

BCVVOICE

SPRING 2025



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baptistchildrensvillage.com



Joining the Cooperative Program Celebration



Several BCV staff had the opportunity to join the Cooperative Program 100th anniversary celebration. As Mississippi Baptists, is there any more powerful tool to help Southern Baptist churches make disciples in Mississippi and around the world? A testament to the power of collaborative efforts and resources. To hear of the scope of work made possible through the sacrificial gifts of thousands of churches throughout the country makes a Mississippi Baptist proud. We are grateful for the leadership of Dr. Jeff Iorg, current President/CEO of the SBC

Executive Committee, and those who came before him who helped build a strong 100-year old legacy.

Today The Baptist Children's Village and other Baptist children's ministries throughout the country are fortunate to be the recipients

We are grateful for the leadership of Dr. Jeff Iorg and those who came before him who helped build a strong 100-year old legacy.



Gotta love those 1920's haircuts.



Baptist Orphanage in the 1920's

Joining the Cooperative Program Celebration (cont'd)

of a portion of that generosity. The Mississippi Cooperative Program provides about 16% of the BCV funding. The remaining 84% of the funding comes from individuals, businesses and churches. This generosity of all these private gifts ensures that the ministry can make program decisions that are good for children and families, and that each of them can hear the gospel that can make an eternal difference for them.

One hundred years ago the then “Baptist Orphanage” was in its infancy as a ministry. Because Mississippi Baptists have been intentional about taking the good news of Jesus Christ to hurting children and families, their legacy through the BCV is a strong and thriving one that is reaching hundreds each year-providing hope and a strong foundation for each of them.



Hallie Kitchings Crane and Kellie Kitchens



Bobby and Chrystelle Thames



BCV Independent Living Program Gets a New Look



For years The Baptist Children's Village has offered older teens within our ministry opportunities to further their education through our Independent Living Program.

The “new and improved” Independent Living Program is scheduled to launch June 1 2025 and be housed at the India Nunnery Campus in Florence.



In recent years program staff have seen a need to start preparing teens at a younger age for successful transition into adulthood. They have observed in children coming into the ministry deficiencies in basic skills. To meet that need a team of Program Staff have developed new policies and standards that involve case managers on all residential campuses in the process of intentional preparation for the



Independent Living Program. Should teens be dismissed prior to entering the Independent Living Program, they will still benefit from their newly acquired life skills.

As teens approach their senior year and want to apply to be a part of the Independent Living Program they must receive a recommendation from their case manager and complete an application. They must also be able to clearly articulate their education/vocational goals and demonstrate a mastery of essential skills on a program skills inventory. Finally they must have a good understanding of and commitment to the program's goals and requirements.

Beginning at age 14 however, mastering a list of basic skills become an intentional

part of time spent with case managers. These skills are varied and include job skills and management training, basic technology skills training, interpersonal skills training and education about the importance of good mental and physical health. As staff document a mastery of these and other skills, they are better prepared to enter the world of post-secondary education. Young people can reap the benefits of this program throughout their education and graduate from the program with a savings account, transportation and a wealth of knowledge to

help give them a firm foundation for the next phase of their life.

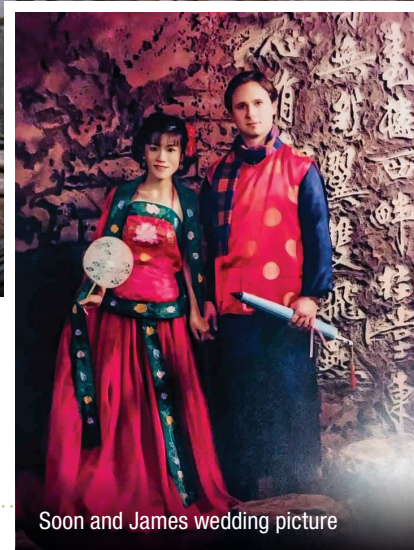
Young people can reap the benefits of this program throughout their education and graduate from the program with a savings account, transportation and a wealth of knowledge to help give them a firm foundation for the next phase of their life.



Soon at the Malaysia Institute of Art

What a Friend We Have in Jesus: Christ's Relentless Pursuit of Soon Guin

By Emily-Kate Ford



Soon and James wedding picture



Soon at BCV Staff cookie decorating contest

"What a Friend We Have in Jesus" is a timeless hymn that has touched the hearts of countless believers. Many of us recall sitting in church, nestled between our parents and siblings, voices united in the familiar refrain: "What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear." Over the years, these words become like a soothing balm—familiar, comforting, yet perhaps a little too routine.

But for Soon Guin, a BCV houseparent missionary, this hymn represents something far deeper—a powerful testament to the relentless love of God. It marks the beginning of an incredible journey of friendship, resilience, and divine intervention. Imagine a shepherd tirelessly seeking out a wayward sheep or a father's heart reaching out to reclaim his child.

Soon Guin grew up in Malaysia, in a household where Buddhism and Daoism intertwined seamlessly. Her family would visit the local temple, lighting incense and paying homage to idols and ancestors as part of their spiritual routine. However, at the tender age of 10, Soon began to sense that there might be something beyond what she had always known.

In her small town, there was an English teacher who followed Christ. Lacking a venue for his gatherings, Soon's father offered the use of their home.

"He called it a gathering," Soon recalled. "Not a Bible study or a church service, but simply a gathering."

Each week, this passionate teacher organized meetings where they played games and fostered relationships. He never pushed a sermon onto them; instead, he would share stories from the Bible and sing a few songs, creating an environment of joy and fellowship.

“As more and more kids and teenagers began to join, the word spread,” Soon explained. “Their parents soon learned about the gatherings and became concerned.”

The parents perceived the teacher as a negative influence and worried he was introducing a foreign religion to the children. Tensions escalated in the town, culminating in threats against the teacher’s life and protests outside Soon’s family home.

“That was my first encounter with Christianity,” Soon reflected. “At the time, I found it enjoyable.” The first song she learned was “What a Friend We Have in Jesus,” sung in her native Chinese language.

Years later, as Soon embarked on her college journey, she made a friend who invited her to a Christmas program at her church.

“I remember how beautiful and peaceful the service felt,” she said. “At that time, I had still been attending the temple, where the constant chanting and presence of monks left me feeling unsettled and anxious.” While she appreciated the warmth of the Christmas service, her heart remained unconvinced.

As her college years progressed, Soon decided to study in the United States, where she encountered a professor who was also a follower of Christ. Each Sunday, this professor took Soon and another international student to church.

“We enjoyed it, especially since they treated us to lunch afterward, which helped us save money,” she chuckled.

Soon and her friend loved singing so much that they both joined the church choir, dedicating three years to the ministry of music.

After completing her bachelor’s degree, Soon moved to Southeastern Louisiana to



Soon and husband James where they met - Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

further her studies, where she met James, her future husband. A professor at her new university invited her to a Chinese Bible study, but a fellow Malaysian student urged her to stay away, labeling the professor as crazy. Yet, James encouraged her to attend, even offering to drive her there since she didn’t own a car.

“They were so patient with me,” Soon noted. “I had countless questions, and they never lost their tempers or showed frustration.”

During a break back home in Malaysia, James wrote her weekly letters, each containing a Bible verse. At that time, Soon wrestled with her thoughts about Jesus and what it would mean to embrace faith.

“I struggled with disbelief, but deep down, I knew it was all true,” she confided. “I was scared of how it would affect my relationship with my family.”

Upon her return from the break, James picked her up from the airport, surprising her with an NIV Bible—much easier for her to understand than the King James Version. Soon opened up about her thoughts and struggles during their time together, and they prayed. In that profound moment, Soon gave her life to Christ.

Now several years later, Soon is passionate about sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with those she encounters. “We have all sinned,” Soon shares. “There’s nothing we can do in and of ourselves that will save us.”

Soon’s journey from the traditions of her childhood to the embrace of faith in Christ is a testament to the transformative power of the Gospel. With a heart of gratitude, she now dedicates her life to guiding others on their paths to Christ, sharing her story as a beacon of hope for those seeking truth. In every encounter, she embodies the message of “What a Friend We Have in Jesus,” inviting others to experience the profound peace and salvation that comes from knowing Him.



Soon with mother, father and brother

Soon’s journey from the traditions of her childhood to the embrace of faith in Christ is a testament to the transformative power of the Gospel.



Statewide Projects Made Possible by Generous Partners

BCV Leadership Team members recently joined local staff for campus celebrations. What is everyone celebrating? An army of partners who made renovations on all of our residential campuses possible. Celebrations included tours of the work and a celebratory lunch with Leadership Team members and campus staff who have worked hard over the last several months to

make improvements. After 128 years Mississippi Baptists continue to provide generously for BCV children and families. As one Campus Director said, "We want to provide an oasis for children and families when they come on campus." Our partners have done exactly that for children and families in chaos-created a refuge-an oasis.





BCV TRIBUTE GIFTS

January 16 to April 15, 2025

Throughout the year, families memorialize and honor family members and special friends with a gift to The Baptist Children's Village. Small groups honor teachers and the special people in their lives. For each tribute gift received, the donor receives an acknowledgement letter and receipt. A personal letter is sent to the honoree informing them of the gift given in their honor. Family members are informed of a gift given in memory of their loved one. The BCV is herein publishing the list of honorees and donors recently received. We are grateful to the many thoughtful donors who pay tribute to the special people in their lives.

You can visit baptistchildrensvillage.com/give or use the enclosed envelope to give a gift of honor or memory for your loved one(s) to The Baptist Children's Village.

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Personal Reflection

June 1 marks 43 years for me as a BCV employee. Before that I was a resident for about four years.

Someone recently described me as one with a significant historical perspective. Well, not sure how I feel about that but I am grateful for the legacy that our BCV ministry enjoys. I frequently explain to people that neither my role or the ministry as a whole look anything like it did at those launch dates. That works well for me who enjoys a regular dose of new challenges, and for the ministry who is able to reach more children and families with the gospel because of its commitment to relevancy in the current culture.

I and my Communications Consultant Emily-Kate Ford, recently returned

from an annual meeting of the Baptist Communicators Association. I am always delighted to hear of the extraordinary reach of fellow Baptist laborers at this meeting. This year was no exception. Communicators from state conventions, state Baptist papers, universities, IMB, NAMB, children's ministries, Baptist churches and others from across the country shared about the work God is accomplishing in and through their entities and there is much to celebrate. While we sometimes get lost in our own ministry and the work God is doing through the BCV, the reminder of the expansive work of Southern Baptists across the country is profound.

I also celebrate the commitment to excellence that each of our colleagues have in the work they do. Each is keenly aware of the need to fervently use the gifts God has given to accomplish His work. I was again

challenged as I watched so many receive awards for their efforts. How encouraging to have partners in the ministry who spur each other to excellence for God's glory.

As I consider the last 43 years and look forward to the years ahead, I choose to embrace my new "historical perspective" descriptive and look forward to seeing how God may want to use that historical perspective for His glory. I think I will also treasure all those I encounter who challenge and encourage me to do excellent work each day.

Chrystelle Thames

Director of Communications