

2021 MISSIONS STUDY

Statewide Goal: \$1,200,000

by Candace McIntosh, Alabama WMU Executive Director

"Hope is an anchor for the soul, firm and secure..." Hebrews 6:19

While this verse wasn't written specifically for a pandemic, it certainly fits the place where my heart has dwelled during this incredibly difficult year. When it felt like everything was shifting and changing faster than my ability to keep up, there was a firm and secure hope that anchored my soul.

I have a feeling that is true for you, too. I hear echoes of this same abiding hope from people all over the state. When I hear the changing tone in people's voices now versus a year ago, I sense that the brighter days we prayed for have finally arrived. The anchor held tight, and as the clouds are lifting, so are our spirits...by His Spirit!

Every time I read the stories of how God is at work among Alabama Baptists, I can't help but get excited. All across our state, God is continuing to stir the hearts of His people for missions. Sharing the hope that has brought us through is one of our greatest privileges as believers. Being the hands and feet of Christ, our Hope, is a source of joy and blessing.

Take Church at the Oaks, for example. During day four in the Week of Prayer for State Missions, you will read about all the seeds of hope planted by so many different people. These seeds took root, and

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now a college student who was once lost is now changing the world for Christ. What if the Baptist Campus Ministries team had not obeyed the Lord's prompting to provide COVID Care Bags for isolated students? Consider the faithful giving of the local association to provide budgetary funds to help with those bags. Consider the surrounding association's WMU group that donated packaged snacks to be included. Think about the college student who followed up with Matthew after he returned the connection card. And consider Pastor Britton who obeyed the call to start a church in Tuscaloosa and helped Matthew grow in his relationship with Jesus. Those are just the touchpoints we know about. There is no measure to how many ways God has used Alabama Baptists to reach Matthew and so many others with the Gospel.

Another example of hope you'll hear about during the Week of Prayer for State Missions is the incredible way God uses ordinary people with ordinary skills to do His extraordinary work. The prayer guide highlights two examples of volunteers with Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief's "Yellow Shirt Army" who are using their gifts and talents for His kingdom work. You'll hear about

how a recent retiree was willing to rethink his plans and choose to go where God sends, even when it's thousands of miles from home. You'll read about a leader who has taken a new role at the State Board of Missions to invest in growing and maintaining healthy churches across the state and learn how ministers' wives are being poured into and encouraged. You'll read about how Alabama Baptists used virtual platforms during the pandemic to bless and encourage our missionaries on the field.

As you work through this Mission Study and follow along with the Prayer Guide, you will see many ways God is using Alabama Baptists. You, your church family and the Great Commission Ministries supported, in part, by gifts to the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering are sharing this hope we have in Christ. You are obeying His command to share the hope we have deep in our souls!

Hope is the core that has kept us moving forward during this difficult year, and hope in Christ will continue to propel us forward as we begin to reestablish our mission discipleship groups in the days ahead. To Him be the glory!

WEEK OF PRAYER

FOR STATE MISSIONS

**Your gifts help support these
Great Commission Ministries:**

ALABAMA WMU
DISASTER RELIEF
CHURCH PLANTING
PARTNERSHIP MISSIONS
CHURCH REVITALIZATION

Myers-Mallory.org



PREPARATION FOR PASTORS & CHURCH MISSIONS LEADERS

GATHER the missions leadership team in your church (pastor, missions pastor, WMU director, etc.) for a time of prayer for state missions and for planning your churchwide week of prayer observance. Thank God for all He has done through these missions and ministry efforts, and pray with expectancy for how He will continue to work through them.

PLAN

1. Set a date for your observance. Suggested dates are September 12-19, 2021. If that week presents a conflict for your church, feel free to choose another. Set your church's offering goal. The statewide goal is \$1,200,000.
2. As a team, make a plan for promotion. Reserve space in church newsletters, on social media calendars, in worship service presentations and any other outlet you plan to use for promotion. Visit Myers-Mallory.org to explore the resources available for the week of prayer and offering. Some options for promotion include:
 - Displaying posters throughout the church, distributing prayer guides, and placing envelopes in pews
 - Utilizing one or more of the videos available at Myers-Mallory.org during worship services
 - Enlisting a State Missionary or Alabama WMU consultant to speak to your congregation or group
 - Promoting on social media and in the church newsletter using graphics from Myers-Mallory.org
 - Using the activities in this study guide during missions gatherings like Mission Friends, Children in Action, GA, RA, Acteens, Women on Mission, etc. or during other discipleship times.

ORDER promotional materials (prayer guides, pew envelopes, posters, etc.) for churchwide distribution and for use in missions discipleship groups. Consult your age-level leaders to determine their needs, and, if possible, submit one order for your church. Visit Myers-Mallory.org/resources to see all available resources.

Order free Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering materials by:

1. Ordering online at Myers-Mallory.org
2. Calling 334.613.2223 or 800.264.1225 ext. 2223
3. Emailing aarmstrong@alsbom.org

Activities for PRESCHOOLERS

In advance, make a Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering bank out of an oatmeal container. Bring coins and/or bills to put into the bank. In addition, read the Myers-Mallory Prayer Guide to familiarize yourself with the ministries referenced.

1. Encourage preschoolers to build houses out of blocks. After the houses are built, tell them: "When storms come, tree branches sometimes fall on houses." Place sticks or branches on the houses. Tell preschoolers there are some special helpers from Alabama Baptist churches who go and help people when this happens to their houses. These people are called the "Yellow Shirt Army." Show a photo of John Hayes (available at Myers-Mallory.org). Let preschoolers help take the branches off the houses and rebuild them if necessary. Say: "One day you might be part of the Yellow Shirt Army!"

2. Show pictures of Scotty Goldman and Jamie Baldwin (available at Myers-Mallory.org). Tell preschoolers that both men love God and tell others about Him. Then show preschoolers a United States map, pointing out Alabama and Alaska. Tell the children that Mr. Goldman lives in Alabama and that Mr. Baldwin did live in Alabama. Now Mr. Baldwin lives far away in Alaska! Say: "Mr. Goldman helped people in Alaska by sending Mr. Baldwin to a church there. They are 'partners'! Now Mr. Baldwin gets other people in Alabama to come to Alaska to help, too!" Assign each preschooler a partner. Give each set of partners a "job" to do together – clean up blocks, put away toys, wipe off tables, clean windows, etc. Say: "Isn't it nice to have the help of a partner?"

3. Provide a suitcase and clothing. Clothing should include winter and summer items (heavy coat, gloves, wool socks, sweater, thick pants, toboggan hat, as well as shorts, swimsuit, flip flops, sleeveless shirt, sunglasses). Talk about the weather in Alabama and in Alaska. Remind them that Mr. Baldwin moved from Alabama to Alaska. Let each preschooler choose an item to put in the suitcase for Mr. Baldwin to have

in Alaska, where it gets really cold. Remind preschoolers that God asks people to go to all kinds of places all over the world every day.

4. Provide a vase and fresh flowers. Let each preschooler put a flower in the vase, making a beautiful bouquet. Tell preschoolers the flowers are for your pastor's wife. Let them draw pictures for her. As they draw, talk about how special your pastor's wife is. Then show a photo of Trish Jackson. Say: "Her husband is pastor of a church, and she works at Alabama WMU, helping other pastors' wives." If possible, have your pastor's wife come to the class to receive her bouquet.

5. Pray for all the people you have learned about in this study – Mr. John Hayes and the Yellow Shirt Army, Mr. Scotty Goldman and Mr. Jamie Baldwin, Mrs. Trish Jackson, and your own pastor's wife. Show the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering bank that you made. Tell preschoolers the money that goes in the bank will help the people they have learned about today. Let preschoolers put money into the bank.

Before they leave, give each preschooler a pack or tube of M&M's candy as a reminder to bring money for the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering.

Activities for CHILDREN

In advance, read the Myers-Mallory Prayer Guide to familiarize yourself with the ministries referenced.

1. Tell children about Jamie Baldwin and how God is doing some amazing things in Alaska (Prayer Guide Day 5). Just as God is using Jamie's specific skill set to serve alongside Liberty Church, God wants to use you and your skillset to love and serve others around you. Give each child a piece of paper to write down skills, talents, and interests that they have. They can even start by using an acrostic of their names (see below). Then help them imagine how they can use these skills and talents to serve their families, churches and community.

Acrostic example for Laura:

Likes music
Artistic
Unicorns
Reliable
Almost 10

2. Having the right information sure does make life easier! Providing accurate information is how Shirley serves Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief (Prayer Guide Day 7). Describe the various ministry areas of Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief (SBDRe.org/connect/find-your-ministry). Convert the game Battleship from a destroying mission to a rescue mission (printable game board and instructions available at Myers-Mallory.org). It is easy to see that it can take a while to "find" the ship with so many possible locations. Once it is known where the ship is located – that is, once one has all the information – one can quickly come to its rescue! Based on the various ministry areas of Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief, discuss why having accurate information is so important (knowing which volunteer disaster relief teams to send out, understanding the needs, prioritizing where the needs are greatest, etc.).

3. "Load capacity" refers to the maximum load that may be held by a specific structure. Have kids use an item (such as large popsicle sticks or straws) to design a bridge between two tables. Stack items, adding weight gradually, to demonstrate how a bridge can hold only so much weight before it collapses. Then have students build a bridge adding some sort of reinforcement (such as hot gluing a stack of popsicle sticks together or adding a yard stick) to demonstrate how much more weight can be held with reinforcement. This is the work that Trish Jackson is doing (Prayer Guide Day 8) when she brings together ministers' wives from across the state to encourage and pray for one another. It multiplies the "load" they are able to carry.

4. Bring soil and seeds, along with a container for each child to plant. In order for plants to grow, certain conditions must be met. Seeds need water, sunlight and good soil. Church plants also need God to supply needs in order to grow. Praise God for the Church at the Oaks (Prayer Guide Day 4) and other church plants across the state that God is growing!

5. John shared that his most important work for Disaster Relief has been sharing the Gospel story (Prayer Guide Day 2). Talk with children about the most important aspects of the Gospel. If able, have them write out the Gospel story in their own words. Ask for volunteers to share the Gospel with the class. Encourage kids to share the Gospel story with their families and friends this week. This, too, is our most important work!

Give kids an offering envelope to take home. Challenge them to personally give. Remind children when to return their offering and to pray for the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering in the coming week.

Activities for STUDENTS

In advance, read the Myers-Mallory Prayer Guide to familiarize yourself with the ministries referenced.

1. Tape five white pieces of paper in various spots on a wall, as well as three to five red pieces on the floor. Divide your group into teams of two, blindfolding one partner. With blindfolded partners starting at the same point, the non-blindfolded partners will communicate to their partners how to reach each of the white papers on the wall without stepping on the red. The more teams competing, the more difficult this is. If they step on the red paper, they must start over. The first team to touch all white papers wins. When finished, discuss how difficult it was to hear above the noise. Likely, teams had trouble communicating. Discuss how Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief goes into disaster zones with a clear plan and a set line of communication (Prayer Guide Day 7). Because of the training they receive, they're able to be effective and efficient as they serve those affected.

2. Tear small pieces of paper and ball them up. Each student should take one piece of balled-up paper and put it in one of their shoes. Have them walk around the room or even take a short walk outside. When finished, ask the students whether the paper was annoying in their shoe. Then ask whether it would have been even more annoying if the paper had been larger. Would it have been easy to ignore? Sometimes, it's easy to ignore small issues right under our noses in our communities and our churches, but they can quickly become big issues. When left unattended in a church, these issues can greatly cripple a church's ability to reach those in their community. This is where Church Revitalization comes in. They help struggling churches get back on their feet by dealing with the issues that have proven challenging for them with grace and compassion (Prayer Guide Day 6).

3. Split your group into two or three teams (depending on size). For three rounds, have teams choose one artist per round to draw a different familiar animal (giraffe, fish, dog, snake, etc.).

Without sharing the animal with their teammates, have the blindfolded student draw the animal on a whiteboard, poster board or large sheet of paper in one minute. If their team guesses correctly, they get a point. Let each team go three times, and the team with the most points at the end wins. Sometimes, reaching a new area with the Gospel can feel like drawing an animal blindfolded, but teamwork certainly helps. This is where Alabama Baptist Church Planting comes in - offering resources and guidance to church planters around the state to help make their work easier (Prayer Guide Day 4).

4. Invite one or more of your church's ministers' wives to join your group for a few minutes at the end of your session. Ask them to share a little about their role and how students can pray for them. Before they arrive, gather your students to write notes of encouragement to tell the ladies how much they appreciate them. The ministers' wives think they're coming to share about their roles, but they'll also leave encouraged for the vital part they play. Alabama WMU recognizes that they are often the unsung heroes of our churches. Pray for Alabama WMU's encouragement ministry to ministers' wives through their Minister's Wives Fellowships and in-person and online gatherings.

5. In a large space (the darker, the better), hide lots of glow sticks or glow bracelets (at least one for each student). Then give students a few minutes to find as many of them as they can. When they've found one, that student can return to home base. When finished, turn the lights on and discuss how Partnership Missions works to bring the Gospel into dark places. They work with missionaries around the world to do this and sometimes it feels like finding a hidden glow stick in a large, dark room. The more support the missionaries have, the better, and Partnership Missions works to fill that gap for them.

Before you conclude, give each student an offering envelope, and encourage them to pray about how much they should give. Remind them when to return their offering to church.

Activities for ADULTS

In advance, read the Myers-Mallory Prayer Guide to familiarize yourself with the ministries referenced.

1. When people see the “Yellow Shirt Army”, they know help is on the way. Invite group members ahead of time to a “Yellow Party”, complete with yellow snacks (bananas, lemon-filled donuts, corn tortilla chips, peanut M&M packs, lemonade, etc.) and yellow decor. Encourage yellow clothing, too! Take a group photo with all things yellow, and share on social media with the caption: “Praying today for Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief!” #yellowshirtarmy

Yellow apparel has become synonymous with Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief which encompasses Administration, Assessment, Chainsaw, Chaplaincy, Childcare, Cleanup, Communications, Mass Feeding, Shower and Laundry crews. Visit SBDR.org for details. Plan ahead of time to help someone in your community in one of these ways, and present one of the following project ideas to your own “Yellow Shirt Army” to do as a group: Pick up laundry from a single mom which you launder ahead of time and the group neatly folds; Offer a free hour of childcare to several moms ahead of time so they can go grocery shopping during your meeting; Communicate with the staff of a struggling church in town by writing prayer cards; Assign a portion of a meal to each member ahead of time, and deliver it to a family together as a blessing; Spend time doing simple yard or house clean up for someone who is homebound; Have a chaplaincy emphasis by visiting some elderly friends for a front-porch prayer visit. Be sure that, as you go, you share the love of Christ with everyone you meet just as Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers do!

2. While many were isolated during the Covid-19 pandemic, Alabama WMU may have traveled to more countries this year than ever before - virtually that is (Prayer Guide Day 3). Great Commission Conversations (GCC) allowed face-to-face interaction with missionaries from all over the globe! Urgency to pray for missions is directly affected by interacting with missionaries personally about their struggles, needs and victories in Christ. Arrange for your group to speak via Zoom or Facetime on a

laptop with a current or retired missionary. Ask group members in advance to write down questions for the missionary. Keep the call to 30 minutes, so as to respect your guest missionary's time, and have a time of prayer with them at the end. Once you hang up, ask God through prayer to continue the work of Alabama WMU's GCC so that believers in Alabama churches continue to experience the friendship, knowledge and burden to pray for missionaries serving all over the world.

3. Alabama Baptist Church Planting desires “for every unchurched person in Alabama to have the opportunity to hear and respond to the Gospel and to be disciplined through the starting of culturally-appropriate congregations”

(PlantAlabama.org). Campus Ministries have developed creative ways to reach unchurched college students in order to share the Gospel and connect them to local churches (Prayer Guide Day 4). As a group, make ministry care bags using gallon bags, small tissue packs, individual Tylenol packs, pop top chicken noodle soup, bandaids, cough drops, mini water bottles, gatorade powder packs and a signed get-well card. Consider asking a local church plant, like Church at the Oaks in Tuscaloosa, for a business card to put in the bags, and then deliver the bags to the check-in desk of the closest college dorms for them to share with sick students. Close by praying for unchurched people in Alabama to understand the love of Christ, for church planters like Britton Latham as they lead new churches and for state missionary, Brian Harper, and his team as they equip church planters in Alabama.

4. Partnership Missions is an opportunity for churches and believers in Alabama to make a worldwide impact. One great example of this is the new five-year partnership with Alaska Baptists (Prayer Guide Day 5). Pass out several candles, flashlights or lights on phones, and turn out the room lights. Ask the group to share what they think about when they hear, “Alaska.” What are reasons it might be difficult to recruit church planters or ministers to this state

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Activities for ADULTS *(continued)*

(nearly continual darkness in winter, sparse road access, increased cost of living, harsh climate, feelings of isolation, etc.)? Explain that the darkness in Alaska is not only physical - it is spiritual. What difference can one person, like Jamie Baldwin, make in a dark place? Have one person in the center of the room light a candle. Comment on the power of just one light. Then ask everyone to light their source, one-by-one, and remark how powerful we are as lights when we partner together. Split into small groups (one candle per group), and have each group discuss the following questions: 1) What unique giftings do you have that God might potentially want to use in a place like Alaska? 2) What things might you need to do to prepare for such an assignment? 3) How has God helped you in the past to overcome a difficult hurdle? Close in prayer for Jamie Baldwin, for Partnership Missions in Alabama, and for the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering to further kingdom work in places like Alaska.

5. Church health is vital (Prayer Guide Day 6), and to assess the health of a church, state missionaries ask difficult questions. Wear a white jacket or lab coat, and if possible, bring a medical or duffle bag with items a doctor might use for a check-up (thermometer, blood pressure cuff,

scale, stethoscope, bandaids, tongue depressor, etc.). Explain that your group will be doing a health check-up of your own church or ministry. Let group members reach into the bag and pull out an item with one of the following questions attached on a slip of paper, and then discuss the answers as it pertains to your church or ministry: 1) Have you engaged in 3 or more outreach events this past year? 2) Is your worship attendance increasing? 3) Has missions giving increased? 4) Do you have an effective process for discovering, training and involving leaders? 5) Is a majority of your leadership under 60 years of age? 6) Would you describe your church/ministry as an Acts 1:8 model of reaching the community and the world? Discuss areas where your church or ministry health could improve. The Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering helps equip the Office of Church Health to supply resources and counsel to churches who answer "No" to even one of these questions. Give each group member a band-aid on which you write, "Church Health" with a marker, and apply to their hand or arm as a reminder to pray throughout the day for Dr. Jackson and this needed ministry.

Take time to pray for and collect the offering, or remind the group when the offering will be collected.



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