

# Together

AUGUST 2024

AT DAWSON

BAYRON  
MOSQUERA  
30 YEARS  
OF FAITHFULNESS

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Building  
Campaign  
Update

CHAPEL CHOIR  
MISSION TOUR  
in Oklahoma City

Missions Is  
Our Passion

Scenes  
of Summer  
2024!

# Life's Better Together

THERE'S A LIFE GROUP FOR YOU!

PRESCHOOL | KIDS | STUDENTS | COLLEGE  
YOUNG ADULTS | ADULTS | SENIOR ADULTS



[dawsonchurch.org/lifegroups](http://dawsonchurch.org/lifegroups)

# Together

AT DAWSON

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WATCH LIVE  
[live.dawsonchurch.org](https://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,

*He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance (Acts 28:30–31).*

Spoiler alert—these two verses are the final two verses of the book of Acts. I doubt any of you really enjoy having a movie, television show, or book ending spoiled. But can you really spoil the ending of a book of the Bible that has been around for over 1900 years? What an incredible ending to such an incredibly inspiring book of the Bible. I am so eager to return to the Acts sermon series in our Sunday morning worship services this fall.

As Luke's account nears its close, he details the Apostle Paul's days under house arrest in Rome. We are left with a cliffhanger, not knowing what exactly will be Paul's fate. But what is not left open-ended is what becomes of the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Though Paul is confined, his message cannot be confined. This message of the Good News goes forth with boldness and without hindrance.

What a wonderful reminder to us that, we, as servants of Jesus Christ, are a part of a much larger story that has been going forth for almost 2000 years. This is a message that shapes us. It is one that we have the privilege to share with boldness and without hindrance right here in Birmingham, and far beyond, through the work God is doing in our church family.

One of the purposes of our *Together at Dawson* magazine is to give you a glimpse into some of the wonderful ways God is at work in and through our church family. Contained in these pages are ministries that we desire to celebrate and opportunities for service and ministry that we want to pray about joining. But most of all, what you hold in your hands is simply a snapshot of God's faithfulness on display in the lives of those who call Dawson home.

So as the summer concludes and the fall is right around the corner, let us join God's work in and through His church as we share the message of the Gospel, like those who have come before us, with boldness and without hindrance.

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Eldridge". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Pastor David

# Life Group Stories

By Jim Rives



Jim and Sandi Rives' first Young Adult Life Group in 1989.

Sunday School has always been a significant part of my life, and it always will be. It's a big part of how the Holy Spirit works among us... and on me. But I think Life Group is a much better name, so I'll use that here.

I have a vivid memory from when I was five years old and in my class at our Methodist Church. Today, I appreciate the loving care someone took to paint that ugly plumbing pipe in the middle of the basement room, and then attach hand-made twigs and paper leaves to make it look like a tree. Someone invested a part of their life into my life just to give me a better atmosphere for learning about Jesus. What a subtle but sweet way to plant tiny seeds to encourage life in the Body of Christ and for a future Dawson Life Group member and leader.

Thirty-five years ago, after spending 18 years teaching Dawson's youth, my wife, Sandi, and I were asked to lead a Life Group of sweet young married couples who had lost two sets of leaders to other churches. Before they "let me in," three of the guys in that class insisted on interviewing me. They were kind,

but grilled me resolutely. After covering subjects like teaching priorities and style, I found out that what they mainly wanted to know was if we were staying. God matched us up. Members of that class grew in number and in active service at Dawson, the kind of growth essential in a healthy church.

A few years later in 1993, I realized we had added only one new couple in the last two years. After some focused prayer, I felt a call to start something new. Our group was strong, so we knew that they would be fine. With Alta Faye Fenton set to take over the teaching, Sandi and I left that beloved group to start a Life Group for young married couples new to the Birmingham area.

God never stops working. A few of those amazing Life Group members soon left to serve and lead in other areas of Dawson, ably meeting ministry needs and making room for new people. That next year with Alta Faye, they added eight couples, while seven new couples joined our new Life Group. With 30 additions to the Dawson family in one year, we all felt that God had led us to where He wanted us.

That "interview" Life Group is still going strong and is active. It is led by two men who were in that original group. (You know who you are, Lee and Lance.)

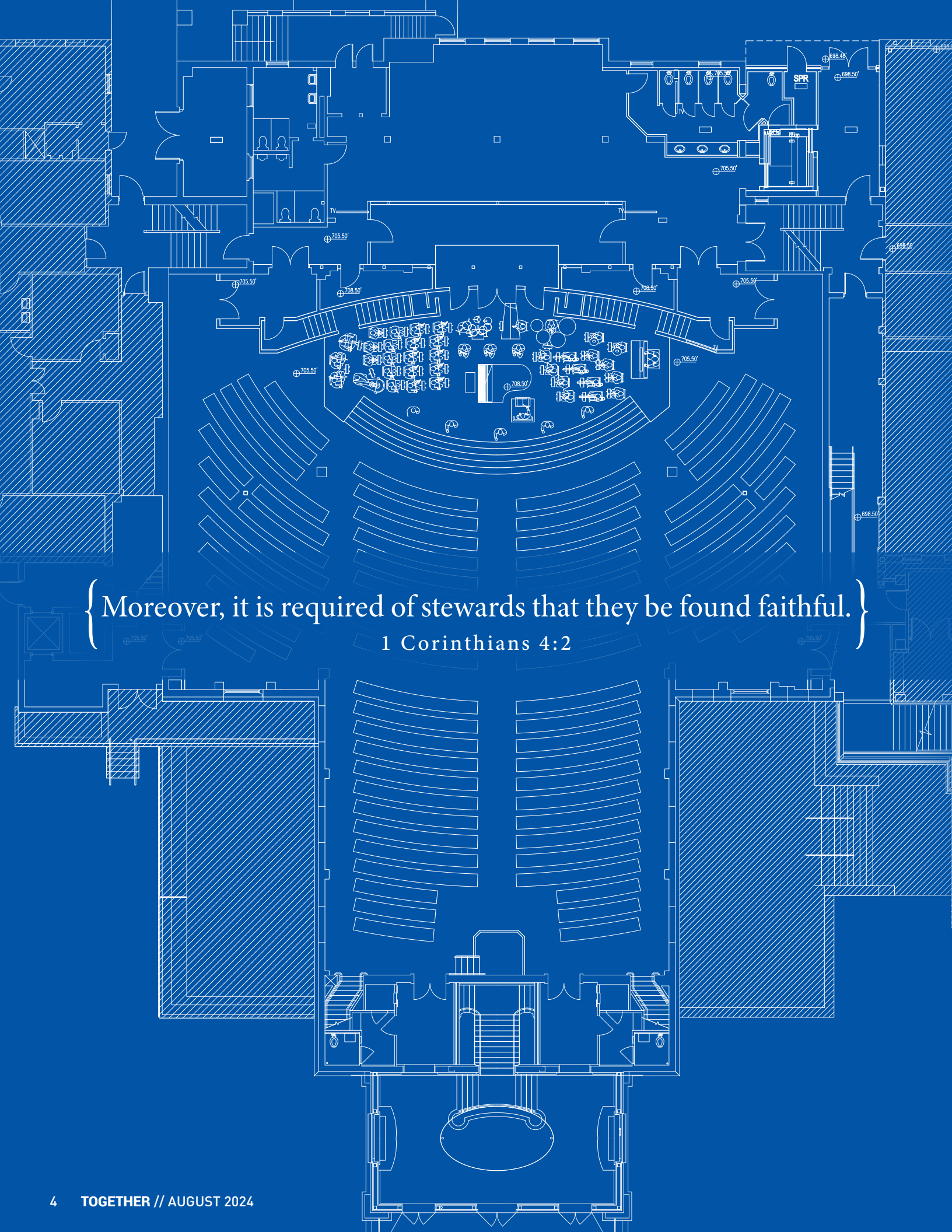
Today, after 50+ years in Life Groups, Sandi and I are enjoying the Spirit-filled dynamics of our sixth new class: a wonderful multigenerational Life Group that God put together in 2019. We began with 10 people anxious to reach out and grow—one couple each in our 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s and 70s. We are now 47 single and married adults who range in ages 35 to 80. God's still working.

Dean Thornton is a co-teacher. He and his wife, Tracy, grin and claim to this day that I "kicked them out" of the Life Group we started in 1993, and "made" them go teach in College. Well, we're back together in a Life Group and now Dean's my teacher. There you have it...

The CIRCLE of LIFE GROUPS.



**Jim Rives** has been married to Sandi for 57 years, and followed her to Dawson after their wedding. He loves teaching Language Arts and Bible Study at The Learning Center and is very active in the Music & Worship Ministry.



Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.

1 Corinthians 4:2

# SANCTUARY RENOVATION

By **Tom Thompson**

In 1920, as the Birmingham area gradually moved a little southward and came “over the mountain,” a group of committed believers realized that a Baptist church was needed in the Edgewood community. Starting in a living room, this group continued to meet informally, hoping to organize as a church. During that time, women from that same group who had faith that God had a plan for that church started a Woman's Missions Society. The women collected money on a regular basis and bought two lots on Oxmoor Road for the site of the future church building. In 1925, the original group was able to be reorganized, and the church was constituted as Edgewood Baptist Church. The Woman's Missions Society gave the two lots that they had purchased to the church, along with \$3,500 they had raised to put toward the cost of a building for worship and study. That is \$60,000 in today's dollars!

Edgewood Baptist Church was later renamed in memory of its first pastor, Dr. L.O. Dawson. Today, when you enter the Arendall Children's Building, you are walking across those original two lots. The faithfulness of the women in responding to God's call is the foundation on which Dawson is built.

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

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

Throughout its history, the members of Dawson have repeatedly answered God's call to provide the physical space needed so that more people can come to know Jesus as Savior and so that believers can grow toward spiritual maturity. God has blessed that response, and now we stand ready for the next step. Recognizing the need for renovation, in 2020 the church began a process of developing a Master Plan for the Sanctuary and adjacent spaces. That Master Plan was approved by the church on May 15, 2022. Subsequently

it was decided that the Master Plan should be built in phases, with the first phase being the Sanctuary itself.

The Sanctuary will be completely modernized, but it will retain the same character that was created in 1951. With pews, organ, expanded choir loft, and the same architecture, we will retain the Dawson feel. Our sound, lighting, video, and technology will all be state of the art. Egress and ingress will be improved. An expanded platform will accommodate today's worship style and provide access to those with mobility issues. The Next Steps area will be expanded to improve the experience for guests. The new Sanctuary will greatly enhance our worship experience while also better serving other events such as KidLife, DNow, weddings, Candlelight, and more.

On **November 17, 2024**, the church will have a Called Church Conference to approve the detailed construction plans and the cost for the first phase of accomplishing the Master Plan. If the church gives its approval, the next step will be a building campaign in early 2025. During the campaign, every Dawson member will be asked to make a commitment to give over and above their tithes and offerings for the next five years to help pay for the cost of the renovations. The savings in our Building Fund will be used, and we expect to borrow as well. In addition, we will need every Dawson member to make a commitment if this campaign is to be successful.

Construction will begin in the summer of 2025 and is estimated to last about 14 months. During construction, we will not be able to use the Sanctuary, so we will worship in the Family Recreation Center. Temporary enhancements will be made in the FRC to make those accommodations as we look forward to having a brand new space for worship.

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



**Tom Thompson** has been a member of Dawson for more than 30 years. He served on staff as Minister of Stewardship during the campaigns for the Arendall Building and for the Go Love Tell missions initiative.

# MISSIONS IS OUR PASSION

By **Ben Hale**  
Evangelism & Missions Pastor





# WE PROCLAIM THE LOVE OF JESUS

TO ALL PEOPLE BECAUSE THE LORD'S COMMISSION AND  
OUR CALLING IS TO MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS.

As I write this article about Dawson's passion for missions, I realize I have the privilege of addressing the subject from a unique vantage point. As Dawson's Minister of Evangelism & Missions, I regularly get to see our congregation's passion for missions lived out by our people. Sometimes it's in "big" churchwide efforts, and at other times it's in small individual acts of sacrificial service.

However, neither of the adjectives "big" or "small" adequately describe what I see. A better word to use that is much more accurate would be "significant." I get to see Dawson members making a significant impact on people's lives beyond the walls of our church. Put another way, I get to see Dawson members display their passion for missions by impacting the lives of others regularly in "significant" ways. Over the years I have developed a habit of intentionally looking for examples of our people passionately serving others with the goal of helping them experience God's love for them through Jesus. What does Dawson's passion for missions look like? The potential list is long, but here are a few things I have witnessed that are a great encouragement to me.

I am confident this next statement has never been uttered or written by any church staff member from any church at any time: "The most significant worship service I ever participated in at my church was an annual business meeting." Annual business meetings are important, but everyone knows they are seldom exciting. That was not the case for Dawson's annual business meeting in 2014. The reason this was a significant event for me was because it revealed Dawson's passion for missions.

On the agenda that night was a proposal that would, if approved, challenge the congregation to give five million dollars above their regular tithes and offering, over a five-year period, for five designated mission projects. Church leadership understood that if this were to be approved, it would mean that for this five-year period 25% of every dollar given to Dawson would be used to support mission causes beyond the walls of our church.

The response to the proposal left no doubt that at Dawson "Missions is our Passion." Those in the Chapel that night voted unanimously to accept the challenge, but they did not stop there. Immediately after the vote, everyone stood to their feet and applauded this monumental decision. Throughout the next five years, our members gave over their pledged amounts and at the same time Dawson's regular budget also increased each year. That is what a churchwide passion for missions looks like: unity, generosity, and sacrifice for the sake of the Gospel.

While that is just one churchwide illustration of what Dawson's passion for missions beyond the walls of our church looks like, I see other things happen on a regular basis. Things like:

- Volunteers counseling and praying with our clients at Kids Connection and The Learning Center.
- Teachers and tutors at The Learning Center welcoming each adult student by name as they arrive for classes.
- English Language instructors teaching our international friends to speak English.
- Dawson's three Hispanic pastors baptizing new believers in Homewood, Fultondale, and Huntsville.
- Shoppers helping grandmothers shop for clothes for their grandchildren at Kids Connection.
- Hispanic church planters, trained in Dawson's church planter residency program, starting and growing new churches in Albertville, Huntsville, Fultondale, Alabaster, and Birmingham.
- University students serving together to minister among an unreached people group in Eurasia.
- High schoolers working hard in Chapel Choir so that they will be prepared to lead worship and do outreach during their choir tour and mission project week.

If someone were to ask me to describe our congregation's passion for missions in one sentence, I would tell them that when it comes to missions, "We are a congregation with tremendous potential and extraordinary passion." My prayer is that we will be found faithful as we seek to use the reality of this statement to make disciples of the nations, just as the Lord taught us:

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20).



**Ben Hale**, Dawson's Evangelism & Missions Pastor since 2000, has been married to his wife, Lindy, for 37 years. They are parents to three adult children and grandparents to four grandchildren. Ben is passionate about providing people opportunities to serve beyond the walls of our church buildings.



# SUMMER RECAP!







# FAMILY GET TOGETHER

By Neechie Tarrant

Pictured: Inice Elise  
Carlisle Tarrant at her  
home in Dothan, AL.

"Can't catch me now!" the little girl exclaimed as she darted across the Sanctuary stage to hide behind the pastor standing in the pulpit. In front of the entire Sunday morning congregation, this wry, dark-haired three-year-old had grown restless sitting in the pew with her grandmother and decided this Sunday she would rather be in her mother's lap seated in the choir loft.

Even there, she grew more restless. The wiry toddler escaped the arms of her embarrassed mother and made a desperate dash across the stage to the refuge of her pastor's shadow. He stopped the sermon, and the congregation held their breath. He gently picked the child up into his arms, turned and calmed her mother with these words: "Do not worry, Sister Carlisle. Inice Elise is ok, and right now, enjoying more attention than I could ever hope for."

That loving pastor was Dr. L.O. Dawson, and the little girl is my mother, Inice Elise Carlisle Tarrant. Mom's mother in the choir that day was Inice Waller Dryman; and her grandparents sitting in the pews were Binion Chappel and Hattie Elizabeth Waller. Every Sunday in the late 1920s and early 1930s, these four charter members faithfully joined other families in the "Fieldstone Building" at Edgewood Baptist Church, which would later become Dawson Memorial Baptist Church after the passing of Dr. Dawson in 1938.

My brothers and I have heard this story and so many others throughout our lives. Even though we grew up in East Tennessee, far away from our families still in Birmingham, Mom wanted us to know the kind of special connection she had to her home church. There are so many chapters of her life that belong to the church, especially Dawson. Her church life began at her birth in 1929. In those days, babies were often dismissed from attending services in the Sanctuary. For Mom, this is where her love for Dr. Dawson began. In an era where children were to be seen and not heard, he believed that children and their mothers should be included in the worship services as soon as they returned to public life: first to hear the Gospel and to begin training as future members.

Mom tells one story of growing into that training by asking for her own personalized envelopes for tithing and special missions. Grandmother, like most during the Great Depression, was a frugal woman who tried to explain to Mom that her request was not feasible and selfish to

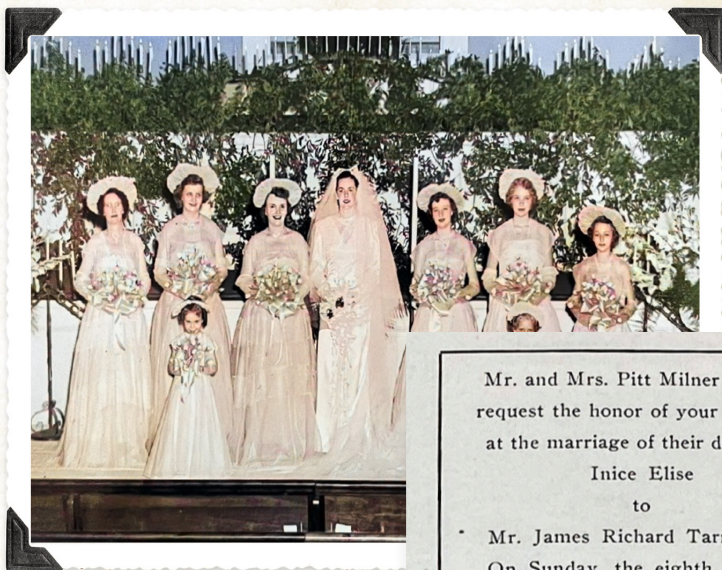
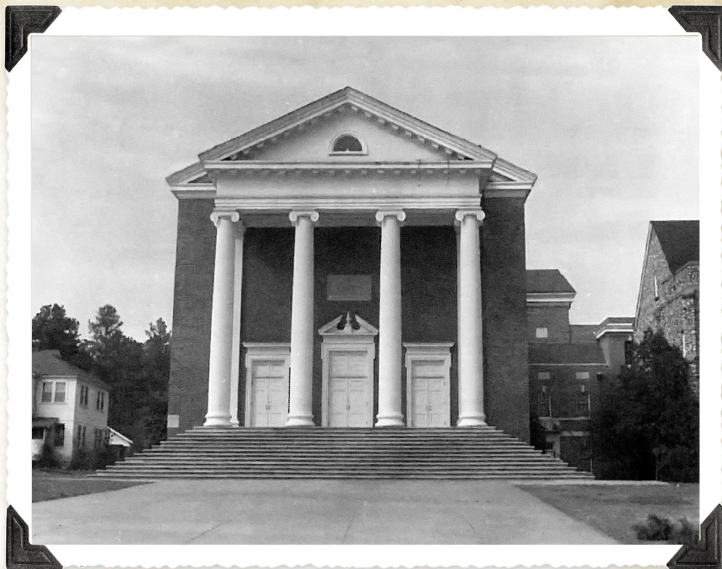


ask for. One set of envelopes for the family would certainly be enough. Dr. Dawson overheard their debate and intervened on Mom's behalf. He told Grandmother that because Inice Elise was, in fact, a baptized member of the church, she was entitled to her own envelopes. Beaming with pride and purpose, that young child began her commitment of giving back to God with the very next offering. Mom was filling her very own labeled envelopes with a tithe from her meager allowance, but more importantly she was fulfilling her commitment as a member of her church.

As a child, Mom had once used part of her tithe to buy candy, a rare treat in those days. When Grandmother discovered this, she explained that her tithe was "repayment" to God for His blessings. As such, she had taken God's money to spend on her candy. That lesson hit home and stays with her today.

Dawson Baptist Church was family to Mom. The church not only provided a direction and a lighted path but also wrapped her in faith and comfort in troubled times. She remembers vividly where she was and what she was doing when the news of Pearl Harbor was announced over the radio. Mom was in Training Union on December 7, 1941, when one of her friends came running into their classroom panting with the news that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. Without a thought, her teacher began to lead them all in prayer for President

**That  
loving  
pastor  
was  
Dr. L.O.  
Dawson,  
and the  
little girl  
is my  
mother,  
Inice  
Elise  
Carlisle  
Tarrant.**



Mr. and Mrs. Pitt Milner Carlisle  
request the honor of your presence  
at the marriage of their daughter  
Inice Elise  
to  
Mr. James Richard Tarrant, II  
On Sunday, the eighth of July  
At 8:30 o'clock in the evening  
at  
Dawson Memorial Baptist Church  
Homewood, Alabama

(Above) The first wedding in Dawson's newly completed Sanctuary celebrated the marriage of Inice Elise Carlisle to James Richard Tarrant, II on July 8, 1951. (Right) Invitation to church members listed in the Sunday bulletin on July 1.

Roosevelt and the families and service members stationed in Hawaii.

Mom thought the world of Dr. Dawson and so many other pillars of her foundation of Christian faith. After the loss of her beloved Dr. Dawson, Mom's new pastor quickly found a home in her heart. Rev. J. Ivey Edwards would pick up where Dr. Dawson left off.

An intelligent and precocious student, Mom was only fifteen when she entered Howard College. "Brother Edwards" took Mom under his wing and walked her into the Alpha Delta Pi "sorority house" (more of a campus meeting room than a house) where he introduced her to the young women who were also A-students in his Greek classes. As he explained to Grandmother, these were the "kind of young women that he wanted Inice Elise to be around—smart and church-going students." Through divine intervention and a miracle that Mom claims occurred, Grandmother found the funds she needed to pledge and become an ADPi. It was on the Eastlake campus that Mom and Daddy met and fell in love. Upon their graduation, they became engaged and then married. Part of our family's history is her 1951 summer wedding, which was the first formal wedding ceremony held in the newly dedicated Sanctuary at Dawson. I've been told that the wedding was huge, happy, and hot!

## She loves to share those July 1951 wedding photos.

When Mom and Daddy would return to Birmingham for Christmas holidays and summer vacations, we four children were expected to attend church services with Grandmother, aunts, uncles, cousins—all who attended Dawson. We would walk from Grandmother's house on the corner of Hawthorne and Grove Place down Oxmoor Road to Dawson with Mom. Following her footsteps to her church led us to our own memories of Dawson. Except for family, no one really knew us children there, but they sure knew our mom. We were proud of her and happy for all the welcoming embraces. There is nothing like coming home—and that is what Dawson was for Mom.

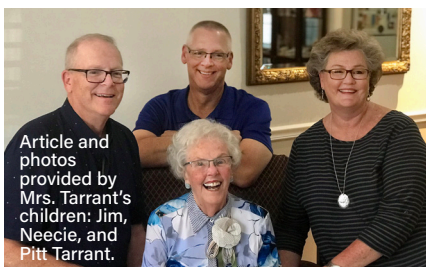
When we children attended church with Mom and Grandmother, we were never alone. We always sat with the rest of the Waller family, brothers and sisters of Grandmother who'd also joined Dawson in the early days. They always sat in the same section of the congregation. For decades, our extended families filled several pews on the right side of the church facing the pulpit. Mom's cousin,

Jim Smith, is the elder son of James and Shirley Smith and grandson to Ed and Elise Smith (my grandmother's sister). The Smith family also grew up at Dawson. Jim and his wife Ann attend Dawson today along with one of their children and several grandchildren.

## She still has the fire of Jesus in her heart.

Earlier this year, Jim brought a small team from Dawson to video Mom for a documentary celebrating the church's 100 year anniversary. Before filming began, my brother, Pitt, and I shared a meal with Jim and our new friends and listened to many of Mom's stories. Even in that short amount of time, there was something familiar in their friendly smiles and warm demeanor. It was a wonderful moment of time together, and Mom was definitely with her people.

Our mother is now 95 years old and still very much that same restless youngster who ran across the church's stage to find refuge near the preacher's pulpit. She is a fountain of energy to her friends and family around her in Dothan. Yes, she still lives independently, drives her SUV, uses a Kindle and a computer, does her own banking, and swims each week. She is a member of First Baptist Church in Dothan, where she has found many "transplants" from Birmingham, Samford, Dawson, and her sorority. She still has the fire of Jesus in her heart, but now she calls them "just glowing embers." Inice Elise Tarrant is still running across life's "stages" and finding refuge in the pulpit of her faith. I'll bet if you asked her, she'd still wink at you and say, "Can't catch me now!"



Article and photos provided by Mrs. Tarrant's children: Jim, Neechie, and Pitt Tarrant.



Miss Inice Waller, Dawson Charter Member



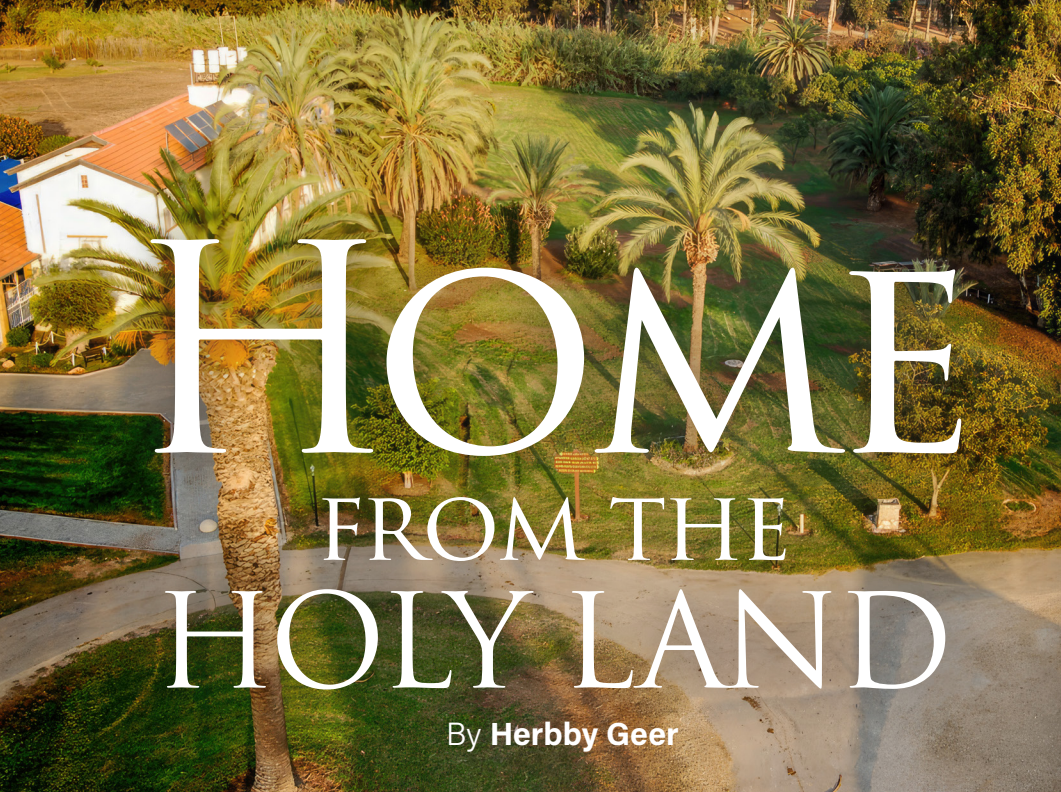
Mrs. B.C. Waller, Dawson Charter Member



The Waller family.



Inice Elise Carlisle and Jim Tarrant under the Sherman Oak at Howard College, 1947.



# HOME FROM THE HOLY LAND

By **Herbby Geer**



We are Herbby and Anne Geer, and we are living in one of your Dawson missionary houses for the next several months. What a blessing it is to be able to return home and have a place to stay where people are so caring and kind. This is our fourth time to stay at Dawson, after serving on the field for 38 years.

The Dawson family has been very special to us in several ways. First of all, staying with you allows us to be close to our family. My sister, Fay Elmore, and her family have been part of the Dawson family for more than 40 years. In addition, during one of our stays at Dawson, our son, after hearing the Gospel many times, came to the realization of the truth of Jesus in his own life. He accepted the Lord in one of the rooms in one of these Dawson houses. What a blessing!

We have been serving in Israel for 38 years now. Anne felt from the age of 12 years old that she was to live in Israel. Her journey began in 1985 when she went to the Holy Land as a volunteer after finishing a Bible school in England. She is originally from Kingston, Ontario. I am from Gordo, Alabama, and moved to Birmingham to work with The Southern Company.

After the Lord began to speak to me about serving Him in Israel, it took me roughly four years to work through that call. In 1987, I quit my job, sold my house, and went to Israel with a volunteer program. When I left Birmingham, I thought, "That's it, I'll be single for the rest of my life." But the Lord is faithful.

I met Anne in Israel, and we got married in 1990 and returned to Israel just before the first Gulf War. We raised our three children in Israel, and since 1997, we have been working as your Southern Baptist Representatives in Israel. What an amazing adventure of faith this journey has been.

We have seen Israel grow from the fledgling country of approximately 4.3 million to a country that now has 9.3 million people. It went from an agrarian society to one of the high-tech centers of the world. Israel is now known as

"the startup nation" because many high-tech companies start in Israel and then are developed in other countries where markets are larger.

One promise made to Israel in the book of Isaiah says: "Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, And gather you from the west. I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' And to the south, 'Do not hold them back.' Bring My sons from afar And My daughters from the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 43:5-6 NASB 1995).

We have witnessed this firsthand as the Jewish people have returned from all over the world. In the 90s, we saw the Lord bringing in the Ethiopian Jews from the south, and simultaneously, with the release of the Jews from the former Soviet Union with a large number of Jews returning from the north. Israel is so blessed with multiple cultures, languages, and cuisines from all over the world. It is truly a marvel to see and experience.

Spiritually, we have seen faith in Jesus growing in Israel. When we first started, the estimated number of Jews who believed in Jesus in Israel was around 2,500 people. Today, that number is estimated to be more than 35,000.



We have seen spiritual leaders develop from the movement. These leaders in Israel also have the potential of being spiritual and theological leaders worldwide. One of the greatest roadblocks to the Gospel has been the lie that one cannot be Jewish and believe in Jesus. Recent surveys have shown that 51% of Jewish people now believe it is possible to be Jewish and believe in the Jewish Messiah, Jesus Christ. Of course, many of these people may not believe this a good thing, but we are seeing a real and progressive change in the attitudes of many Israelis as they consider the true faith.

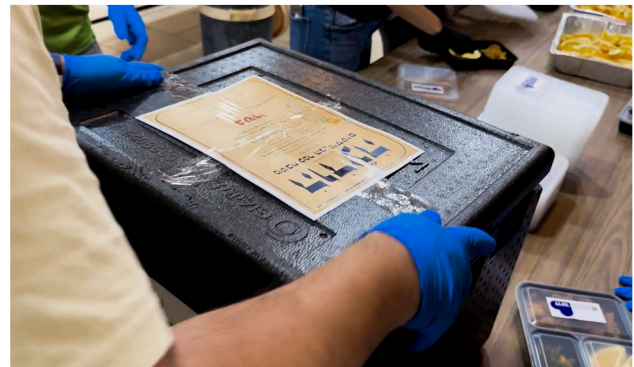
Baptist work originally began in Israel in 1911. We have many churches in Jerusalem, Galilee, and other places in northern Israel. In the late 1950s, there were many orphans because of the wars. The Baptist convention in Israel built an orphanage and was able to care for both Arab and Jewish children. This changed in the 1980s as laws concerning raising orphans of different religions changed. The orphans at the Baptist Village were allowed to continue there until their completion of high school.

Baptist Village was then repurposed and is now a camp and conference center, a place for congregations and churches to come to train and to grow. It has been an amazing thing to see the development of the body of Messiah within the different communities of Israel. Thirty years of developing relationships within these communities of faith has been amazingly fruitful.

When the tragedies of October 7, 2023, became known to us, Baptist Village immediately moved to being the center of emergency relief. The gifts that have been given through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, the Cooperative Program, and Send Relief made it possible to serve many of the hurting within Israel. More than 100,000 hot meals and meal equivalents were distributed to those in need. The Baptist Village was even able to get a Kosher license so that they were able to serve all the communities. All of our national partners came together as one. They gathered volunteers, materials, and funding to give much needed aid, comfort, and support to the hurting communities. There were more than 150 displaced people housed at Baptist Village during this time of need. All of those there were ministered to by the body of Messiah in Israel. It was a beautiful thing in the midst of a horrible tragedy. Many on the property would serve, pause during missile attacks, go into safe rooms, and then continue serving as soon as it was clear to work.

Southern Baptists have a rich history of loving and serving the peoples of Israel—both believing communities and those of other faiths. You are part of this rich history and of the light and love of Jesus that continues to shine in Israel today.

We would ask you to simply do what the Bible says in Psalms: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem." Israel is a nation that is hurting. They need your prayers. They need your love. Please pray for the Jewish people, the Bedouin people, the Druze of Israel, the Muslims of Israel, and all those who make up this amazing country that is so diverse, so small, and so critically important to the salvation history and future of the world.



**Herby and Ann Geer** lived in Israel for more than 35 years, which has given them a unique perspective on the Bible, understanding the land, and the Messianic movement. Herby currently serves in Israel as a Representative of the Southern Baptist Convention. He and Ann have three wonderful children.



# SUMMER RECAP! 2





🎵 OKLAHOMA IS

🎵 MORE THAN OK! 🎵

CHAPEL CHOIR

MISSION TOUR 2024

BY VIRGINIA BLACKMAN

This year, the Chapel Choir Mission Tour went to Oklahoma City, OK. This was my first year to go on a Chapel Choir Mission Tour, but I can't imagine previous tours being better than this one! Our goals for the eight days of ministry were to plant the seeds of the Gospel in Oklahoma City and allow the local churches to grow and continue to nurture those seeds. We had countless encounters with a wide variety of people who came from all walks of life.

## Day 1

On the first day, we went to a warehouse that housed **The Kaleo Foundation**. The Kaleo Foundation provides food and supplies for families in Oklahoma City. Sam and Pam Walker are the founders of The Kaleo Foundation, and they were ready for our arrival. While we were there, we packed food and supplies into bags for distribution. For Mission Tour, all of the students are divided into "Family Groups." My family group packed over 167 bags alone, and the overall total of bags packed by all of the family groups was 1,200 bags! At the end of our time there, we gathered together and sang some songs for them. The last song we sang was *The Blessing*. You could see tears streaming down Sam's face as we sang to him and his wife. I never knew how powerful that song was or how it could impact people until watching Sam that day.

After we left The Kaleo Foundation, we headed to **The Collective Kitchens**. In a way, it is very similar to the Pizitz Food Hall in Birmingham. My friends and I ate some of the best fried tacos that we had ever tasted! At one point, my friend Gabby, and I met two little girls named Isaiah and Isabella. We asked them some questions about Jesus and the Gospel. They didn't know much about Jesus except that he had died for our sins. Gabby and I gave the girls our story bracelets, which we use to help explain the story of the Gospel. Beaming, Isabella said, "I am going to give my bracelet to my mommy!" In that moment, I realized that meeting them had not been on accident but an opportunity for us to share what Jesus had done in our lives. And I also realized that you can share the Gospel anywhere, even when you are enjoying the best tacos ever!

After lunch, we departed for **Grace Rescue Mission**, which provides emergency shelter for homeless men. Our job there was to paint. We painted everything from inside rooms to the outside of buildings. Brother Scott, the campus pastor at Grace Rescue Mission, told me and some of the other girls I was working with (jokingly), that he now felt the confidence to put his name on the sign out front because of the great job we had done. Soon after everyone was finished painting (and covered in paint), we performed a concert for the residents who lived there. The parking lot was boiling hot.

During that concert, we sang many songs that moved the men. When we sang the song *One Day*, I could see that some of the men were visibly touched by the lyrics of the song. The song lyrics include: "When we all get to Heaven what a day of rejoicing that will be! When we all see Jesus, we'll sing and shout the victory." That song took on a new meaning for me, especially knowing how much of an impact it had made on people who have never heard the Gospel before. What an incredible way to end a hot and productive Day 1.



## Day 2

On Sunday morning, we woke up very early to lead worship at **Southern Hills Baptist Church**. The church was beautiful. It reminded me of Dawson because

of the people at the church. The members of the church were very welcoming and so kind to us. One thing that stood out to me there was that they celebrated wedding anniversaries on a slideshow before the service began. People who were celebrating anniversaries from 55 years all the way to one year were included. This was a sweet way to celebrate the healthy relationships that God has given to his people.

After we sang at Southern Hills, we headed to our four field day sites. Over the next three days, we would be spread out over four locations where we would be hosting a kids camp for children in the area. When we arrived, we walked around the park and prayed for our field day ministry there and the kids we would encounter. Once we finished praying at the sites, we drove to a place called **Hope Is Alive**, a home for recovering addicts.

At **Hope Is Alive**, we performed a concert for the men who lived at the facility. Before we sang, they held a time where some men could celebrate the number of months they had been sober. It was very encouraging to see how the men celebrated and encouraged each other. As we sang, shouts of joy and amens could be heard from the residents. A fellow choir member later shared with us, "My God moment was at Hope is Alive. As we were singing *One Day*, there was an older man who started to cry. Seeing a man that age show such vulnerability touched me and led me to pray for him and any burdens he carries. As we were singing 'One Day we'll be free, free indeed,' I prayed that blessing over him." Some of the men sang along to the songs even though they didn't know all of the lyrics. When we finished singing, we found some men to talk to after the concert. One man named Jacob told us, "Listen to your parents. You never know what God has planned for you. I am still realizing that now." While we visited there, we saw firsthand that HOPE IS ALIVE!

## Day 3

On Monday, we had our first field day. At my location, we started off the morning by walking around the neighborhood knocking on doors and asking people if they had or knew of any children in the neighborhood who would like

to join us. When my group got back to the park, it was swarming with kids, from ages two years old to even a few teenagers. We had over 65 people on the first day! That day I got to hang out with a kid named Elias. We played with the parachute on the playground, and we even played some soccer. I also got to explain to him what the Gospel was as I used my story bracelet we were handing out to everyone. Elias said that he had never heard the Gospel before and that surprised me. Growing up in a church, you hear the story of Jesus so much that it just becomes normal, but to Elias, it was a new story, a new adventure. He gladly took the bracelet and said, "I will keep it forever."

AS WE SANG,  
SHOUTS OF JOY  
AND AMEN'S  
COULD BE  
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THE RESIDENTS.

After the field day we headed off to **The Vine**. The Vine is a place where mothers who have been in toxic or abusive relationships can go and live safely with their children. We hosted a small camp for the kids that afternoon. They did arts and crafts, recreation, and face painting. I was in charge of a crafts station. At my station, the kids got to color some felt bags and create scratch art. Each kid had a student buddy who hung out with them the whole afternoon. It was cool to see how engaged the kids were with their buddies. After the camp was over, we invited the kids and their mothers (who had not been with them at kids camp) to enjoy dinner

and a concert with us. The kids and moms enjoyed watching the puppets and listening to the Chapel Jazz Band perform various songs. They were so engaged and joyful that night, with claps, cheers, and even a conga line! When it was time for us to perform our songs, John Woods, Dawson's Music & Worship Pastor, invited the kids to the front and told them to clap, dance, and sing along with us. At one point, he told them to stand on the risers with us as we sang *Swinging with the Saints*. There was so much happiness on the kids' faces when they got to sing with us. Each child found their buddy and was enjoying every second of the time that they had with them on the risers. They sang and danced their hearts out. It was very moving to see how each kid treasured their time with us, even though we spent only a few hours with them.

After the concert was over, one of the residents came to the front and shared her testimony with our group. She told us how she had been through life's ups and downs and that she had questioned whether she should even stay at The Vine. She then told us about a dream she recently had where she saw the word STAY seven times in red letters, followed by the phrase, "And I will multiply your blessings." She said, "and I have been here ever since. God has called me to minister to the women here, so that I can provide encouragement to them while they go through their hardships." This reminded me of the importance of listening to God—especially when we think our plan would be best.

## Day 4

On the second field day I hung out with a young girl named Tang and her sisters. We played tag and swung on the swings. Another girl told me that her kid was most excited for Bible study. The seeds of the Gospel were growing at our field day site after only two days! After our activities were over, we went to the **Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum**. At the museum, we learned about the bombing of the government building in Oklahoma City. Some of the most moving things I saw at the museum were glass chairs that had the names of those who died on the day of the bombing. There was one chair that had a woman's name on it along with the words "and her baby." One of my friends shared, "I noticed a connection: the bomber ran away from the destruction while the helpers ran toward it. In the same way, Satan plants doubt and then runs away, and Jesus runs toward us every time." When we sang *The Blessing* at the





Survivor Tree, it made me think about all of the people who lost their lives that day. I also believe that God had a plan and a purpose for this tragedy and even through the loss, the goodness of God is still alive.

## Day 5

On the evening of the fifth day, we hosted a block party at **Vintage Church**. We had invited the children from each of our field day sites to come to a block party. Our hard work really paid off, because there were over 1,000 people that came that night! We had face painting, gaga ball, bounce houses, balloon animals, and so much more. After the fun, we sang for everyone there. John called a woman forward who had been at his field day site. He then told us that she wanted us to sing *I Shall Wear a Crown*. When we started singing the lyrics, "I shall see His face, I shall see His face. When it's all over" tears started to roll down her face. After we finished singing the song, she came around and hugged each and every one of us saying, "Thank you. God bless you." The gift of song and the way God used us to glorify Him was so evident in that moment.

After the concert was finished, we handed out the bags we made at The Kaleo Foundation on our first day. So many of us thought that Pam and Sam would hand out the bags to the families, but we were given the joy of handing them out to each family who came to the block party. The people who came said that they were so blessed to have food to make meals for the next few weeks, as many of them had no idea where their next meal was coming from. That was a first for me, since I have never had to worry about that. Throughout this experience, God has taught me to be more grateful for what He has given us. Many people at the block party came

from underprivileged backgrounds and were grateful for just one can of food. Seeing the joy on the kids' faces when we gave them the bags full of food was worth it all.

## Day 6

On Thursday morning we went to a special needs facility called **Wings** in Oklahoma City. There we sang and talked with the residents. Each resident enjoyed dancing and clapping along with us. They truly enjoyed every second of the performance. After the concert we had the privilege of connecting with the residents. Some other freshman girls and I got to know a woman named Aubro. She told us about her favorite TV shows, what she was having for lunch that day, and all about her family. It was a special time, and we enjoyed being able to connect with the residents of Wings in such a unique way.

This Mission Tour showed me what an honor and privilege it is to be surrounded by a community of believers at such a young age. I have heard the stories of how Jesus walked and lived with His disciples. I have learned the songs we all sing as children, and have even memorized Scripture, but so many of the people we encountered this week had never heard of the redeeming story of our hope. Sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ and planting those seeds of faith were the most rewarding parts of the whole experience. I'm not sure how the next three Chapel Choir Mission Tours could ever top this one, but I'm excited to see what comes next!



**Virginia Blackman** is a rising 10th grader at Mountain Brook High School. She is the daughter of Eric and Lindsey Blackman. Virginia is involved with choir at school and is looking forward to being in leadership of Chapel Choir this year.



# My Extraordinary 30 YEAR JOURNEY

By Bayron Mosquera  
Hispanic Pastor



(From left to right): Byron Mosquera, Jr., Maria Mosquera, Evelyn Meza, Benjamin Meza, Marco Meza, and Pastor Bayron.

It was Wednesday, November 30, 1994, when I arrived in Birmingham with my wife, Maria, and our children, Evelyn (6) and Byron, Jr. (4). We brought four suitcases full of optimism and hope. It was the beginning of our “American Dream,” which had more to do with our desire to be obedient to the will of God than with ensuring our future or our material well-being. I started working on December 1, the very next day! I vividly remember that it was a time when Dawson was in the process of making a technological change from typewriters to computers. Every new employee received a notebook, a pen, and a floppy disk, and the entire staff

shared three computers in a Technology Room. The office assigned to me was in the Middle East building. When I heard the words “Middle East” it made me feel like I had been commissioned to be a true missionary.

I always understood that the pastoral calling includes being willing to serve wherever the Lord calls you. However, I never thought that He would call me away from my native country, much less to serve in the United States. It was only when Dawson called me to work as Pastor of the Hispanic Congregation that I understood that God had plans for me and my family in a place far from where I was born.

In their initial proposal, I would serve approximately four years at Dawson while attending a Baptist seminary and then return to Ecuador to continue my pastoral work there. However, when I completed my studies, Dawson invited me to stay on as their Hispanic Pastor. After prayerful consideration with Maria, Evelyn, and Byron, Jr., we agreed that God’s calling was here, and Dawson incorporated me into the staff as a full-time employee. Not in my wildest dreams would I have ever expected that I would be celebrating 30 years of serving the Lord at Dawson this December!



Pastor Bayron in the 1990s.



Pastor Bayron and family in 1998.



Congregación Hispana trailer

I have to admit, the first years of working at Dawson were quite challenging. I had to assimilate to the culture, understand new ways of thinking, pursue a seminary degree in a different language, attend to my family's needs, and work with a congregation made up of people from a variety of different countries. Many may not realize that Hispanic speaking countries, ranging from Mexico to Argentina, include people who are as culturally different as Americans are to the British and Australians. Another challenge was to lead a Hispanic Congregation within the dynamics of the Dawson Anglo Church, which meant that we had to function under the policies, principles, rules, and structures, while sharing the same physical space. I liken it in similarity to being a musician in an orchestra in which one has to carefully read the music so as to not sound dissonant.

The need was there, and there was an expectation that the Hispanic Congregation would grow. With this goal in mind, we formed small home Bible study groups throughout the Birmingham metropolitan area. This helped the Congregation begin to flourish. There was one unique characteristic with this congregation: that is, there were members who were transient, who for work reasons were constantly moving within the United States, or had to return to their countries of origin. All of this made the growth process slow.

Over time, I realized that this seemingly negative aspect to our ministry had a positive side. Those transient members who were coming and going and only temporarily with us were now prepared to go out as missionary agents of the Gospel. They would now carry the Word of God to the place or places where they moved, whether within the United States or to their countries of origin when they returned. The fruit of our labor was not only in what could be seen in terms of

numbers here at Dawson but also in what was not seen this side of Heaven. Once I understood this reality, I felt that the work we were doing was not in vain. This encouraged me to move forward, understanding that I was working, not only for the local church, but also for the extension of the Kingdom of God.

As the years passed, we expanded our outreach through different events, such as immigration conferences, dental and ophthalmological clinics, soccer tournaments, and Hispanic Vacation Bible School. Not only did we have the opportunity to share the Gospel at each and every event, but we also had opportunities to build friendly relationships with attendees.

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VAIN.

VBS has been one of the most outstanding events for outreach, not only for children and young people of our community but also, for their parents. Through our VBS, many kids have come to know Jesus as their personal Savior. This event brought Hispanics and Anglos together so that hundreds of children had a lot of fun and learned about Jesus. And it's a perfect example to show that culture and language are never an obstacle when it comes to serving the Lord.

Our vision then extended beyond the four walls of our church. We began to realize that in Alabama there was no organization, such as an association or convention for Hispanic churches to organize events together. A group like this would allow us to fellowship or simply get to know each other among the different churches. One idea arose to organize a musical event in which all of the Hispanic Churches in the state of Alabama could participate. So, in October 2001, the Dawson Hispanic Congregation hosted "Hispanic Day," which was attended by more than 200 people. This was such a success that Dawson hosted this event for the next five consecutive years.



# THESE 30 YEARS HAVE BEEN SO RICH AND REWARDING!

This event gave rise to other initiatives, such as organizing conferences, retreats, and training events for the formation of leaders who were preparing to face the challenges of reaching the increasingly growing Hispanic community. This last initiative resulted in the founding of the Alabama Fraternity of Hispanic Churches in 2003 (now Alabama Hispanic Baptist Churches), and later, the establishment of the Alabama Baptist Bible Institute in 2010. The Bible Institute began its operation at the First Baptist Church of Hoover with 30 students, and it utilized several local pastors as teachers. The study plan included a three-year curriculum ending with a certificate of completion. For 13 years I have had the privilege of being part of the faculty, teaching the Old Testament, and in this way, contributing to the formation of the next generation of leaders, several of whom currently work as pastors.

On more than one occasion we have asked ourselves how to define the relationship between the Hispanic Congregation and Dawson's Anglo Congregation. In many ways, we seem to function independently, since we have our own programs and activities, we appoint our officers, we manage our budget, we have our finance committee, our own worship service, etc. However, we operate with the same

rules and principles and occupy the same building. The best definition of this relationship was given by Dawson's former Senior Pastor, Dr. Gary Fenton, when he explained the Church Within a Church concept in an article in the weekly *Together* bulletin:

*"How do you expand the kingdom of God in the local setting? One excellent model is church growth by reaching people for Christ. . . . A second method is church planting by beginning new small congregations with their own styles and customs. . . . A third method is the "Church Within a Church" concept that can be effective under the right conditions and circumstances. This method uses an existing church's organization, infrastructure, and buildings to start new groups within the church. The new groups develop their own unique styles and methods yet stay connected to the larger body through mission, doctrine, membership, and use of the larger church facilities. Instead of investing in real estate and buildings, these new groups can quickly invest in missions and ministry. Our Hispanic congregation is an example of the 'Church Within a Church' concept. "*

In 2016, with the purpose of developing more orderly and intentional work, the

Hispanic Congregation launched a short-term Strategic Plan, determining goals and objectives that would allow us to quantify results. This plan included planting a new church in the northern area of Jefferson County where there was no Hispanic Baptist Church. Before long, this effort bore a great deal of fruit, and soon it was time to look for a pastor to direct this new work. Several of our congregation's leaders and their families prayerfully decided to help with the new church and left to support the work in Fultondale.

These 30 years have been so rich and rewarding! Many people have heard the Gospel and have been baptized. Entire families have been strengthened, and we have been a blessing to many sister churches. We want to continue our work here where God brought us so many years ago, following His voice, and understanding that the task is not finished. I want to express my personal gratitude to all of Dawson for its vision for opening their doors to our Hispanic Ministry and for making us feel welcome and at home each and every day. It is a privilege to be part of this great family of faith.




**Bayron Mosquera** loves to work with people, helping those in need, and sharing the Gospel with non-believers. In his free time, he enjoys playing soccer and ping pong.

*dma*  
**20** Year  
Celebration

By Kimberly Jones  
Director, Dawson Music Academy





In July 2004, I received a phone call from Layla Humphries, the founder of Dawson Music Academy (DMA). She was gathering a team of teachers who were not only talented musicians but also loved Jesus, and who wanted to be part of Dawson's vision to create a place for musicians of all ages to grow in their musical talents. She invited me to join the team, and I wholeheartedly answered,

**“Yes!”**

You see, for as long as I can remember, I wanted to be a teacher. I've always been fascinated by the important role that teachers play. Growing up, I was fortunate to have several remarkable Sunday School teachers who taught me not only the truth of God's Word but also what it means to anchor my daily life in His promises. Their impact on my life is best summarized by the famous quote, "A teacher affects eternity; she can never tell where her influence stops" (Adams). The validity of that quote has gained clarity as I've grown older. The many hours that my Sunday School teachers invested preparing Sunday School lessons, teaching Sunday morning Bible studies, praying for me, talking with me, answering my questions, and encouraging me to follow God's ways helped shape me into the person that I am today.

In addition to my desire to teach, I've always enjoyed music. As a child, I sang in children's choir, took piano lessons, and played flute in the high school band. After graduating from Samford University with a degree in church music, God opened the door for me to combine my passion for teaching with my love for music.

Layla, also a Samford graduate, had a passion for sharing the joy of music, too. As a talented violinist, Layla played in Dawson's Sanctuary Orchestra and served as an Instrumental Associate on Dawson's staff. Bob Hatfield, Dawson's Minister of Music at the time, and Layla wanted to expand Dawson's thriving music ministry to include private music lessons. In August of 2004, with a vision to share the joy of music, Layla and Bob, together with the support of the Dawson Family of Faith, launched the ministry of Dawson Music Academy.

When the Academy began, one of the original goals was to provide a way to support musicians who were already leading worship at Dawson. With the important role that Dawson's Sanctuary Choir and Orchestra held in leading worship each Sunday, the Academy provided a way to support musicians who were interested in improving their musical skills and in gaining confidence to lead in worship. Sometimes that might be a DMA voice teacher coaching a soloist for Sunday. Other times that might be providing weekly lessons for a flute player who wanted to join the Orchestra but had taken decades off since her high school days of playing.

In addition to supporting current musicians who were already connected at Dawson, another aspect of DMA's ministry was focused on community outreach. The schools in our community are known for their excellent music programs, from elementary music programs to high school show choirs and marching bands. With a community so focused on music education, creating a music school on Dawson's campus seemed like a wonderful idea. Providing music education resources through private lessons definitely had some positive benefits, but it was not the primary goal. The top goal was finding ways to build community outreach connections, and as the Lord provided opportunities, to share the good news of the Gospel.

*Let everything  
that has breath  
praise the Lord.*  
—Psalm 150:6

## *Ministry*

The mark of a teacher is powerful, having the opportunity not only to teach music but also to build meaningful relationships with students and their families. With private lessons, teachers have the opportunity to invest in students over the timespan of several years. As they connect with students, God provides opportunities to share Christ's love in powerful ways. Teachers encourage students when they're walking through tough seasons of life, but they also celebrate with them when they win the school talent show! Because of this important role that teachers play, each one of our Academy instructors not only has a passion for teaching music, but also has a growing relationship with Christ.

While our primary role remains to teach music (and not a Sunday School lesson) each week during lessons, we're always amazed at the meaningful opportunities God provides for ministry. Sometimes that means sharing a Bible verse of encouragement with a student. Other times it might mean praying for or with a student and their family. Sometimes it's just offering a listening ear and reminding a teenager that they're not alone. And sometimes it's helping a student get plugged in with Dawson discipleship ministries and watching the body of Christ minister in powerful ways!

One of the unique opportunities provided through music lessons at Dawson is the "open door" that we provide to families in our community. While there are many Dawson members who enjoy taking music lessons at the Academy, there are also many families who do not have a place that they currently call their church home. In fact, some of our students and their families have different faith beliefs or none at all. And for us, that's okay. We think it's an awesome mission field to be able to share the Good News of Jesus as opportunities arise. And it's even more amazing to recognize that these students and their families have the opportunity to set foot inside Dawson's campus every week and to be around the body of Christ. We may be the only "Jesus representatives" they see this week. Isn't that awesome?

While some of these families may not yet be comfortable joining us for Sunday worship, they are comfortable attending music lessons on our campus. Our Academy team is constantly looking for ways to help these families experience more of what God has for them. With that goal in mind, we created what has now become one of our annual highlights for students: our Academy "Celebration Sunday" in November.

On Celebration Sunday, all Academy students are invited to join with Dawson's Sanctuary Orchestra to lead in Sunday Worship. This special opportunity allows students to experience the unique role of playing with a live orchestra. It also allows students to see what it looks like to offer their talents to the Lord and to lead in worship. But, equally important, it provides an opportunity for families who may not ever set foot in a Sunday Worship service to see what it looks like to worship the one true, living God!

## *Celebrations*

For the past 10 years, I have had the amazing privilege of serving as the Director of DMA. My favorite part of my job is watching students of all ages experience the joy of music. Starting as young as 6 months old, babies and their parents join us for Kindermusik classes. Joy fills the room as over 100 Kindermusik families sing, giggle, and dance each week.

The joy of music connects with students of all ages. Each week, our Academy



welcomes over 300 private lesson students, from age 4 years old to 74 years old, to explore their musical talents. If you walk through the North Building or West Building on a weekday afternoon, you'll hear a variety of beautiful instrument sounds: piano, flute, trombone, violin, cello, drums, guitar, voice, and more. You'll also hear a variety of musical styles.

Some students are working with their teachers to prepare a song they'll share in Worship this Sunday. Other students are working on a Show Choir audition song or selections that meet the All State Band requirements. Other students are playing classical favorites such as Vivaldi's violin concertos or Bach's famous inventions. Whatever the age of the student and whatever the style of music, our goal remains the same: support students in their musical talents while sharing Christ's love.

In addition to private lessons, one of our favorite music adventures occurs each summer in July when we host over 250 preschool and elementary campers for our annual Summer Music Camp. During this exciting week, campers explore new musical skills, enjoy team spirit games, and celebrate God's faithfulness during daily Worship Rally. Similarly, our Ignite Student Bands provide opportunities for elementary, middle school, and high school students to grow in musical skills as well as worship leadership opportunities. Watching the younger generation grow in their musical gifts while also learning biblical truths is truly amazing!

### *Looking ahead*

Celebrating 20 years is an exciting benchmark for DMA! There's not enough space in these pages to share all of the stories of student lives that have been impacted by the Gospel or all of the stories of young musicians who have grown up to be worship leaders, music teachers, symphony players, and much more. And God is still writing the story of our continued ministry for many years to come!

Our Academy teachers, students, and families are extremely grateful to the Dawson Family of Faith for your ongoing belief and support of our ministry and vision. Thank you to the many Dawson members who have been part of our journey from the very beginning. And a special thanks to those of you who have offered a warm Dawson welcome to Academy families who cross your path during special ministry opportunities. Without your support, our ministry reach would be very limited. As we look ahead for future opportunities, please join us in praying for teachers, students, and families to experience not only the joy of music, but also the power of the Gospel.

Since the beginning of DMA in 2004, a focus of our Academy has been sharing the joy of music. It is truly a joy to share the gift of music and the Good News of Christ with our community! The psalmist summarizes that goal well with the proclamation found in Psalm 150:6, "Let everything that has breath praise the LORD."

If you are interested in learning more about the ministry of Dawson Music Academy, please email Kimberly Jones at [kjones@dawsonchurch.org](mailto:kjones@dawsonchurch.org).



**Kimberly Jones** Before becoming Director, Kimberly taught piano and voice with the Dawson Music Academy. Previously, Kimberly served as an educator in the Homewood City Schools for 14 years. She is married to Greg, and they have one son, Garrett.

## Connections & Celebrations Since 2004



# music lessons taught

**150,000+**

# visitors on DMBC campus

**10,000+**

# DMA Students

**3,572**

# Summer Campers

**2,375**

# Kindermusik families

**1,023**

# Dawson volunteers supporting DMA ministry events

**525**

# Christmas carols played at retirement homes

**988**

# student players in DMA Celebration Sunday

**682**

# students selected for All-State Orchestra/Band

**179**

# student players in DMA Ignite worship bands

**84**



# THE DAWSON FOUNDATION MAKING A LASTING IMPACT

By Stella Young

I am profoundly grateful for the Dawson Educational Foundation Scholarship. The support it has provided has been invaluable. Many are aware that the cost of higher education continues to rise, and as I approached my college years, I diligently sought scholarship opportunities to help alleviate the financial burden on my parents. One of the most meaningful sources of support I've received has been from the Dawson Educational Foundation.

Reflecting on my college journey at the midpoint, I am especially appreciative of how this financial assistance has allowed me to pursue my specific career aspirations. Initially, I began my college career uncertain about my field of study and enrolled as an exploratory major for my first two semesters. This program allowed me to explore various disciplines before deciding.

At the end of my freshman year, I decided to major in Human Development and Family Sciences within the School of Human Sciences. My ultimate goal is

to pursue a Master's in Mental Health Counseling, focusing on working with children and adolescents.

Growing up, my strong relationship with God has been a cornerstone of my life. His presence has been evident in many ways during my college years. I have found a wonderful church community, where attending services at a vibrant, Gospel-centered church has been a weekly blessing. Additionally, being part of a small Bible study group has deepened my understanding of God's character. Through this group, I have learned about His leadership, care, and protection. Surrendering my plans to Him has led to greater fulfillment than I could have imagined on my own.

My involvement in a faith-based campus ministry has also been enriching. This past Spring Break, I participated in a mission trip to Nicaragua, where we served in a local village. We shared the Gospel, built houses, and led a Vacation Bible School for the children. This experience was so transformative.

God used me as a vessel to spread His Word while also teaching me valuable lessons in leadership and boldness. Witnessing the openness of the Nicaraguans and seeing many accept Jesus into their hearts was a humbling and unforgettable experience. It remains one of my most cherished memories.

I am deeply thankful for my upbringing at Dawson, which provided a solid foundation that I have carried with me into college. The Dawson Educational Foundation's scholarship support has been instrumental in my educational journey, and I will always be indebted for the assistance it has provided during these formative years.



**Stella Young** is the daughter of Jack and Hayley Young. Stella grew up at Dawson and is a junior at Auburn University studying Human Development and Family Sciences. When she's back home in Birmingham, you will find her rocking babies in Dawson's nursery.



# The Dawson Foundation

For the 2024–2025 school year, the Foundation awarded \$131,950.

Congratulations to our recipients!

<b>NAME</b>	<b>COLLEGE / UNIVERSITY</b>
Rana Abawi	UAB
Caroline Adams	Samford University
Alexa Alvarez	UAB
Claire Bailey	Southern Union
Madeline Beam	University of Alabama
Maddie Bembry	Auburn University
Rachel Bensingher	Samford University
Madilyn Berryhill	Samford University
Salvador Blanco-Perello	Beeson Divinity School
Lexa Botello-Montoya	To Be Determined
Will Bourland	Mississippi State University
Abigail Bradford	Beeson Divinity School
Emily Bradley	University of Alabama
Parker Burnham	Troy University
Mason Campbell	Beeson Divinity School
Ashley Chicnes-Pizarro	UAB
Joselyn Corona	Jefferson State Community College
Elizabeth Doss	Auburn University
Hayden Eldridge	Auburn University
Carrie Engle	Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary
Carter Engle	Auburn University
Brianna Flores	Mississippi State University
Emmalee Floyd	Auburn University
Matthew Floyd	Jefferson State Community College
Avery Flynt	New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
Hannah Gibson	Beeson Divinity School
Katherine Gillum	Wofford College
Elizabeth Gillum	Mississippi State University
Adan Guerrero-Camacho	University of Montevallo
Kiara Guerrero	Samford University
Isaac Hennessey	Samford University
Jack Harrington	Auburn University
Aubrey Helms	Auburn University
Kindred Herrera	Belmont University
Grayson Holbert	Beeson Divinity School
Cameron Hughes	Covenant Theological Seminary
Ainsley Hulsey	University of Alabama
Haley Hulsey	University of Alabama
Maddie Hunsberger	Auburn University
Ali Hyde	Mississippi College
Cassady Hyde	Mississippi College
Ella Jayne Hyde	Samford University

<b>NAME</b>	<b>COLLEGE / UNIVERSITY</b>
Isabelle Jackson	Auburn University
Cooper Johnston	Samford University
Josh Kaiser	Auburn University
Kate Kaiser	Auburn University
Haleigh Kelley	Auburn University
Charlotte Lee	Auburn University
Sophia Lindsey	Mississippi State University
Laura Matthews	Auburn University
Aniyah McCaslin	University of Alabama
Sury Meza-Cortes	Samford
Hannah Mintz	Highlands College
Matthew Morris	University of Alabama
William Morrison	Beeson Divinity School
Caleb Mullis	Huntingdon College
Jessica Natalia-Cortes	Samford University
Benjamin Nation	Mississippi State University
Jose Ocampo	Samford University
Livi Cate Osborne	Mississippi College
Allie Patrick	University of North Alabama
Anna McKaime Patrick	Mississippi College
Dulce Perez-Angeles	UAB
Jordan Poe	Auburn University
Jordan Posada	Auburn University
Kaylee Ramsour	Samford University
Jacob Ray	UAB
Maddie Roberts	University of Alabama
Elizabeth Rohdy	Auburn University
Emily Romero	UAB
Jackson Shows	Samford University
Shepherd Skellie	Samford University
Hannah Swearingen	Samford University
Tristan Tate	UAB
Jackson Taylor	Samford University
Kate Varner	Samford University
Timmy Watkins	Beeson Divinity School
Chase Whitworth	Mississippi State University
Ellie Willcutt	University of Mississippi
Claudia Williams	Indiana University
Chelsey Wilson	Selma University
Stella Young	Auburn University
Timneisha Young	Troy University



Lainee's family with her mom and dad.

By **Lainee Stidham**  
Discipleship Ministry Assistant

**WORDS ARE POWERFUL. I GREW UP IN A FAMILY OF FOUR: DAD, A BAPTIST PREACHER, MOM, A MUSIC TEACHER, AND A BROTHER WHO I THOUGHT HUNG THE MOON.**

**My dad** had lots of words in the pulpit, but he was a gifted listener at home. There was always a relaxed safety in the many conversations I remember having with him. When I needed to be disciplined, he was succinct. He would remind me what I did, explain my consequence and the purpose it served, and leave me to sit with it. (Ugh! I hated sitting with it.) My thoughts would criticize, deceive, and sometimes overwhelm me. I've always had more thoughts than I knew what to do with.

**My mom,** on the other hand, was constantly bubbling over with energy. She is a brilliant performer. Some of my earliest memories are of her in full makeup and costume on stage as she performed "The King and I" with the Augusta Opera. She can hold down the highest notes like nobody's business, in a sold-out opera house, and a smile on her face. Mom had perfected her craft. The show would always go on, and she could always be counted on to deliver.

**My brother** was the object of my aspiration. I wanted to be just like him. I'd wear his t-shirts (without his permission) and hide them in the bottom of my closet for fear of him getting mad at me. He loved Christian punk music, so I loved Christian punk music. He could've been a professional tennis player, so I was committed to becoming proficient on the courts. He drove a Jeep, so I wanted my first car to be a Jeep. Everything he did, I did. Everything he liked, I liked, or maybe forced myself to like, but nonetheless, I was trying my hardest to follow every footstep.

In our house there were very few times when anyone was at a loss for words. Sure, there were times we didn't want to talk because of a disagreement or if there was something difficult to discuss. But I never remember anyone not knowing what to say. I grew up watching my dad, my mom, and my brother very carefully, so I figured out how to play a lot of parts—and I was really good at it. I'd learned to read people really well, decide in less than a minute which "me" would serve the situation best, put that "me" on, and get the result I wanted. If I was going to build a kingdom for myself, it was up to me to keep it standing. All I had to do was carefully craft my words, which was easy. I continued to play a bunch of different parts, knowing I could put on a different "me" if the results weren't going my way. Things worked out for a while this way... until they didn't.

It happened little by little, and it happened all at once. It felt like it was happening behind my back when really, it was all happening right in front of my eyes. All the parts I was playing were not the real me. And when my kingdom fell, I was left to look at myself. Who am I really? I had no clue. What I thought defined me was a result of what people thought about me, how they treated me, and whether or not they did what I wanted them to do. I was letting all the relationships I had with people (my opinions of them, emotions about them, and experiences with them) drive everything I did. It had nothing to do with my relationship (or really lack thereof) with God. It was true, I was worshipping anywhere and everywhere, but I wasn't worshipping God.

There is absolutely no logical reason why I turned back to God at this particular moment. I hadn't talked to God in a long time. I would tell people I prayed, but really, I didn't. I listened to thoughts in my head (my own and thoughts of others) and wished things could get better. I told myself that this was praying. I hadn't studied the Bible in an even longer time. The truth was that there was no part of me that was actually pursuing God or seeking what He wanted for me. And then, through the power of the Holy Spirit, I had a true revelation. Jesus was the only one who could get me out of the pit I was in and keep me from it. **He** was the answer. Though I had professed Jesus as Lord and Savior of my life when I was six years old, (and many times since then) He truly became Lord of my life on that day and at that moment. I was different.

It might be easy to see how my long sojourn away from God also included being away from His Church. I said all the wrong things about "being able to worship God anywhere so, I didn't need to be in a church (building) to do it," and "church people say they love God, but really, they just hurt each other." My words sounded good and were carefully crafted, but they were far from the truth. I had taken myself out of the one place where people were seeking to love

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God and each other. I was trusting in a fallen (and failing) world and I was alone. I didn't have to say it in words because I was saying it with my life. Outside of the church, I became the biggest offender of all, by pointing people away from God and encouraging others to do the same. I'm not sure which came first, but I neglected God, and I neglected being part of a family of faith, and the results in my life were devastating!

Over the years I've come to learn that my own voice, the voices of the five other people in my home, and the voices I will encounter throughout the day will beg for my allegiance. The only way for me to keep my worship at the feet of Jesus is to put myself there before I go anywhere else. So, I start each day by listening to His voice. When that happens, He and I get to continue our conversation all day long. And somehow, in the way that only God can, He's shown me that it's because of all the things I've done, places I've been, and where He's brought me to right now, that He can use me.

This is why I write—so God can use me for His glory. I no longer use my words to get my own way. I want my words to be used to build God's

Kingdom. That's why I am excited to be one of the writers for a new editorial platform on Dawson's website—launching this fall. My personal prayer for this new venture is that the articles and editorials offered each week will reach three groups of people:

1. For our family of faith at Dawson, I hope that these stories and honest accounts will allow people to perceive more clearly how God is at work right now.
2. For those who may be curious about God or about His Church and happen to stumble across these articles, I hope that some of them may be used as ministry tools or points of discussion that would naturally lead to Gospel conversations.
3. Lastly, there are many people who used to be part of a family of faith and yearn to come back. I was one of them. For those whom I'll call the "Once Churchied," I pray that some of the personal stories of faith will spark a deep, renewed desire in the hearts of God's people to gather together regularly.

I believe that God's plan for us to gather, as brothers and sisters, to worship and grow in Him, has not changed. I pray that unity and togetherness will also become our desire.

I invite you to join me, and others from our family of faith who are on the same journey: To become and help others become faithful servants of Jesus Christ.



**Laine Stidham** and her husband, Judson, have four children, Judson Jr., Lucas, Georgia Kate, and Zachary. Dawson entered their story the day after their oldest son was born. She is still amazed at how relentlessly faithful God continues to be in their lives.

## DAWSON CHURCH TROOP 83



# CHRISTOPHER HUGHES

EAGLE SCOUT / DAWSON CHURCH TROOP 83

Christopher Hughes achieved the rank of Eagle Scout on March 14, 2024. Christopher began his scouting career as a Cub Scout in Pack One in Vestavia Hills and then joined Dawson Troop 83 after earning his Arrow of Light. In addition to earning 23 merit badges and participating in numerous outings, Christopher completed "high adventure" trips to Sea Base where he served on a sailing crew in the Florida Keys as well as a 10-day backpacking adventure in New Mexico at the famous Philmont Scout Ranch.

For Christopher's Eagle Project, he worked with officials from the Birmingham Zoo to design and build a "flexible presentation center" for zoo personnel to hold interactive educational programs for zoo patrons. The initial location for the presentation center is at "Gigi's Porch," an area recently renovated as part of another Eagle Scout project. However, the project was designed so all of the components can be relocated across the zoo as programming changes.

The new flexible presentation center includes outdoor benches and a platform (stage) for zoo animal programs. He completed the project in December 2023 with the official unveiling in February 2024. Christopher was able to complete the project with the help of family, friends, fellow Scouts, and adult leaders.

Christopher's parents are Paul and Julie Hughes. His older brother, Carson, also earned his Eagle rank while in Troop 83. Christopher and his family attend Dawson Memorial Baptist Church in Homewood where he is actively involved in Dawson's Student Ministry and Chapel Choir.

He recently completed his senior year at Vestavia Hills High School where he was a varsity soccer player and earned the seal of biliteracy in American Sign Language. Christopher will be attending Auburn University in the fall. Congratulations, Christopher, on this outstanding accomplishment!



# HARRISON HEATH

EAGLE SCOUT / DAWSON CHURCH TROOP 83

Harrison Heath achieved the rank of Eagle Scout on April 11, 2024. Harrison began his scouting career as a Cub Scout in Pack One in Vestavia Hills and then joined Dawson Troop 83. Since joining Troop 83, Harrison has earned 23 merit badges and held numerous leadership positions, including Senior Patrol Leader, Assistant Senior Patrol Leader, Instructor, and Scribe.

Harrison's Eagle Project involved building the first 8x12 gabled shed at Unless U Post Place in Vestavia Hills, Alabama. Unless U was in need of a storage space for their wheelchairs and adaptive bicycles. Through the help of his family, friends, fellow Scouts and adult leaders, on February 3, 2024, Harrison

built a storage unit to keep the bikes out of the hallways in order to be used for their purpose of being ridden and enjoyed.

Harrison's parents are Ezra and Deana Heath. Michael, his brother, is also a member of Troop 83. Harrison and his family attend Vestavia Hills Methodist Church in Vestavia where Harrison is actively involved in Thrive student ministries. Harrison played football for Vestavia Hills High School and was a captain for their Homecoming game against Oak Mountain.

Harrison graduated from Vestavia Hills High School this year and will be attending Auburn University in the fall. Congratulations, Harrison, on this impressive achievement!





# TEN MINUTE TALK

## A Series of Rapid-Fire Questions With Dawson Staff Members

At Dawson, **Brooke Gibson**, our Minister to Preschoolers, is affectionally known as Queen B. Not only is "Ms. Brooke" very special to our preschoolers and their families, but also to the rest of the church family and staff. Her big smile and kindly demeanor puts everyone at ease—always letting her "light shine" for everyone to see and sharing the love of Jesus. Having been at Dawson since the age of six months old, one might think you'd know everything about Brooke. However, few could have predicted the strong feelings she has about sandwiches. Read on to learn more!

**Early bird or night owl?** Early bird.

**First job?** Savage's Bakery. I was 14. I ran the cash register, and I washed a lot of trays.

**Do you prefer to stay at home or travel?** Travel.

**What's something you're looking forward to this fall?** A 25th anniversary trip to London and Paris.

**Have you read a good book lately?** *Saints & Scoundrels in the Story of Jesus* by Nancy Guthrie and Kristin Hannah's *The Women*.

**TV show you could binge over and over?** *Gilmore Girls*—preferably with my daughter, Hannah.

**All time Favorite movie (non-Disney)** *The Princess Bride*.

**Favorite Disney movie** *Mary Poppins*.

**What's been your favorite KidLife theme?** Great Big God.

**Favorite Super Hero?** Mighty Mouse because I can remember singing the song and watching episodes with my dad.

**Were you ever grounded as a kid and what for?** No. I was the baby of the family and I'm a natural people pleaser. I did not have a bedtime but the rule was that "I had to wake up pleasant."

**Who was your celebrity crush?** Josh Lucas.

**What is your favorite story to teach the children?** Creation!

**Were you in any sports or clubs growing up?** Not sports, but I did theater and choir and color guard.

**Best concert you've been to?** Jason Isbell at Red Rocks.

**What's your lock screen image?**

It is a picture of my husband, Darrell, and me at a concert.

**Which Disney character do you relate to most?** Winnie the Pooh. Because there's not much that a circle of loved ones, a nap, or a good snack can't cure!

**What is something important you taught your own children?** Know yourself and your audience. I still say that to them all the time.

**Favorite local Birmingham eatery?** For something casual, Sam's Deli. For fancy, Blueprint on 3rd.

**Cake or pie?** Pie.

**Best ice cream flavor?** My all-time favorite is strawberry, but I do love the Brambleberry Crisp from Jeni's Ice Creams.

**Would you go skydiving?** I think yes. I would definitely do the fake in the arena kind. I have bungee jumped.

**Where did you meet your husband?** At Valley View Baptist Church. I was their children's minister right out of college (Samford). I had been there maybe six months when Darrell started coming to church there with his (now our) son, Shae. And we met because Shae was in my mission friends class.

**What are you good at, but you don't enjoy?** Being in charge! I really prefer to be behind the scenes and have an assigned task.

**What country would you like to visit?** I have visited before, but I would love to go back to Spain.

**Crossword or word search?** Word search.

**What's the most used app on your phone?** Photos.

**Favorite costume you've worn?**

The Queen of Hearts.

**Is a burger a sandwich?**

Yes. Fun fact—I believe a sandwich has to be hot to be considered a meal. A cold sandwich is just a snack, and a snack I don't want!

**What makes you happy?**

Sitting on our back deck in good weather with tea and my favorite people.

**Do you prefer to call or text?**

Neither! I prefer a face to face chat.

**Do you have a secret talent?**

I can't really think of anything, but I do whistle a lot like my mom.

**Do you have a hobby people might be surprised to hear about?**

Treasure hunting at thrift stores.

**What was it like growing up at Dawson?**

Very sweet. We talk so much about the tradition of Dawson, and it's rewarding to have seen that my whole life. I have great memories of watching the staff interact with each other, specifically Sunday night services.

**What have you learned recently?**

Not to have knee-jerk reactions to things, because it's pointless and harmful to worry about something that may not happen.

**What song would be your personal anthem?** *Coming Home* by Drew & Ellie Holcomb.

**What was your favorite game when you were a kid?** I have great memories of doing puzzles with my grandmother.

**Something that people don't know about you?** I have lived in the same house my whole life.

**What's your proudest achievement?** Our family.

SONG | PRAYER | WORD

HE MUST  
INCREASE

# auxano

I MUST  
DECREASE

TUESDAYS BEGINNING  
SEPTEMBER 3

7:00 P.M. | CHAPEL

[DAWSONCHURCH.ORG/AUXANO](http://DAWSONCHURCH.ORG/AUXANO)

WEEKLY WORSHIP SERVICE FOR 18-29 YEAR OLDS



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## MIDWEEK BIBLE STUDY

**Q**  
**A**

# Questions That Every Christian Should Ask

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## (And Answer)

Wednesdays beginning September 25 | 11:00 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.  
[dawsonchurch.org/midweek](http://dawsonchurch.org/midweek)