- Follow in obedience through baptism
- Join the Dawson family through church membership
- Learn how to study Scripture for the first time
- Accept calls to vocational ministry
- Explore calls to domestic and foreign missions
- Serve God through other ministries within Dawson
- Engage the lost on their college campuses
- Pursue healing from sexual abuse and various addictions
- Help others to become faithful servants of Jesus Christ

Aside from what we have seen in the lives of our college students, we think it is best for you to hear it straight from them.

COLLEGE LIFE GROUP

College Life Group has been an amazing experience and full of learning. Personally, I have found much of what has been taught very helpful and motivating. This semester we spent time recapping the many disciplines that are good for deepening a relationship with God then growing in understanding of some of the characteristics of God. One of the things that was personally convicting for me was the week on journaling. Journaling is a practice that I have done in the past, however I had fallen out of it. But in addition to the content, the people have also been amazing to get to know and learn from." – **Austin Sanders**

VILLAGE

Village...I find it challenging to describe something so wonderful and impactful in just a few words, but I'll try my best. Before entering my sophomore year, I prayed specifically for a community that would keep me accountable and that I could pour into. In response to that prayer God gave me Dawson, and along with this incredible church family, led me to Wednesday night village with Ben and Beth (and Heidi) Hewitt. I couldn't have imagined a better gift from the Lord than the Hewitts' Village. Within the walls of their apartment, more than fifteen students would show up consistently with a hunger for the Word and a desire to be in community with others. We built on each other's points when going through the Gospel of John.

We carried each other's burdens and celebrated joyfully with each other. Wednesday nights swiftly became the highlight of my week, because the Lord's presence was so evident among His people there. Ben and Beth loved each student so well; exemplifying how I believe Jesus served his disciples in truth and care. Village has been my lifeline this semester, and a place where I am constantly challenged and encouraged to grow in my faith. – **Abby Bradford**

AUXANO

AUXANO was one of the few places I felt like I was able to relax in fellowship with others. It provided peace, music, and direction in my walk with Christ. AUXANO, for me, was a place where I felt like I could be vulnerable with myself—mentally and emotionally. It was a space I felt safe in. It helped equip me to answer some of the harder questions I'd been posed during this uniquely difficult semester. By also having the

opportunity to lead with the worship team, it gave me a chance to do what I love and to do it well. It also provided opportunities for me to reach out to people I otherwise would never have spoken to. Overall, AUXANO and its leadership team were a blessing to me, and I'm sure will continue to bless me as I continue my college journey.

– **Micaiah Bolton**

BETA INTERN PROGRAM

The BETA intern program has been hands-down, the most formative, rewarding, and humbling experience of my college career. Dawson's College Ministry was very intentional in sharpening my skills and affirming my calling to ministry. I

highly recommend this program to anyone interested in ministry, because this program gives you a real look at what a life of full-time ministry looks like on a day-to-day basis. I was plugged into a ministry on campus that I felt called to and was immediately put into leadership roles. Not only was I able to pour into younger believers, but I was also given access to countless older members of the Dawson family who offered me their wisdom and companionship. The BETA intern program has given me an opportunity to explore, learn, and grow. – **Cole Frier**



Blake Jenkins is Dawson's Minister to College Students. He is married to Becca and they have two sons Thomas and Will. He is a graduate of the University of Alabama and Beeson Divinity School and has just begun the Ph.D. program at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

FRAD

Love

RADICAL

By **Christopher Hunsberger**

RADICAL CEO

&

Mandy Hewitt

RADICAL Communications & Marketing Administrator

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, missions work looks vastly different than it did only a year ago for many churches around the world. When global travel came to a halt, local congregations accustomed to multiple short-term trips each year were left with decisions that seemed unthinkable just months before. Devastatingly, many of those congregations chose to cut their global missions budget altogether. But that did not happen at Dawson.

How do we minister to the nations when we cannot get to them in person? That is a question that Christians have been asking long before COVID-19. Did you know that there are nearly 3.2 billion people on the planet who remain unreached with the Gospel? That means that almost half of the earth's population will die with very little chance of ever hearing about having eternal hope in Jesus Christ. The need is an urgent one.

Many times, these unreached peoples deal with immense physical needs. While their ultimate need is Jesus, addressing their physical needs often reveals the love of God in tangible ways that open doors for the Gospel. However, it has become increasingly difficult to minister to them in person. Why is that?

TWO MAIN REASONS:

One, unreached people often suffer behind immense barriers that have impeded the progress of the Gospel for centuries. Some of these barriers include persecution, poverty, war, famine, political turmoil, geographical isolation, lack of education, lack of medical care, and lack of access to clean drinking water. Put simply, these unreached people are difficult to get to, for many reasons.

Two, once those barriers are crossed, for security reasons, it's often difficult to communicate the work being done, the needs of the workers, not to mention how you could even get resources to the workers without exposing the work they're doing and putting that work and the worker in danger. These concerns often prevent Christians from hearing about disciple-making efforts among the unreached.

It is in the face of these barriers that Radical, a ministry devoted to serving churches and to disciple-making, created Urgent. Urgent is an initiative that connects God's faithful followers to the urgent needs around the world. Through Urgent, Radical supports indigenous believers who are making disciples and multiplying healthy churches in some of the world's hardest to reach places, among some of the hardest to reach peoples.

A NEW PARTNERSHIP:

There are many complications of ministering to the already-difficult-to-reach during a global pandemic, yet, as servants of Christ, we cannot let these barriers continue to keep the hope of the Gospel from those who urgently need it. This belief, shared by both Radical and the Missions Team at Dawson, has forged a new partnership through the Urgent initiative. Dawson and Radical are now teaming up to support biblically faithful and practically effective work aimed at delivering the hope of the Gospel on a massive scale to the unreached people of Iran. Some people may wonder, why Iran and why now?

IRAN'S PHYSICAL NEEDS

The 1979 Islamic Revolution overthrew the monarchy that had ruled for more than 2500 years and converted Iran into a Shi'ite Muslim, cleric-ruled country. A year later, Iraq attacked Iran and an 8-year war followed, helping solidify the rule of the Muslim clerics (Ayatollahs) and worsening the already hurting economy. Currently, Iran's over-dependence on the country's rich oil and natural gas exports, a significant increase in the birth rate in the 80's, and economic reforms that fell short of their targets have resulted in high unemployment and under-employment, double-digit inflation, and almost 20% of the people living in poverty. Furthermore, Iran's questionable nuclear program along with its geographic location and attitude toward Israel has stirred up considerable political concerns for the stability of the region and has resulted in economic sanctions and continued close scrutiny of all Iranian political activities.

IRAN'S SPIRITUAL CONDITION

In Iran, all ethnic Persians and anyone from a Muslim background (even if they are not practicing) are considered Muslim. If anyone does convert to Christianity, he or she is declared an apostate and could be put to death. The Iranian constitution recognizes several historic minority religions including Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity. However, it does not allow churches to preach or distribute materials in Farsi, and proselytizing is highly forbidden. Yet, astonishingly, the number of Muslim-background believers coming to Christ continues to grow greatly regardless of almost certain persecution or even death.

Believers and non-believers alike recount how God has used dreams and visions, as well as wonders, to point them to Christ and the Gospel. Many are curious about the Bible, but Bibles and Christian printed materials in Farsi are illegal. Smuggled Farsi Bibles and materials are quickly put to use. The internet and broadcasts by radio and satellite TV are providing encouragement, resources, and training for believers as more people come to Christ and more underground house churches are being established.

ON THE GROUND

CHURCH PLANTING

Radical is deeply embedded in Iran through robust underground church planting efforts. In spite of international sanctions and political tensions, the Iranian church is growing at an exponential rate.

RESOURCES

Radical develops biblical resources in multiple languages for pastors and church leaders around the world to use as they share the Gospel and make disciples among the nations.

TRAINING

Training church leaders is crucial as more people come to Christ and new churches are planted throughout Iran.

DISCIPLESHIP

Radical is investing in the relational infrastructure of private entrepreneurs attempting to use their businesses as platforms for further discipleship and evangelism.





MEDIA PROJECT

Because of the risks that come with evangelism and conversion to Christianity in Iran, we must think strategically and creatively about how to effectively share the good news of the Gospel. (In fact, it is because of the great risks involved that Radical cannot be specific about the details connected with this project.)

The media project is part of a broad seed-sowing effort that teaches biblical stories from the Old Testament by using secular media channels. It is built around a strong theological follow-up team that is Iranian-led and is designed to help start churches. The project requires advertising, production, editing, and promotional support. This project is created by Iranians, distributed by Iranians, and Iranians will see the project through to the end as they follow up with all who respond.

Teaching the Old Testament to people in the Muslim world is used as a platform for communicating New Testament truth. This is effective because: 1) The Old Testament is rarely explored in depth in Iran, so the content of the teaching is fresh to the listeners. 2) The Old Testament may meet with less resistance since the people have been taught that the New Testament is corrupted. 3) The Old Testament also points forward to Jesus' coming.

Radical's worker on the ground recently began broadcasting the Bible stories on secular airwaves aimed at a national audience. Extensive research has been conducted to ensure biblical themes are easily understood by Iranians so that the Bible stories aired throughout the country make sense to those who hear them.

Following each broadcasting event, we pray that many will seek out the meaning of the story told and connect with the follow-up team.

Both Radical and Dawson are excited and encouraged by this new partnership and are praying that God will "do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think" and that He would be glorified "in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

ABOUT RADICAL

Radical exists to serve the church for the cause of Christ—to glorify God by making disciples and multiplying churches among all the nations. When Radical was founded in 2010, our goal was to serve the church in making disciples of all nations. We did this primarily through providing biblical teaching and articles on our website, and through hosting events like Secret Church. Today, Radical serves the church in five primary ways: Resources, Events, Training, Mission Strategies, and Urgent Needs.

While our main goal has not changed, the Lord has continued to open up new avenues for us to carry out our mission. Looking to the future, our prayer is that God would use Radical to serve Christ's church across the globe, as we rely on the sufficiency of God's Word and the power of God's Spirit—all for His glory!

To learn more about Radical, please visit radical.net. To learn more about how you can get involved with Urgent through prayer, go to urgentneeds.org.



ONE FAITH ONE FAMILY

By Karon Bowdre

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, Who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb."

Revelation 7:9–10

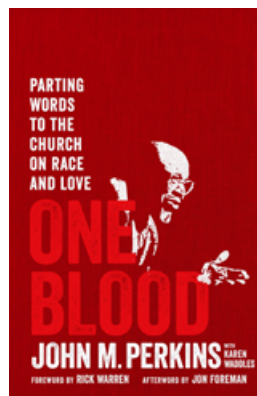
About this time last year, our Life Group was immersed in a deep study of Revelation—the only kind of study we know how to do. We had been discussing how glorious it will be in heaven when we are side-by-side with people from every nation, tribe and language, worshipping the Sovereign God of the Universe. Unfortunately, the fact was not lost on us how different heaven will look from what we experience today with the groups that we typically socialize with here on earth. We questioned whether some Christians might be uncomfortable with such a mixed congregation and agreed that we should all broaden our social circles to prepare for that great color-filled congregation in heaven.

Then came the events that rocked our world: the brutal killings by police of George Floyd and other black people. Some of these were captured live for all of us to see. No longer can we hide from the ugly truth that racism still lives in America. Racism distorts our perception of other members of the human race who, exactly like us, are created in the image of God. We cannot cling to the idea that racial segregation and discrimination ended with legislation that grew out of the Civil Rights Movement. If we didn't know it then, we have to face it now—governmental legislation cannot change hearts and attitudes.

My experience with racial issues goes back more than a half century. As a child growing up in Montgomery,

Alabama, during the turbulent '60s, I watched the Civil Rights movement take front and center stage on the nightly news. The scenes of the violent police encounters with the protestors terrified me. The riots in Birmingham, Watts, and other places gave me nightmares. During the March from Selma to Montgomery, I naively thought the marchers would soon descend on Montgomery. I kept looking out the window of my elementary school classroom expecting to see riots in the little park outside. At that age, I had no concept of the reason for the protests—only that the adults around me were worried about the changes they feared were coming. And I was afraid too.

One of Pastor David's recent sermons from Exodus reminded me of conversations I had with my paternal grandfather. Although he only had a sixth-grade education, he was a recognized "Bible scholar" in the rural churches he attended. He told me that the reason Moses didn't make it to the promised land was because he had married an African woman. I knew that was wrong. (It was because Moses hit the rock when God told him to speak to it to bring forth water.) He also insisted that the Bible supported slavery, and that the "negro race had its proper place." Even as a child, I knew in my soul that was wrong too. But my grandfather was not someone with whom anyone could argue. (As a teen, he warned me about the wrath of God because I was wearing pants and highlighting my hair.)



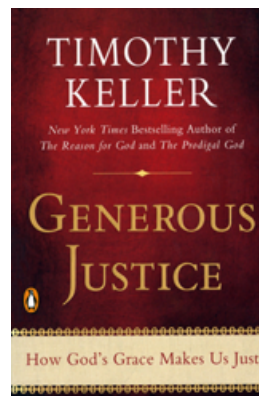
When integration finally came to Montgomery schools, I obeyed my mother's advice to be kind to the black students in my classes, and I even sat next to Patricia, the only black girl in my Junior High class. Because I was 'friendly,' I thought of Patricia as a friend. Years later, when I heard Kay Coles James speak about her experience as one of the girls chosen to integrate the schools of Richmond, Virginia, I was convicted that my "friendship" had treated Patricia more like a second class friend since I never even thought about inviting her to my home or to any of our parties, or even to be in a study group with my white friends.

My actions in trying to be more welcoming to the black students really showed a lack of understanding or even a desire to understand on my part. While I was still a student, our high school banned the Confederate battle flag from football games. I lamented the loss of the beautiful flag I saw as the symbol of the school. I had enjoyed watching it wave as the band paraded around the field during the half-time show ever since I was a young girl. It meant nothing to me as a symbol of the Confederacy, and frankly, I really didn't care why it was so offensive to the new students.

As time passed and I grew up and became less self-centered, I came to understand that the flag was really a harsh reminder of slavery, oppression, and the false view of white supremacy. When my boys were in high school, I joined with other parents to seek the ban of that flag at their high school events. I could not believe that three decades later it was still flying at an integrated school.

All of these memories, and so many others, have been flooding my thoughts ever since the events of last year demonstrated clearly that civil rights and justice for all have yet to become a reality in our great nation. My heart has been broken by the mistreatment of people created in the image of God and by the hatred that spews from both black and white people toward each other. But what could I DO about racial injustice? Where are the answers?

I did what I often do when I want to figure out an issue: I started reading. On a bookshelf at home, I dug out a copy of *More Than Equals: Racial Healing for the Sake of the Gospel* by Spencer Perkins and Chris Rice. It is a powerful book about the struggles involved in racial reconciliation at a church in Jackson, Mississippi. I then sought out more information on the internet, and, after floundering around with fringe writers on different ends of the spectrum of ideas, I found a wealth of biblically-based information from pastor and author, Tim Keller. Keller had written a wonderful 4-part series



in response to the recent racial events that made me more curious as to how justice of any sort, social justice and racial justice in particular, are tied to God's commands about justice and grow out of our response to the Gospel. From the internet, I then jumped to Keller's book *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just*. This book answered so many questions I had about justice, race relations, and social justice—all from a solid biblical perspective.

Since my days as a law student, I have had a keen interest in the concept of justice. As a member of the Christian Legal Society, I practically "pledged allegiance" to our selected Scripture verse: "And what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8). Surely somewhere along my journey I had been exposed to the deeper, richer biblical expressions of justice, but my concept remained hemmed in by legal constraints of a definition of justice that focused, perhaps too much, on procedural fairness, honest judging, impartial treatment, and decisions based on the law—things that occur in a court of law. Of course, I knew that the

Bible contained many verses about taking care of the poor, the widows and orphans, the oppressed and the alien, but until this deep dive into biblical justice, the comprehensive manner in which God's justice encompasses the care of the vulnerable had not seeped deeply into my heart and mind.

Keller masterfully discusses the many references to justice in the Old Testament that demonstrate God's interest in it, how justice is part of God's character. He explains that God symbolically identifies with the poor and oppressed in the Old Testament, and that when Jesus came to earth, He literally became one of the poor and marginalized, suffering a miscarriage of justice to redeem all of us from spiritual poverty. From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible is devoted to justice in the world. And, according to Keller, the Bible not only calls us to do justice, but gives us the motivation—God's outpouring of grace to us and His power to live a just life.

Keller states, "If you are trying to live a life in accordance with the Bible, the concept and call to justice are inescapable. We do justice when we give all human beings their due as creations of God. Doing justice includes not only the righting of wrongs, but generosity and social concern, especially toward the poor and vulnerable. This kind of life reflects the character of God."

In his book and several of his articles and sermons online, Keller mentions the work of John Perkins in racial reconciliation. My husband, Birch, and I had heard Rev. Perkins speak decades ago, and were familiar with his reconciliation ministry. So I read again his autobiography *Let Justice Roll Down*. Rev. Perkins' story of growing up in Mississippi, being beaten and almost killed by white law enforcement officers, finding God's grace to forgive, helping to raise people from poverty, and working relentlessly to reconcile people to God and to each other proved

to be great encouragement to me that one person can be used by God as an agent of great change. But I realized that I needed more than an inspirational story and sought to continue digging.

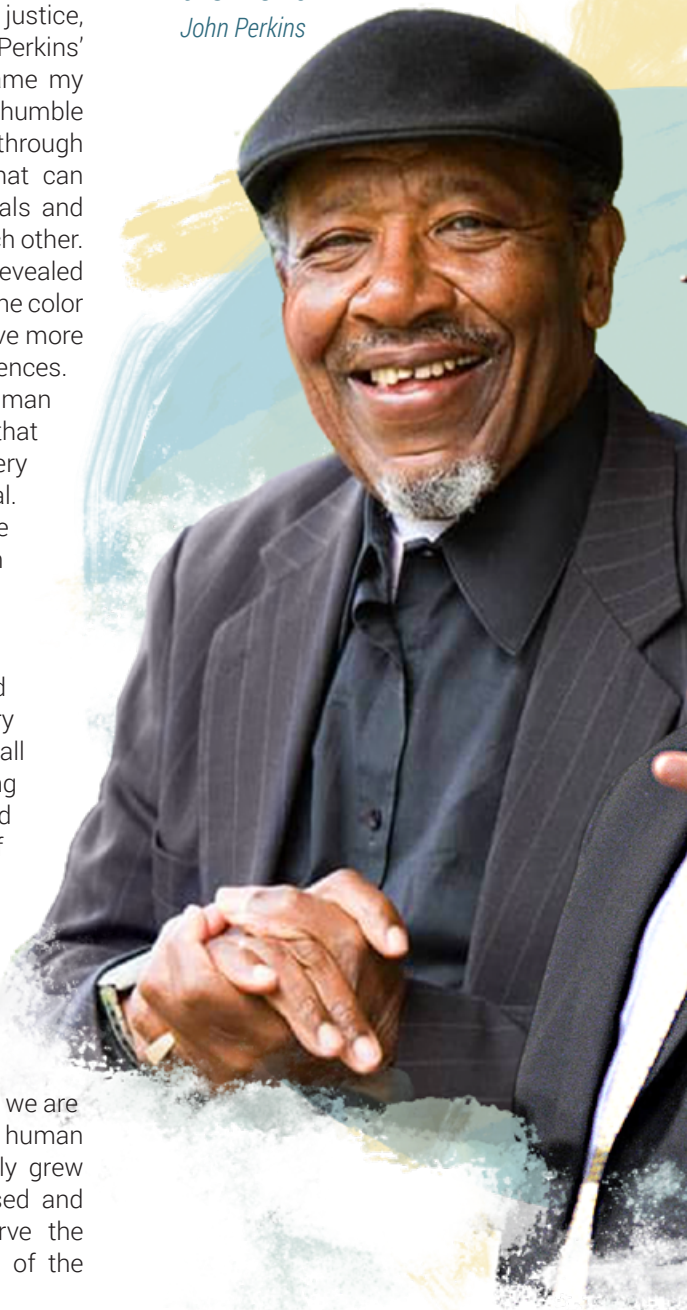
A friend who knew my desire to go deeper on how to address racial justice, highly recommended John Perkins' book *One Blood*. So that became my next must-read. In such a humble way, Perkins walks readers through an understanding of steps that can be taken to reconcile individuals and communities to God and to each other. He explains that science has revealed that all humans, regardless of the color of their skin or appearance, have more genetic similarities than differences. Scientists from The Human Genome Project discovered that the genetic makeup of every human being is 99.9% identical. This scientific evidence supports the biblical position that all human life originated with one man created by God in His image. As Paul explained in his sermon in Athens: "And He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation" (Acts. 17:26).

The Bible never mentions race. It speaks of people from different nations to capture the idea of different people groups based on a common history, language, or region. So, we are all members of one race—the human race. The idea of race actually grew from a social construct devised and refined over centuries to serve the economic and religious goals of the majority culture.

The name of Perkins' book came from the idea that "Just as from one man, Adam, all human physical life began, it is from the blood of one man, Jesus, that all who believe in Him are born again and united into the family of God.

"It must be the reconciled Church, black and white Christians together imaging Christ to the world."

John Perkins





"Doing justice includes not only the righting of wrongs, but generosity and social concern, especially toward the poor and vulnerable."

Tim Keller

We are indeed One Race... One Blood." We have traveled far from that physical and spiritual unity intended by God, led astray by the enemy, where we focus more on skin color and ethnicity that distinguish us than on the One Blood that unites us.

The New Testament teaches so much about the need for unity among Christians. In fact, Jesus prayed that His followers would be one, united with each other in love and united with God so that the world would believe that God sent Jesus to reconcile the world (John 17:21–23). We have all been given the ministry of reconciliation—to reconcile people to God and to each other: "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18). But the mess created by the sin of racism is too big and deeply ingrained for the government to fix it or even for society to fix it. As Perkins wrote, "The black church can't fix this. And the white church can't fix this. It must be the reconciled Church, black and white Christians together imaging Christ to the world."

God used all my reading and the discussions with Birch and with friends, both black and white, to lay on our hearts the need to study the issue of modern day race relations with some of our closest Christian friends—our Life Group here at Dawson. Immediately following our Revelation study (and months deep into the pandemic) we set the stage with Keller's book, *Generous Justice* and are now over halfway through Perkins', *One Blood*. While the topic has been a tough one at times, our class has approached this study the same way we've approached all of our studies—with the desire to dig deep into God's Word, and with an openness to the Spirit's leadership. Recently, one of our Life Group members asked, "I may not be a racist, but if I'm not part of the solution, am I part of the problem?"

We should all want to be a part of the solution to perhaps the biggest issue facing our country (and the Church as a whole) since the 1960's. Birch and I, and the members of our Life Group, want the materials that we've studied this past year to become so deeply ingrained in our souls. So much so, that we take action to become a part of the solution to racial injustice and work towards reconciliation.

While each of us have taken small but intentional, steps reaching out to black and brown members of our communities, we are praying for God's direction for bigger ministry opportunities to help be a part of the reconciled Church—the kind of big tasks that will only succeed because it's God's work. And let's join Rev. Perkins in his prayer for "another Great Awakening where God shakes the Church in America and helps us to see the truth about race and how our misunderstandings have stained the vision" of unity in Christ. There is only one Lord, one faith, one baptism—one family of God.

Karon Bowdre is a member of Samford's Racial Justice Task Force. She and her husband, Birch, have been members of Dawson for more than three decades and raised their two sons here. They met in the Samford cafeteria where Karon was a student, and they both graduated from Cumberland School of Law. She and Birch seek to use their legal training to serve God and others.



dk FAMILIES SEEKING TRUTH TOGETHER

When the time came to find a way to bring families safely back on campus, instead of thinking “outside the box,” the Dawson Kids team went straight to God’s Word. In Deuteronomy 6 we are challenged to:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”
Deuteronomy 6:5–7

What better way to equip families to follow this command than to offer a season of family life group where families sought and experienced truth together? When creating the framework for dawson kids Family Life Group, the team settled on seven exciting elements that families would experience around tables each week in the FRC. Here’s a peek at each element and how families experienced them together.

By **Danielle Bell**
Minister to Children



The dk dream team (from left to right): Meg Brown, Lawson Cribb, Ruth Ann Turner, Breann Huff, Jackie Bye, Madelyn Ball, Danielle Bell.

Early Arrival Activities

The early arrival activities included making cards for our adult students at The Learning Center, writing notes of encouragement to church staff, Play-Doh creations, socially distance minute-to-win-it types of games, decorating family place mats, and more.

Hear Truth

Each week God’s truth was shared straight from our Gospel Project curriculum by dawson kids staff and guest speakers including other Dawson ministers and church leaders.

Discuss Truth

Have you ever sat in church and heard the pastor say something and wanted to call a time-out to discuss what they said? That is what the discuss truth time was for families. Families were given two to three questions (with Scripture references) to discuss around their table. What a joy it was to see multiple generations actively conversing about what they learned or how to apply that week’s truth.

Experience Truth

The goal was to create activities to help families experience something together that would possibly lead to more discussion at home during the week. Each week was different as the dawsons kids team tried to keep in mind all different learning styles. For the story of Lazarus—families got to wrap a member in toilet paper and then that wrapped family member busted out of the toilet paper as we called out

"Lazarus come out." Families studied various Scriptures together and picked which one they wanted to remind each other of during the week. Kids washed their parents feet as they studied the last supper, created 2020 prayer time capsules, experienced interactive prayer stations, and more.

Memorize Truth

During this unique season of family life group, families memorized (with motions) The Lord's Prayer and Psalm 23.

Understand Truth

Using the "Cornerstones" resource from LifeWay, Meg Brown, Associate Minister to Children, introduced a question and answer to help families grasp deeper truths of theology. These videos are currently available on the Dawson Family app.

Pray Truth

Before and after each dk Family Life Group, our kids prayer ministry team met with families to engage in a meaningful prayer time.

Here's what families who have attended have said:

"Our family has benefited so much from dk Family Life Group. The activities are similar to what the children would have participated in during a regular grade-level life group, and we all enjoyed playing and learning together! Our 5th-grader, Elizabeth Anne, appreciates the crafts; our 2nd-grader, Charlie, loves the interactive games; and our 1st-grader, Lolly, enjoys the engaging Scripture memorization! Discussion time after each lesson leads to vibrant conversation and questions that often spill over into lunch, the car ride home, and the week ahead. We have all experienced "church" in a new, exciting way that involves each member of the family. We truly appreciate the efforts of dk staff to make Family Life Group meaningful for the entire family until it's safe to meet again in small groups!"

Kira Aaron, Parent

"This has been a challenging and different year for sure, and we appreciate all you and your team have done to make it memorable. Our family has really enjoyed the weekly family worship in the FRC. It has created some great teaching moments as well as family talking points throughout the week." **Trey Schaefer, Parent**

Our family has enjoyed learning together during this unique time. We are able to have intentional discussions together and grow spiritually as a family. I am very thankful for all that Dawson has done to provide face-to-face experiences for our families.

Laura Corscadden, Parent

"Family Life Group was such a blessing to see parents and children, together, searching the Scriptures and discussing how each applied to their lives and to their family. The variety of participating, teaching methods aided in keeping the attendees engaged. What a blessing! Well done!"

Jim Averett, Co-Leader Family Prayer Time



Danielle Bell is Dawson's Minister to Children, and a respected children's ministry leader and trainer with more than 23 years of Children's Ministry experience. She is a regional and national conference speaker and a frequent contributor to Children's Ministry Magazine.

Equipping families to follow the commands in Deuteronomy 6 doesn't end with dk Family Life Group. Early in 2021, families of 1st-5th graders were mailed a family worship guide called "God of Generations." This special resource from Jonathan and Emily Martin is a 6-week family worship initiative. "God of Generations" is simply an on ramp to making family worship a habit for your family and a part of your family culture. Videos to accompany the printed devotional guide will be available under kids on the Dawson Family App. We can't wait to see what God continues to do in our families.



DR. DON WHITNEY, SBTS



DR. PAUL CHITWOOD



DR. LILLY PARK, SWBTS



MARY WILEY, AUTHOR



DR. GREGG ALLISON, SBTS

PARENT-EQUIPPING Series

DAWSON DISCIPLESHIP IN 2020

By **Meg Brown**
Associate Minister to Children

During a summer that was anything but ordinary, the Dawson Discipleship team considered seriously how we could minister to and equip parents, even from a distance. As parents seek to “train up a child in the way they should go,” (Proverbs 22:6) it is the role of the local church to come alongside parents who serve as primary disciplers of their children. But, how would Dawson seek to minister to parents in this season?

In a way to meet this need and provide resources to parents, the Preschool, Kids, and Student teams worked together on a project that became the “Parent-Equipping Series.” In this project, the teams selected a variety of topics that would be of benefit to parents. This list ranged from family worship to anxiety and even theology! After building the list, we sought out experts in the field to speak as guests in interviews discussing their given topic.

The Parent-Equipping Series is available for all and can be found on the Dawson Family App, to watch via video or listen as a podcast. Listen as we speak to guests such as:

- **Dr. Don Whitney, SBTS** Professor of Biblical Spirituality (Family Worship)
- **Dr. Paul Chitwood**, President of the International Mission Board (Evangelism)
- **Dr. Lilly Park, SWBTS** Professor of Biblical Counseling (Anxiety)
- **Mary Wiley**, Author of Everyday Theology (Theology)
- **Dr. Gregg Allison, SBTS** Professor of Theology (Tough Topics)
- And more!

These conversations were prayerfully planned, thoughtfully organized, and completed with our church family in mind. Our Parent-Equipping Series was a creative, fun, and valuable way to prioritize ministry to parents in 2020 and it continues throughout 2021. Technology has made a way that experts can come to us, and we can come together as a Dawson Family. Whether you're a parent, grandparent, or even an honorary aunt or uncle, we encourage you to check out these great conversations as you grow in the depth of discipleship here at Dawson!



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.

GOD'S GOOD & PERFECT TIMING

By **Tommy Sanders**
Minister to Senior Adults



If you have ever been to Hodges Chapel at Beeson Divinity School, you were no doubt taken by the beauty of the paintings that grace the dome and the walls. The interior dome contains prominent figures from Church history. The chapel also depicts paintings of Christian martyrs from six continents.

I must admit, I don't know much about art, but its beauty can even transcend my limited understanding. A print of the painting hangs in my office as a reminder of how God has worked through history and how He orchestrates events, not only in history, but particularly in individual lives.

I have often thought of how I would be remembered in life. It's a sobering thought. It certainly won't be anything like the people pictured in the painting. They were giants! Actually, much of my life was more like a Norman Rockwell painting, middle class realism with a touch of the unexpected. In a word, it was normal. I was raised in a Christian home with a dog by my side and the novelty of a pet hamster who at some point in time went to "live on a farm."

I grew up going to church. I was led to the Lord by my grandmother and made my profession of faith at age seven.

It was then that God would begin to teach me to depend upon Him. One significant challenge in my life that God has used to teach me dependence, has been my speech impediment. Many years of speech therapy have improved my speech greatly, but the lessons have also endeared to me those who spend their lives helping others. My speech impediment never held me back. Instead, it has developed in me a persistence and a drive to work harder. My persistence and zeal for my faith prompted me to spend a great deal of time, speech problem or not, preaching to my dog. No doubt, early on, God had a plan, and His timing is perfect.

After graduating from the University of Alabama, I entered the real estate business becoming a sales associate in my parent's company. By making me earn my place in the company, they taught me about the business world and how to genuinely care for people. They also taught me how to run a business with integrity. I have continued in the real estate business as a sales associate, broker, trainer, and recruiter over many years, and God has used me to minister in a variety of ways.

While working in real estate, the desire for ministry continued to tug at my heart. After much prayer and counsel, I entered Beeson Divinity School at Samford University. After only two months in seminary, I had an opportunity to be an interim Youth Minister at Brookwood Baptist Church. Ten months later, I was their full time Youth Minister, as well as, a full-time student at Beeson. The journey God laid before me was beyond what I could have ever imagined. I did not realize that for many years, God had been preparing me for this season. God knew the desires of my heart even before I acknowledged those desires. Working with youth has been a blessing that has extended far beyond the years I served.

As I was nearing the end of this ministry opportunity at Brookwood, God intercepted my life with Kathy's. Kathy and I had known each other years earlier, but the intercessory prayers of her mother intervened, and we did not start dating until we had both finished graduate school.

God was gracious to me, and I married my best friend! After our wedding, I returned to Beeson Divinity School, this time on staff as the Director of the Extension Division. This program equipped Christians to be leaders in their churches through theological education and practical ministry training from outstanding teachers and professors.

I enjoyed traveling the state and meeting people from all walks of life who desired knowledge of God's Word. I have had the privilege of sustaining long term relationships with many of these professors, and they continue to influence my life today.

I had always thought it would be neat to have twins. Right after my 40th birthday, we found out that Kathy was pregnant.



Hodges Chapel at Samford's Beeson Divinity School

And on December 21, 2001, our twins, Margaret Ann and Austin, were born. God is so GOOD! He knew the desires of my heart. Our children have been such a tremendous blessing from God.

There are many memories Kathy and I treasure, as all parents do when your children are growing up: ballet recitals, piano recitals, cub scouts, and Pinewood Derby Cars races. There were also more serious seasons in life that served to strengthen our family bonds.

In the summer of 2016, Austin had surgery to correct a condition called Pectus Excavatum. The condition would require putting a 13-inch bar in his chest that would stay for the next three years. To see Austin's faith and bravery that summer, and to watch how Margaret Ann encouraged and showed her love for him through it all, taught us

much about our children.

Kathy had the blessing of leading both Margaret Ann and Austin to Jesus at our home, and I had the privilege of baptizing them together. Today, they are both freshman at Samford University and involved in Dawson's College Ministry. We are now empty nesters with our two wonderful dogs, Max and Raz, who are both 11.

Over the years, I have had a variety of bi-vocational and full-time ministry opportunities. Throughout that time, I have come to understand and firmly believe that we are all ministers as Christians regardless of what we do as our profession or role in life.

Three years ago, I merged my real estate company with ERA King. Doing that allowed me to focus on just being a sales associate with no management responsibilities. This was definitely a time of transition, yet, I found myself praying and looking for opportunities to return to ministry and be a member of a church staff.

We had been visiting Dawson. One evening Brad Gowing called and asked if I could have lunch with him. At lunch, he asked me to consider and pray about coming on Dawson's staff to minister to our Senior Adults. Dawson had always been a church I had desired to serve in someday; I just never thought it could be possible.

After praying and having discussions with Brad, Pastor David, and Jim Gifford, God made every detail very clear. Kathy and I knew Dawson was the place God had called us. I accepted the call and we joined Dawson as a family. God was at work in His timing with all of the details of our life. He gave me the desire of my heart beyond what I could imagine, just as He has throughout my whole life, and it was all in His perfect timing.

By the time you are reading this, I will have now been at Dawson for almost six months. The church and staff have made me feel very much at home from the very beginning. Ministry looks different today because of COVID-19. I am getting to know people via Zoom (not a bad thing since the



Clockwise from left: Tommy & Kathy celebrating their anniversary, Wedding Day (1998), Austin and Margaret Ann as seniors at Vestavia High School (2020), A "new look" for Dawson Life Groups during the pandemic, Youth Summer Retreat (mid '90s)

names are always there), and on the telephone, with notes and letters, and through conference calls and emails, as well as attending some in-person Life Group meetings during the week. I have found myself ministering through some very hard times through sickness and death of loved ones. Many I had not had the opportunity to meet in person. These days have been difficult, but there is no doubt in my mind that God has called me into relationship with some very special people to serve and love during a pandemic. I am thankful that God has given me this opportunity to serve and hopefully to make a difference in these unprecedented times.

I bring to Dawson the same passion I had years ago as a Youth and Young Adult Minister. I seek to guide and encourage Christians to live transformed lives and make a difference in the world around us! I am confident that the resources of wisdom and godly life experiences of older adults have impacted and will continue to impact this church and community. I love what President Jimmy Carter recently said, "My faith demands that I do whatever I can, wherever I can, for as long as I can, with whatever I have to try to make a difference." Jimmy Carter at age 96 is still making a difference in the lives of people. What a statement of faith! Nearly every godly leader in the Bible who lived a long life lived out their lives serving God in significant ways.

Whatever stage of life we are in, God has a mission for us. We may come to the point of our secular career retirement, but there is no retirement in God's work. There is no greater work than being about the redeeming work of Christ, which will last for eternity.

I look forward to working alongside you in person to fulfill Dawson's mission: "To become and help others become faithful servants of Jesus Christ." I have been inspired and blessed by seeing how you have ministered to one another in love. There will come a day when we can go beyond Zoom and social distancing and make a difference, give some hugs, have some fun, and celebrate good days ahead.

I am still learning that God's timing and plans are always perfect. It is about faith and obedience. The goal is to finish strong the race God has set before us. God uses all of our past experiences to prepare us down the road for all that He has called us to do. Just as the shadows and highlights add depth and dimension to a beautiful painting, so God uses our struggles and circumstances in life to create the portrait that is uniquely us. No stroke of the paintbrush is ever wasted in the Master Artist's hand!

Looking forward to serving with you.



Tommy Sanders became Dawson's Minister to Senior Adults in August of 2020. He is married to Kathy who teaches at Vestavia Hills Elementary West. Their twins, Margaret Ann and Austin, are freshmen at Samford University.

ADAM'S LORD

John Woods,
Music & Worship Pastor

Last year we celebrated the amazing things that God had done through the ministries of Go Love Tell. One of those things is the song below. It was written by the Sparrow people and is now used for their own worship music. Go Love Tell helped recognize the need of cultivating indigenous expressions of worship. You'll find that the words of the refrain point to Jesus as the Lord of Adam, Abraham, Moses, and all the children of Abraham—us! To hear a recording of this song, please visit dawsonchurch.org/SparrowSong and allow it to point your worship to a God who is much bigger than just our little corner of the world.

REFRAIN: 2x

YeAdam Goshta	Adam's Lord
YeEbrahim Goshta	Abraham's Lord
YeMusa Goshta	Moses' Lord
Ahwejay metahen Ata	Now you have come
Ahwejay metahen Ata	Now you have come
Ahwejay metahen Ata	Now you have come
Ahwejay metahen Ata	Now you have come

VERSE:

By your hand, day began
You gave Eve—a wife to Adam
You provided all that is needed
Praise to God!
Glory to God!

REFRAIN: 2x

VERSE:

You arranged the land and sea
Adam settled there
You made plants to grow
The land gave grain
"Everything is very good," You said

REFRAIN: 2x

VERSE:

Adam sinned
The Lord's heart was sad
He gave punishment to Adam
Love God and worship Him
You are strong and powerful!
You are to be praised!

REFRAIN: 2x

VERSE:

Abraham's children spread everywhere on the land
The Lord receives them
When Moses was a child the Lord loved him.
When he was an old man He received him.

REFRAIN: 2x



DAWSON CHURCH TROOP 83

Dawson Church Troop 83 is pleased to announce the achievement of the rank of Eagle Scout by **Carson Hughes, Thomas Robinson, Josh Kaiser & Rishabh Lingala.**



Carson

CARSON HUGHES achieved the rank of Eagle Scout at Dawson Church Troop 83 in August of 2020. Carson's leadership roles in the troop have included Patrol Leader, Assistant Patrol Leader, Quartermaster, Chaplain's Aide, Instructor, and Scribe. He earned 26 merit badges,

which qualified him to receive the Bronze Palms. He is a member of the Order of the Arrow and earned the Arrow of Light as a Cub Scout. He completed many high adventure trips, including Sea Base, Islamorada, Florida, and Philmont, in Cimarron, New Mexico, on which he was the crew leader.

For his Eagle Scout Project, Carson rebuilt the Native American Education Area at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens. The project included building a canoe from a solid log of sweet gum. The canoe weighs approximately 450 pounds. In addition, Carson made a traditional small drying rack, a large drying rack, and a summer house, along with providing the gardens with a bow and arrow, a blowgun, and a gourd vase to use in educating elementary schoolers who will visit the site.

Carson is a senior at Vestavia Hills High School. He represents the school as one of the SGA Chaplains and is a member of the We The People Team. His is also a member of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church.

Carson's parents are Paul and Julie Hughes.

THOMAS ROBINSON achieved the rank of Eagle Scout in August 2020. Thomas began his scouting career 12 years ago in Homewood. He earned the Arrow of Light as a Cub Scout, was inducted into the Order of

the Arrow, and earned 26 merit badges, as well as the God and Church award. Thomas has held leadership positions as Patrol Leader, Instructor, Scribe, Troop Historian, and Chaplain's Aide. He completed the Philmont High Adventure expedition in New Mexico.

Thomas contacted the Greater Birmingham Humane Society in August 2019 and began discussions about improving the trails used for dog walking as an Eagle Scout Service Project. The project began with plans of a trailhead kiosk and grew to include a new seating area with two iron benches, a second kiosk, replacing trail markers, and a trail map for the trailhead. Once plans were approved, Thomas organized work days and recruited manpower from fellow scouts, adult leaders, friends, and family. The project was completed in July 2020.

Thomas is a senior at Homewood High School. He plays trombone in the Homewood Patriot Band and marched in the 2018 Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. He also serves on the Junior Board of Our Hope International. Thomas is a member of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church and serves as a member of the Chapel Choir and the Chapel Ensemble.

Thomas's parents are Sarah Robinson and David Robinson.



Thomas



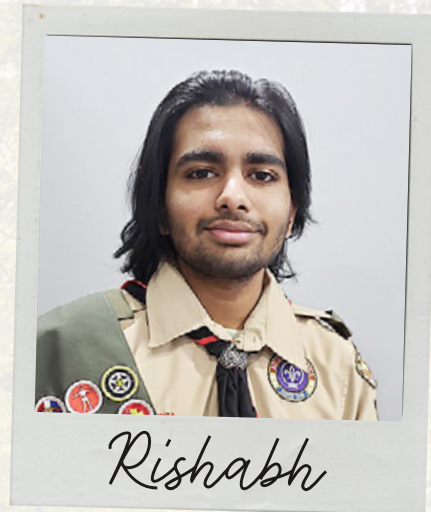


JOSH KAISER achieved the rank of Eagle Scout at Dawson Church Troop 83 in September 2020. Josh's leadership roles have included Assistant Patrol Leader, Patrol Leader, Senior Patrol Leader, Chaplain's Aide, Historian, and Troop Guide. Josh's journey to Eagle Scout includes 21 merit badges, participating in the Sea Base High Adventure in Islamorada, Florida, and becoming a member of the Order of the Arrow.

Josh's Eagle Scout project involved designing, building, and installing heavy duty shelving units for the Music & Worship Ministry at Dawson Memorial Baptist Church. His project allows the organization of supplies and other materials for mission trips, and special worship services such as Candlelight at Dawson, as well as music for worship.

Josh is a senior at Vestavia Hills High School. His high school accomplishments include serving as a Vestavia Hills Ambassador, National Honor Society, Habitat for Humanity, Mu Alpha Theta, Spanish Honor Society, and earning a 36 on the ACT. As a member of Dawson, Josh serves on the Student Leadership Team, Dawson's Chapel Choir, and the Chapel Ensemble. He has also served in Ecuador multiple times on mission trips.

Josh's parents are Boyd and Melissa Kaiser.

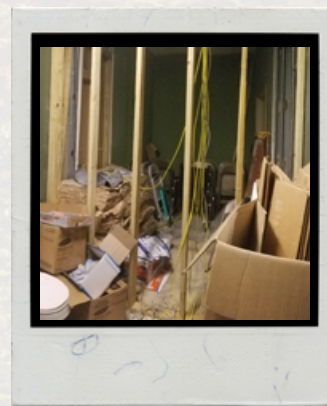


RISHABH LINGALA achieved the rank of Eagle Scout at Dawson Church Troop 83 in December 2020. Rishabh's leadership roles in the troop include Patrol Leader, Assistant Patrol Leader, Senior Patrol Leader, Chaplain's Aide, and Instructor. He earned 21 merit badges. Rishabh also earned the Arrow of Light as a Cub Scout. Rishabh completed many high adventure trips, including Sea Base in Islamorada, Florida and Philmont in Cimarron, New Mexico, on which he was the Chaplain's Aide.

For his Eagle Scout Project, Rishabh renovated a powder room, to be used for storage at The Sanctuary Apostolic Pentecostal Church. He removed everything from the powder room including the sink, all of the plumbing, the mirror, and the tile. Rishabh installed new drywall and painted. He also built and painted wooden shelving to go in the room. This project allows the church to have ample storage room for equipment and supplies to support the activities of the youth program.

Rishabh is a senior at Vestavia Hills High School and is a member of the Speech and Debate Team.

Rishabh's parents are Vomsli and Sudha Lingala.



18 WAYS TO YOUR NEIGHBOR

ANY LIST OF WAYS TO **LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR** STARTS WITH A REALLY BIG ASSUMPTION, WHICH IS THAT YOU ACTUALLY KNOW THEM. YOU MAY HAVE TO START WITH LEARNING MORE THAN JUST THEIR NAMES. HERE ARE SOME IDEAS:

- 1 PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR NEIGHBORS.** One of the greatest things you can give to someone is your "attention." Pay attention to everyday details of your neighbor's lives. You can do this without being a nosy neighbor. Intentionally look for ways serve them and who to show love.
- 2 LOOK FOR THINGS YOU HAVE IN COMMON.** It might be that you discover that both of you face challenges with teenagers or aging parents. How might you learn from and support each other?
- 3 LOOK FOR INTENTIONAL ACTS OF KINDNESS** you can do, particularly on significant anniversaries. If your neighbors have experienced loss of some kind during the past year, anniversaries of those losses are often difficult. Expressions of support, encouragement, or remembrance can be meaningful.

- 4 INCLUDE THEM IN A FAMILY HOLIDAY ACTIVITY.** You could invite them to a child's birthday party, a Christmas meal, or a Fourth of July picnic.
- 5 SHOW CONCERN AND PROVIDE** care for their pets. When people travel, boarding a pet can be expensive. Offering to feed or just check on their pets communicates compassion and concern.
- 6 OFFER TO ASSIST WITH LAWN CARE.** Particularly if your neighbor is older helping with on-going or major lawn care relieves a burden from your neighbor.
- 7 A SIMPLE PHONE CALL** is not a small gesture. In this day of text and e-mails rarely do people pick up the phone and talk with each other. Your call to your neighbor may be the only call they will get all day.
- 8 ASK YOUR NEIGHBOR HOW YOU CAN PRAY FOR THEM** and then do it. Occasionally ask them about their request and assure them you are praying for them.
- 9 CREATE A NEIGHBORHOOD DIRECTORY** with everyone's contact info as well as kids and pets. It will give all your neighbors a sense of mini community.

For Kids

- 1 WRITE YOUR TEACHER A CARD** THANKING HER FOR GOING THE EXTRA MILE.
- 2 BAKE GOODIES AND MAKE CARDS** AND DROP THEM OFF AT LOCAL DOCTORS' OFFICES.
- 3 "WHAT'S HAPPENING IN HOMEWOOD" FACEBOOK GROUP** HAS HAD SEVERAL TIMES WHERE THEY HAVE DONE SNACK DRIVES FOR THE ER DEPARTMENT AT UAB.
- 4 PRAYER WALK YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD.**
- 5 LEAVE A NOTE OR POSTER ON YOUR MAILBOX FOR YOUR MAIL CARRIER.**
- 6 FACETIME WITH A FAMILY MEMBER FAR AWAY OR NEIGHBOR NEXT DOOR.**
- 7 MAKE A VIDEO RECITING SCRIPTURE OR PRAYING FOR A NEIGHBOR AND TEXT IT TO THEM.**
- 8 DRIVE AROUND AREA HOSPITALS PRAYING FOR THE STAFF AND THOSE SICK INSIDE.**
- 9 MAKE A POSTER THAT SAYS "I AM THANKFUL YOU ARE MY NEIGHBOR" AND LEAVE IT ON THEIR FRONT DOOR.**



A YEAR OF LEARNING

By **Ryann Mitchell**
Program Manager, The Learning Center

The year 2020 was a year unlike any other. It taught us the importance of faith, priorities, and community. Thankfully, students at The Learning Center were able to foster each of those ideals, in spite of the hardships of the year. Despite the shutdown, we celebrated as two students made professions of faith and were baptized last year. The good news continued as we hosted more Bible Study classes than ever before in the fall semester. As a result, the Gospel was shared with all of our students, many of whom currently claim no religion or claim another religion. Bible Study instructors told us about the multiple conversations with students where they could see the Gospel being planted and, Lord willing, taking root in their hearts.

Our students also came to class in 2020 in a new way. We reformatted our class structure so students only came to The Learning Center one day a week instead of three. Each student was given access to online tools like virtual classrooms, Zoom meetings, and online curriculum. The logistics of getting everyone in the building safely were not easy, but we found that trying to get everyone on the same page digitally was even harder. Nonetheless, the students proved that they have the drive to do the hard work. They persevered and, as a result, we had six sections of the GED passed between August and December. Our students didn't let a different class structure, the need for new technology, or even a global pandemic lessen the importance of this priority in their lives.

One of the six GED sections was passed by a student who had every excuse to quit. She had taken classes with us several times before but usually dropped out halfway through the semester. It was her pattern. In addition, she had failed this section of the GED four times already, always passing her practice tests but unable to overcome the anxiety when the actual test was in front of her. This student had to walk 3.5 miles to get to class and then 3.5 miles to get back home. Basically, all the odds were stacked against her, but she said she wanted it and she didn't want to give up because she knew she could do it.

We did our best to encourage her and teach her and help her work through her mindset as she took her tests. I watched her tremble with joy as tears rolled down her face when she found out she had passed her first section of the GED. It was something she has wanted for so many years and was a hurdle that she just couldn't quite get over. To see her prioritize her studies and to make it happen gave all of us such joy and for me personally, pride beyond compare.



The experience of going to school as an adult is unique. It's something you don't fully understand until you've lived it. In 2020, we saw how the students have become one another's community. They've built bonds with each other. They pray together and share encouragement in both good and bad times. They keep in touch with each other outside of class. Seeing them work together and support one another the way they do, especially during the craziness of 2020, was such a huge blessing that I will always be thankful for.

Overall, we had five students graduate in 2020 and had twelve sections of the GED passed. We saw students improve their grade level understanding by an average of more than one grade level in just twelve weeks. (That's nine months of progress in three months.) We watched as two of our graduates, Susan and Katie, walked across the stage and received their diplomas. We are grateful for the opportunity to serve our students. They are touching the lives of our staff and volunteers in ways we could not have imagined when we opened our doors four years ago. Mostly, though, we look forward to seeing what all of our students will accomplish and how the Lord will move in 2021.



Ryann Mitchell serves as the Program Manager at The Learning Center. She loves working in a ministry with so many eager students and equally-eager, 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

Maintaining a successful and cohesive team can be daunting, but doing so in a pandemic takes someone who trusts God and relies on His wisdom daily. Brad Gowing, Dawson's Executive Pastor, began his new role on January 1, 2020, and he never looked back! We all agree that Brad is an amazing leader, confidant, and friend...and he's funny! Learn more about Brad with the previously undisclosed information below.

What did you eat for breakfast today?

A smoothie, grapes, coffee, and a Clif Bar.

Do you have a nickname?

No.

What's your favorite beverage?

Coffee.

Would you rather explore the deep ocean or outer space?

Outer space.

Waffles or pancakes?

Pancakes.

Cake or pie?

I'll go with pie.

Favorite exercise?

Trail running.

Favorite superhero?

I don't really have a favorite superhero, so do I need to make one up?

Do you snore?

No, but you'll probably have to ask my wife that question.

What food do you hate?

Sushi.

Can you play an instrument?

None!

What was your first concert?

Alan Jackson.

Is it wrong for a vegetarian to eat animal crackers?

I mean I wouldn't think so; is there meat product in it?

What's your most used emoji?

Thumbs up.

When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

A dentist.

What's your go-to karaoke song?

I don't do karaoke.

If you could be any animal, what would you be?

A goose.

How long does it take you to get ready in the morning?

15 minutes.

What's your secret talent?

I don't think I have one. My girls think I can fix anything, but the reality is I can fix nothing.

What 2 things would you want if you were stranded on a desert island?

Do I have access to food on the island? No matter what food I could find on the island, I'd probably want an endless supply of peanut butter. And coffee.

What was your favorite pet's name?

Roscoe.

If you were a teacher, what grade or subject would you want to teach?

I think I'd want to teach 3rd Grade.

How do you like your steak cooked?

Medium.

Favorite place you've traveled to?

I think one of my favorite things I've ever done was hike to the bottom of the Grand Canyon.

Favorite movie?

Cowboys with John Wayne.

Most recent book you read?

Lead by Paul David Tripp

What song makes you dance?

Bluegrass music.

On a scale of 1-10, how good of a driver are you?

I would say I'm an 8.

Who was your first celebrity crush?

I don't know that that's an appropriate question. Let's go with Kelly from *Saved by the Bell*.

Favorite Disney princess?

What's the princess's name in *Mulan*? Is her name *Mulan*? Let's go with her.

What's your dream car?

A Chevy Z71 pickup truck. That's what I always wanted when I was 16.

Can you touch your toes?

Yes, I can touch my toes. Do I need to prove it?

Would you rather climb a mountain or jump from a plane?

Can I do both?

What's your middle name?

Bradley.

What can you cook really well?

Scrambled eggs.

What was the best Christmas present you ever got?

A trampoline.

What's your favorite sport to watch?

College baseball.

Favorite snack food?

Does peanut butter count? Peanut butter. I love grapes too.

What was your high school mascot?

The eagles.

If you could move anywhere else, where would it be?

I'd probably go to the mountains of North Georgia.

Travel by car or travel by plane?

Car.

Hardest lesson you've ever learned?

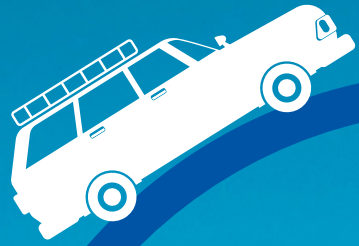
Be quick to admit when I'm wrong.

What are you bad at?

Singing. Terrible. Wretched.

Best purchase you ever made?

An engagement ring to give to my wife.



June 7–11, 2021

Learn more at dawsonchurch.org/KidLife.

Registration opens May 1.



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PSALMS

Songs of Ascent

Wednesdays at 11:00 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.

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