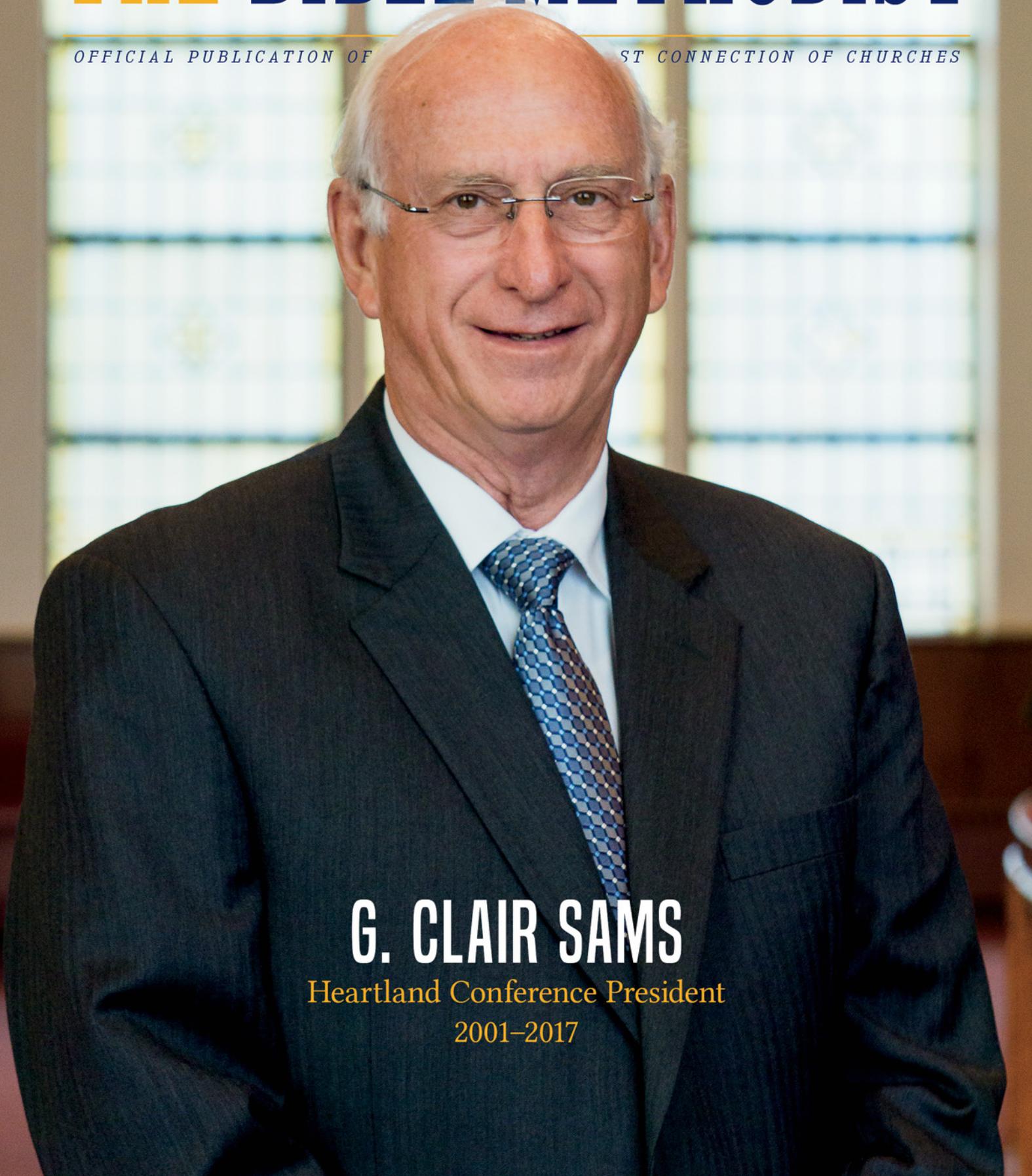


ISSUE 3 | VOLUME 49 | 2017

# THE BIBLE METHODIST

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
SOUTHERN CONNECTION OF CHURCHES



**G. CLAIR SAMS**

Heartland Conference President

2001–2017



# From the Editor

It is with hesitation that I submit much of the material for this issue. It is by recommendation that we highlight the resignation of Heartland's Regional Conference President.

The next issue will highlight the 26 years Walter Hedstrom served as Conference President of the Alabama Regional Conference.

The missions pages of this issue highlight the Mission's Director and Mission's Committee's appointment of Marika Herrer to the Philippines. You will also read of an assembly and church plant.

**G. Clair Sams**  
*Editor*

## NOTE FROM THE CONNECTIONAL CHAIRMAN:

This has been a year of transition for the Heartland and Alabama Conferences. Conference Presidents Clair Sams and Walter Hedstrom both stepped down this summer at their respective annual conferences. Each man gave many years of dedicated and excellent service to the Bible Methodist Connection. In honor of their service this issue and the next will be dedicated to them respectively.

This issue is dedicated to Clair and Melba Sams. Clair and Melba have given their heart and soul to the work of the Heartland Conference and Camp, the Bible Methodist Connection of Churches and to the advancement of the Conservative Holiness Movement in general. They are known all across Bible Methodism for their leadership, professionalism and "classy" behavior. The Church owes them a huge debt of gratitude. This issue is one small way we wish to pay that debt.

**Michael Avery**  
*General Connectional Chairman*

## MY DEEPEST APOLOGY

Please forgive the Editor for mis-labeling an article in the last issue of *The Bible Methodist*. The article *Faithful in Battle* was written by Le Ann Davison not Linda Davison.

- The Editor

# THE BIBLE METHODIST

ISSUE 3 | VOLUME 49 | 2017

EDITOR

**Rev. G. Clair Sams**  
*gcsams@biblemethodist.org*

SUBSCRIPTION MANAGER

**Rev. Deron Fourman**  
*990 S. Wonnell Rd, Port Clinton, OH 43452*  
*pastorderon@frontier.com*

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

**Shane Muir**  
*smuir@gbs.edu*

PRINTING & CIRCULATION

**Country Pines, Inc.**  
*www.countrypinesprinting.com*

*The Bible Methodist is published four times a year. It is the official publication of the Bible Methodist Connection of Churches.*

*Subscription price: \$10 per year*

## BIBLE METHODIST CONNECTION OF CHURCHES

CONNECTIONAL CHAIRMAN

**Dr. Michael Avery**  
*3739 Moorhill Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45241*  
*mavery@gbs.edu*

MISSIONS DIRECTOR

**Rev. Timothy Keep**  
*4473 Forest Trail, Cincinnati, OH 45224*

ALABAMA CONFERENCE PRESIDENT

**Rev. John Parker**  
*40 Skyview Lane, Pell City, AL 35125*  
*johnparker@juno.com*

GREAT LAKES CONFERENCE PRESIDENT

**Rev. Blake Jones**  
*Box 5, Cedar Lake, MI 48891*

HEARTLAND CONFERENCE PRESIDENT

**Rev. Chris Cravens**  
*16346 TR 166, Arlington, OH 45813*  
*chriscravens@biblemethodist.org*





# TRIBUTES TO THE SAMS

## FRIENDS AND FAMILY HONOR THE SAMS FOR THEIR YEARS OF DEDICATED SERVICE.

**The Big Sky Country of Montana** gave Bible Methodism one of its finest leaders when Gordon Clair Sams, Jr. was born on October 10, 1946. His parents, Gordon, Sr. and Julia Sams, left Montana three years later and moved to Caldwell, ID in search of a church that would provide the spiritual nourishment that Gordon wanted for his family. They found that in the Caldwell First Nazarene Church.

In 1955 a group of laymen, concerned about the direction of the Nazarene church, started a prayer meeting to find God's will for their future. The prayer group decided to hold a tent revival that ultimately birthed a new denomination called the Bible Missionary Union (later named the Bible Missionary Church). The Sams family attended the second

service of the tent meeting and never went back to their former church. The whole family became charter members of the newly formed denomination.

Most of Clair's "growing up" years were in Caldwell. In their early Caldwell years his family lived on a very small farm. Clair and his sister raised lambs, calves and chickens. The Sams were working people and there was always something to do. One summer, after they moved into town, his mother could not find enough work to keep Clair busy, so she had him dig up the lawn, clear it of everything and then replant the grass. In Jr. High and High School he worked "bucking" hay in the summer and in a livestock auction during the school year.

All of Clair's early education was in Caldwell schools through the 11th grade. In his senior year, the family moved to Middleton, ID, and it was in Middleton where he graduated from high school.

Music was always a central part of Clair's family's life. He took piano, violin, guitar and voice lessons. He played in the band and sang in the school choir through junior high and high school. Symphonies and Classical music concerts were a big part of the family entertainment.

Clair and three other boys from his church formed a quartet. They sang together at church and soon were singing in local revivals. Clair sang bass. (It's whispered that he was as good as George Younce).

During the Middleton years,

Clair's dad started his own business as a mechanic. Clair worked with his father in the business until graduation from high school.

After graduation in the fall of 1965 Clair left for Bible Missionary Institute in Rock Island, IL. During his first year of Bible School Clair got serious about serving the Lord. He felt God was calling him to preach but did not see how he could do that since he could hardly get five words out as a testimony.

Also that fall he met and fell in love with a pretty girl from Oklahoma. Her name was Melba.

Melba Jean Meek was the first of four children born to E. B. and Dorothy Meek on April 19, 1947 in Sherman, TX.

At the age of 18 months her parents moved from Eastern Texas to West Texas seeking better employment in the oil boom.

Melba's parents were not Christians when she was born and life was not easy. But a little Nazarene church in town had some people who were concerned about sinners and invited them to the revival. God spoke; they responded; and the family's direction was forever changed.

Melba started first grade in Odessa. School ignited a deep desire in her for books and learning. Throughout her 12 years of elementary and high school Melba attended 13 different schools. Even with this continual change in her life, it never affected her desire for academic achievement.

In 1955 several families in their church felt a desire to be a part of a more conservative church. One of the families had heard that a new group had just started in Idaho and made contact with this group. As a result, the small group of five families formed a Bible Missionary Church in Odessa.

In the fall of 1956 Melba's father began to feel the call to preach. So the next Spring at the age of ten Melba moved to God's Bible School where her father enrolled as a student. The school had a one room elementary school in the old 10-weeks Building on campus. She went to school there for one semester only because her father moved to Beulah Heights, KY that summer to pastor a church. The following years included moves to KY, WV, PA, OH, OK, TX, NM and AR.

Melba's love for books and learning did not inhibit her tendency for fun and mischief. She was well known for her subtle pranks and practical jokes. Nor did it turn her into a lazy girl looking for a place to sit and read. She was quite an industrious worker. While they lived in Chandler, OK she took in ironing to earn money. There was a National Guard Armory in town and Melba would iron and starch the army fatigues for the soldiers. She earned

25¢ a piece for this work. (She loves to iron to this day!)

At Chandler High School, Melba served as class secretary in 11th and 12th grades, was a member of the National Honor Society, and Head Student Librarian. She also volunteered as a Math tutor in the Chandler Elementary School.

Melba graduated from Chandler HS in 1965 and left for Rock, IL in September to attend the Bible Missionary Institute. There she fell in love with a tall, handsome young man from ID. His name was Clair. . .

Clair was so bashful that he actually asked Melba for their first date while walking away from her. He either assumed the answer was yes or she shouted yes loud enough for him to hear because they did take that first date! Melba found Clair more interesting than books and Clair got over his bashfulness because they were married June 9, 1967 in Little Rock, AR. They recently celebrated 50 years together.

The young couple returned to Rock Island to begin a new year of school. Clair's struggle with his call to preach was so serious that they dropped out of school and moved to Little Rock, Arkansas where he prepared to enroll in a Jr. College – intent on taking a different direction with his life. This story was playing out during the height of the Vietnam War. In early spring of 1968 Clair received his draft notice and was told to report for a physical. He passed the physical and was told to report for basic training at a certain date. At the same time the church in Little

Rock started revival. One night during an altar service Clair went off in a corner by himself to settle his call to preach. He told the Lord he had to know if he was "truly called" and made this statement to the Lord: "Lord if you keep me out of Vietnam, I will preach." About three weeks later Melba came home from work and found in the mail a letter from the Selective Services. The letter simply stated that his services were not needed by the United States military and that he had been reclassified H-6. No one has ever heard of that classification and he has never heard from them again.

The Sams moved back to Rock Island and enrolled again in BMI. It was during this time that Tim was born. In the spring of 1969 Clair graduated and they moved to their first church in Denver City, TX. It was a small church with only two members. They lived in the Sunday school rooms and did their best for this tiny flock. It was here that Laurie was born.

The next few years were spent pastoring small churches in TX, OK, AL and NM. While pastoring in Tuscaloosa,



AL, their third child, Larry, was born in April 1972. In 1974 the Sams family accepted a call to a church in Ontario, OR. Pastoring some of these churches felt like what Moses must have felt like during his 40 years in the desert. They were definitely the School of Hard Knocks. But God was teaching them many lessons that they would need in years to come.

The Sams experienced another major change in their lives in November of 1977. They received a call from a church in Goderich, Ontario, Canada. They knew nothing about the church nor did they know anyone who attended there but felt God was calling them to go. They responded positively to the church and to God and moved 2,300 miles away from family, friends and their native country. The trip was momentous. The snow and ice was record breaking and road conditions treacherous. It took 4 days to cross Wyoming alone due to closed roads and blizzard conditions.

The ministry in Canada was a time of personal encouragement and spiritual growth for Clair and Melba. The Church was solid and the congregation grew. Yet God still had some lessons for the Sams to learn. Their visa had to be renewed every year and on the fifth renewal the immigration officer stamped their papers "EXIT" by a certain date. While they were reeling in disappointment a call came from a church in Houston, TX. There was nowhere else to go so they moved to Houston. However, Houston became a turning point in their lives. It was there that God began to show them that there were other denominations in the Holiness Movement that were doing God's work too. God began to uncover and destroy the exclusive sectarian spirit that they had inadvertently developed. Listen to their words, "It was painful. We were both charter members of our respective local churches as children. It was all we knew and what we loved but under the circumstance God slowly and carefully led us beyond our small world."

In 1984 the Sams moved from Houston to Six Lakes, MI. They served this church for four years. While pastoring in Six Lakes Clair and a neighboring pastor started Youth Camp which is still blessing Youth in Michigan. It was during their time here that Clair attended his first IHC.

In the fall of 1987 the Church in Goderich, Ontario asked the Sams to return and pastor them again. This seemed to be God's will and the Sams once again headed

North to Canada.

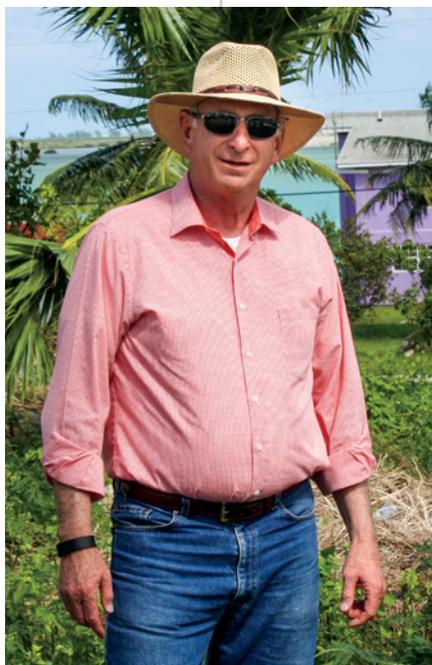
By 1989 it became evident to Clair that another change was coming in their lives. Many hours were spent in prayer and discussion. In August of 1989 they informed their church people of their decision to leave the church they had grown up in and follow wherever God would lead. Clair resigned the church and they prepared to move. The church board met and begged them not to leave but to help them leave the denomination also. After much prayer and consideration they decided it would be God's will to stay and lead them through their vote. They did not know how the vote would go but it was God's business. The church voted to leave and asked them to remain as pastor. The next 6 years were wonderful times of church growth and fruitful ministry.

In 1995, because of varying circumstances, the church in Goderich closed. This was a terrible blow to both of them. However, Clair was crushed. Questions came: "What was God doing?", "What did He want with us?"

It happened that while I was in Canada representing Bible Methodist Missions. Clair and I talked, and growing out of that discussion a new ministry called Mission Focus was born. A board was formed and Clair began working for this new ministry. Mission Focus opened up many opportunities for the Sams. Clair began to travel both in short-term missions and evangelism. During this time he did short-term work in the Philippines and Russia. He also traveled across America holding "Lets Pray" conferences, as well as traveling extensively for Society of Indian Missions.

In June of 1994 Clair, Melba, and their youngest son Dan joined the Ohio Conference of the Bible Methodist Connection of Churches. In 1995 he was elected Vice President of the Ohio Conference and served under both Rev. Gary Brugger and Rev. Mark Cravens. He also served as Camp coordinator under these men.

In June 2001 he was elected Conference President. This position opened the door for extensive involvement in the Bible Methodist Connection of Churches for both of them. Clair was immediately involved in all the committees of the Conference and Connection. In 2002 he was elected Editor of the "Bible Methodist" and still serves in that capacity. Melba became his personal secretary upon Clair's election as conference president and then she was elected the Heartland Conference Missionary President in 2003.



In May, 2003 Clair felt the need to go back to college and earn a degree. He graduated from GBS with a BA in Ministerial Education in May 2005.

Along the way they have added three daughters-in-law, one son-in-law, 15 grandchildren and 8 great-grandchildren.

Clair and Melba have given their heart and soul to the work of the Heartland Conference and Camp, the Bible Methodist Connection of Churches and to the advancement of the Conservative Holiness Movement in general. They are known all across Bible Methodism for their leadership, professionalism and “classy” behavior. The Church owes them a huge debt of gratitude. They ushered in 2 decades of growth and organization that future generations will build upon.

Clair and Melba, I wish I could be here with you tonight to say this in person. You have meant much to Ruth and me and I am personally indebted to you for wise counsel and solid friendship. However, even as I fly home from Denver I add my voice and praise to the voices of all of those gathered with you tonight. I thank God for the influence, leadership and spiritual impact of you both.

**Dr. Michael Avery**

*General Chairman*

*The Bible Methodist Connection of Churches*

**Three score and ten years ago** there was born on this continent a baby boy of which the world took little notice. It was enmeshed in recovering from a long and costly world war. So many children were born in that post-war era they called it the Baby Boom Era. But that baby was destined to impact our lives in many ways yet unforeseen. That baby’s future is now forever embedded in the history of the Heartland Bible Methodist Connection of Churches.

A few months later a small girl was born in East Texas country. Her future was an unwritten page that providentially intertwined with a now maturing young man. They joined hearts and hands in matrimony 50 years ago to face the future in God’s service.

We salute G. Clair and Melba Sams, leaders among us for 16 years and celebrating 50 years of wedded union this June.

They trained in Bible School. They lived in an era when doctrinal concern arose in the mother churches that led to “come-out” groups and protest movements. Soon the

Conservative Holiness Movement emerged. A span of positions ranged from careful and conservative to radical and extreme.

They were influenced and pressured by many voices in that spectrum. A battle raged for their loyalty but they found a balanced course based on God’s Word. Their leadership has been a beacon of steadfastness in changing times. They knew where God had placed his landmarks. There they stood. They have led us from this position.

Years of service were given in Canada and USA. Time was shared in the Philippines, Mexico, South Africa, Russia and other places on this globe.

They firmly anchored themselves in our hearts, in our churches and here on the grounds of Beulah Grove Camp. Here they shared in sweat and tears as they labored with passion and integrity.

In all this they maintained relationships with God and raised their family. We pastors received the last Sunday Expectations, the weekly email contact of President Sams last Friday. With Duane Quesenberry’s permission I am quoting a most fitting response to that last SE.

“Thank you for leading with a commitment to the Holy Spirit.

Thank you for serving so sacrificially. I’m sure we have no idea the measure of sacrifice.

Thank you for faithfully calling us to prayer. Did we ever rise to your call? Probably not.

Thank you for loving our families and being a President they also loved.

Thank you for resisting personal temptations to a host of things that we never had to be embarrassed by or deal with.

Thank you for working hard. I can’t think of a leader who has left more tanned, more calloused, more committed, more weary, more dedicated!

Thank you for the countless occasions of behind-the-scenes labors about which we never knew and “Thank you” was never expressed.

Thank you for having fun with us in our homes, at MOI Retreats, even a golf game, or two.

Thank you for being real, wise, available, organized, tireless, classy, - YOU!

Thank you for praying for us, our families, our ministries, our Congregations.

Somehow I believe that the familiar font and format of the weekly SE is only a part of what we have been blessed to enjoy and unfortunately have at times taken for granted, but will soon very much miss!”

They took time, and still do, to be with their children

and grandchildren. In the midst of this they were involved with aging parents. They lived exemplary lives before us.

Beulah Grove Camp Ground is a growing tribute to this dedication, leadership and hard work. They are not afraid to roll up their sleeves and join the workers.

The story is told of revolutionary war soldiers building a log house one winter. The major was barking orders to the rank and file soldiers as they tried to heave one log high on a wall. An officer riding by stopped and watched a bit. He dismounted and joined the men to successfully raise the log into place. One man made the difference. As he mounted his horse he said, "Major, next time your men are struggling to get the job done please send for General Washington," and rode away. We have such leadership in Clair & Melba Sams.

The distinctive pointed index finger gesturing during preaching indicated continued vision for the future. Bro. Sam's son captured this so aptly in a woodcarving that stands on the office desk at 171 Gibraltar Drive in Germantown.

Men change hats from task to task. But Melba Sams has worn so many hats through the conference, across this campground, and here in Wilcox Tabernacle. She even seated herself at the controls of the Ingersoll Rand road compacter just a couple weeks ago. Many times completion meant designating individuals or teams to do the task. She stepped to the plate and delivered.

Bro. and Sis. Sams we wish you God's will for your future and Thank You for your service.

### **Norman Blowers**

*Emcee of the Service Honoring the Sams at Beulah Grove*

**Sixteen years ago** I was attending my first Annual Conference in years. Scheduling conflicts at my pastorate in PA had kept me from coming out to Beulah Grove for 11 years. It was at that Annual Conference when the task of electing a new leader was the main order of business. I really did not know Clair Sams well at all, but his reputation was a good one: years spent in pastoral ministry and evangelism, missionary service, prayer conferences, and conference leadership.

I knew that he had not grown up in a Bible Methodist environment, but he had embraced Bible Methodism gladly. I knew he was pastoring a prominent church in Michigan of which I was familiar. It took little time that Monday afternoon to unite as a conference and elect Clair Sams as Ohio Conference President. Much to my surprise, a few ballots later, I was elected to the Executive Com-



mittee. That day began my journey of serving with Bro. Sams on the Executive Committee and has continued for all the years he has been President.

During that time I have very closely observed our President in times of celebration and rejoicing and in times of difficulty and heartache. This has given me a prospective of our leader maybe few have witnessed. Seven years after his election, I became his pastor and for the next nine years I also had the unique prospective of pastor to parishioner. From those vantage points let me share some observations on behalf of our Conference.

First and foremost our President is a man of God. We were certain in 2001 and we are certain today that He loves the Lord with all his heart and has set a godly example before us. He is a strong exponent of holiness. He has encouraged us to preach the glorious message that makes us truly Wesleyan. He has been a diligent student and avid reader. He has led by example as he encouraged us "to study to show ourselves approved unto God." He is a man of prayer. None of us doubted that when he said, "I am praying for you," that he really meant it. He has led us with humility, grace, and class. We were never ashamed to call him our leader.

Clair has worked diligently and sacrificially. He modeled before us the virtue of hard work and careful living. He never asked us to do what He was not willing to be a part of. He has promoted our Conference and the greater Connection in numbers of venues. Very good people and churches have joined our ranks because He attracted them to us. He has strengthened our Conference by pro-

moting our camp, youth camp, ministerials, retreats, and other events.

He has preached the Word effectively across the country and in foreign lands. He has kept us informed. His weekly Sunday Expectations and his excellent work as editor of *The Bible Methodist* has done much to improve our awareness of our churches and Connection.

He has taught us by example the grace of gratefulness. How many times have I received a thank-you card from him for some seeming small favor? He has been available to us when we called for advice, prayer, or just to vent. Clair never sought his good over the greater good of the Kingdom.

None of this could have been accomplished without the steadfast support and tireless work of his faithful companion. Melba has always been by his side and we as a Conference are forever grateful.

On a personal note, I share this sentiment with many in our conference when I call Clair my friend. We have laughed and cried together many times. We have planned and prayed together. We have shared many memorable moments over these sixteen years. We always know He loves us. That will be a great legacy.

God's Word declares that when our service to Christ is over and we stand before our Sovereign these are the words we all want to hear, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." The highest note of appreciation I can give on behalf of the Heartland Conference is this: for sixteen years we have been led by a good and faithful man of God. Thank you, my friend, for your service to us and to your Lord.

**Jack Hooker**

*Heartland Conference Secretary*



ABOVE: Sams enjoy a meal with Rev. and Mrs. Jack Hooker.

**Dear Bible Methodist Friends:**

On behalf of the InterChurch Holiness Convention and holiness people everywhere, we honor G. Clair Sams, and his good wife Melba, through their ministry in the Heartland Conference of the Bible Methodist Church.

They have led the Bible Methodist's well and have sacrificially given of themselves. In a much larger sense, they have been a blessing to the entire holiness movement. Truly, their ministry has touched all of us. Integrity, carefulness and vision have marked their lives.

Our prayers rest with Chris Cravens as he assumes leadership in the Heartland Conference. May the foundations that have been laid and the plans that have been made be blessed of the Holy Spirit for the spreading of Scriptural Holiness across these lands.

To God be the Glory for all He has done,

Sincerely,

**James D. Plank**

*IHC General Secretary*

**Clair and Melba show servanthood in:**

1. Unselfish devotion to God's Kingdom in very practical ways – In lending (to Becky and me), in standing in the gap created by cancer (serving in the Philippines for 6 months).
  2. Their consistent attentiveness to detail (the little things). This is doubtless a more reliable indication of Christlikeness than many things we could mention.
  3. Their faithfulness at follow through. No empty vows and promises. When they made a commitment you can put it in the bank.
  4. Quietly investing their own resources
  5. Perseverance - Clair and Melba have put everything into God's Kingdom for decades. They haven't quit.
- Thank you Clair and Melba.

**Timothy Keep**

*Bible Methodist Missions Director*



ABOVE: Larry Sams

**I know that this** is my dad's worst nightmare. Me on the platform speaking about him. I have provided him with many sermon illustrations. Dad where should I start...

Dear Dad and Mom (aka Gramps and Granny),

Your children want to take this opportunity to say thank you for all the sacrifices you have made to serve Jesus in this capacity for the last 16 years. We have watched you serve others in such an influential way in the most humble manner possible.

We would also like to say thank you for being at home what you preach in public. It has been our pleasure to share with the conference pastors and families, missionaries, and church laymen as they have become as close as family. You have shared many amazing things about what God has done and is doing in this conference. We have witnessed your tears and prayers when one of your own was hurting as well as many occasions of rejoicing in times of celebration.

As your biological family, we say thank you for representing these dear people in a way that was positive and edifying. Your grandchildren have observed your faithful walk in this position of authority as well.

Mom, words cannot express our gratitude to you as you have supported Dad during all these years. There are many areas in which you have quietly (And not so quietly) worked behind the scenes and Dad has received the credit. You are an amazing role model to all of us.

Dad, you have carried the burdens of this conference with dignity and grace. You have exemplified Godly leadership before the conference and your family. God has blessed us because of your faithfulness to Him.

As we enter into this new phase of life together, please know that we are by your side. We are looking forward to the days of rest that the Lord has in store. Your ministry together is continuing in a new venue and we are excited to observe the faithfulness of God... a new and a fresh in your lives.

Forever grateful,  
We love you.

**Tim and Sue Sams, Brian and Laurie Parrish  
Larry and Martha Sams, Dan and Erica Sams ■**

## REMINDER:

**The next General Conference** is scheduled for June 12-14, 2018. Memorials for changes to the Discipline must be submitted in the following manner: (The Discipline Page 104-105 Paragraph 264)

Each Memorial shall be submitted to the Committee by the vote of a Regional Conference, members of the Connectional Committee, or the signature of three or more elders or lay leaders of the Connection.

Each memorial shall be printed and in the hands of the Connectional Chairman and Memorial Committee at least 30 days before General Conference.

OCTOBER 4, 2017

BRIDGE THE GAP

UNITING THE CHURCH IN PRAYER



FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

What: **Prayer service**

When: **October 4, 2017, 7:00 pm**

Where: **Online streaming from Hobe Sound Bible Church**

Info: **[www.youthchallenge.net/bridgethegap](http://www.youthchallenge.net/bridgethegap)**

21 Day Prayer Challenge: **October 5-25**

**Bridge the Gap** is a prayer event designed to unite 3 generations of Christians and challenge them to join together in prayer. The prayer service is on Wednesday, October 4 and will be live streamed from Hobe Sound Bible Church. Pastors and youth leaders will be participating from several different states.

Join us this Fall as we launch a unique 21-day prayer initiative to stand in the gap for the young people in our lives. This call to prayer is for your entire congregation, young and old alike. We encourage everyone to participate in the 21 Day Prayer Challenge.

**Bridge the Gap** is sponsored by Youth Challenge and hosted by Hobe Sound Bible Church. There is no charge to participate. To register your church and receive a complimentary prayer packet with service information and 21 Day prayer cards, go to [www.youthchallenge.net/bridgethegap](http://www.youthchallenge.net/bridgethegap).



# *A Gracious Woman*

By Eunice Stearns

**The Proverbs writer** says that a gracious woman retains honor. (Proverbs 11:16)

Giving her heart to the Lord as a young girl, Melba Jean Sams, a soft spoken Texas girl with a pleasant, happy nature has found countless ways to be gracious and bless others throughout her life.

After marriage to Clair Sams, a unique life of ministry and teamwork unfolded. They pastored in several states and Canada, while raising their four children.

As Conference President's wife for the last sixteen years, she has been one hundred percent engaged and supportive. Mary Stetler describes her as her husband's "encourager, secretary and chauffeur." Our reflections center on those years of service.

Full of boundless energy, this lady can be found using her hands to serve the many people that she loves—family, church groups, board members and camp meeting crowds. Energized by people, she thrives on being busy and useful. Seeing a job

to be done, she will own it; expending time, energy and even her own resources when needed for Kingdom needs.

She served as Recording Secretary and Missionary President in the Bible Missionary Church and as personal secretary to her husband during his years as president of the Heartland Bible Methodist Conference.

As Conference President, Clair Sams was also Camp president. Melba was a wonderful help. She worked countless hours on the campgrounds, and her touch is seen everywhere. Riding her golf cart, she raced from one job to another, working very hard, but having fun. Tablecloths, flower centerpieces in the camp dining room, kitchen organization, comfortable evangelist quarters with beautiful gift baskets, and flowers around the tabernacle and snack pavilion show her feminine touch. Under her direction and influence, a beautiful much needed snack pavilion was erected and is heavily used and appreciated by all

during the various encampments at Beulah Grove.

Many ministry couples have been overwhelmed to see the Sams walk into a hospital room or for a funeral, knowing they traveled hours to be by their side in times of crisis. She never complained, but loved to being there to show love and compassion.

Melba continues to serve as the Secretary of the Women of Worth Literature Committee and not only has been the Recording Secretary, but also a contributing author. She has spent countless editorial hours behind the scenes preparing books for publication.

Starting her fourteenth year as Missionary President of Heartland Bible Methodist Missionary Society, her passion for missions is seen in her leadership and vision.

Her list of 'accomplishments' only hint at the amazingly talented woman that she is. She is a capable seamstress, and has an amazing talent of being able to sew many items without a pattern.

Melba's culinary skills are superior. From the warm steamy kitchens of several holiness camp grounds where she served as cook, to her modern well appointed home kitchen, Melba prepares delicious meals and treats with ease. Someone described her 'yummy meals' as the best part of work week at camp and reminisced about her chicken enchiladas and flaky biscuits.

A close friend described her as the 'queen of the kitchen and hospitality'. While pastoring, their home was open from the most prestigious board member, to the 'down and outer.' Needy souls were drawn to that "something different", which could best be described as the peace and comfort of a godly home. A visit to the Sams is a real treat from the gracious greeting, to the lovely table setting, delicious food and friendly conversation.

Although their home is beautiful, it is not too good to share with others in need. More than once, it has been a shelter for people in crisis or in need of a place to stay; for a few days – or months. Whatever the circumstance, they were treated with welcome and love.

Even though she is an excellent hostess, when visiting others' home she is a gracious guest and puts her hostess at ease. Enjoying a good laugh and loving to have fun has made her a favorite with children and young people. Melba is not an older lady avoided by the young people, but a friend whom they enjoy talking to when they meet up with her, often greeting her with a hug. A young pastor's daughter, Kara Eckert says, "Sis. Sams cooks good and I love her."

Ashley Quesenberry recalls the first time the Sams came to their house as Conference President and wife: "I was 10 years old and nervous about meeting our Conference President and his wife. The whole evening, I tried very hard to behave and act mature, but my younger siblings simply couldn't manage that task. Autumn and Stewart began running around the living room, chasing each other and hollering loudly. My mother was mortified! Then, Sis. Sams did something that startled us all. She jumped up from her chair at the table and chased after my siblings, hollering just as much as they were. That night has never been forgotten in our family and has become one of our fondest memories. As I grew into a teenager and now a young adult, Sis. Sams has been and is still one of my dearest mentors and confidantes. She has cried sad



*"My very dear, elegant, kind, considerate, professional and caring friend doing what she does so well...servings, instruction and entertaining ladies in ministry." – Marilyn Muir*

tears with me, laughed with me, cleaned the camp kitchen with me, and has prayed with me. I've thanked God many times for placing her in my life. She is a gem of a lady."

One woman described her as 'a true friend.' Eileen Blowers says, "She can keep a secret and chooses to believe the best" about others. She has a unique ability of making people feel comfortable, appreciated and loved; like they really matter to her.

An 'excellent role model' is a description by more than one of her friends. Watching her actions and the way she chooses to dress is an inspiration. Carefully, consistent, modest and neat, her attractive appearance is magnetic. Not only is she a role model in dress, but in her very lifestyle and choice of activities. Her energies are not expended on frivolous things, but on things that really matter to others and to the Kingdom.

Two of the Bible Methodist pastors' daughters, Ashley and Lauren Young write that she had a great impact on their lives from praying with them at the altar, and watching her support her husband's ministry and give of herself to others.

One of the young Bible Methodist pastor's wives, Jennifer Eckert said, "Sis. Sams is a dear friend and role model. I knew I could ask her anything and she would always give me a direct answer without sugar coating it. She showed me that it was 'ok' to not be able to play the piano and still be a preacher's wife. I love her. When Cordell was born, she (and Bro. Sams) came multiple times to see him and us. She cared and would listen."

"Truly amazing" are words another friend uses for her. This is an accurate description of Melba Sams. Whether it is office work, an editorial project, sewing, preparing camp meals, special dinners, or just being a friend, amazing excellence is shown.

Mary Stetler recalls her being humble. "When she is acknowledged for what she has done, she is thinking, "this is no big deal...anybody could do the same." Most of all, as Mary reminds us, Melba is a prayerful lady who knows how to intercede.

Melba Sams is a Proverbs gracious woman and one to be honored. Her touch and influence as the Heartland Bible Methodist Conference President's wife will be greatly missed. ■



# WORLD MISSIONS

## NEWS UPDATE

TIMOTHY KEEP | MISSIONS DIRECTOR



### The Commissioning of a New Missionary: *The Highlight of Missions Day 2017*

The highlight of Missions Day during the Heartland, Alabama, and Great Lakes family camps this year was the commissioning of our newest missionary, Sis. Maricka Herrero.

After playing a video recorded interview with Maricka Mission's Director, Tim Keep, read from Acts 13:2-3, "As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away." Though Maricka was in South Africa during the service she was able to listen in via Skype as Becky represented her at the altar, and as Dr. Allan Brown, Dr. Mike Avery, and Rev. Blake Jones prayed commissioning prayers over her.

The Lord's tender presence upon each commissioning service seemed to be a validation of His will and a promise of His favor and blessing upon the life of Sis. Maricka. We're excited about what God will do in and through Maricka in the days to come.

Maricka lands in the Philippines August 11th, and after a few weeks of rest at R. G. and Sarah's home, as well as introductions and orientation, she will begin six months of language classes in Manila. In the mean time, our Shepherd's College campus family in the Philippines is working hard to finish Maricka's efficiency apartment before she moves to the campus. Funds are still needed to complete this project.



ABOVE, LEFT: Maricka Herrero arrives in Manila, Philippines and is greeted by Sarah Hutchison  
ABOVE: Shepherd's College students  
LEFT: Construction progress on Maricka's apartment



### Brennan and Ivon Begin Deputation

At last, after a year of language school and three years of dedicated and effective ministry in Mexico, Brennan and Ivon Muir have begun their Share Tour through the conferences. Speaking from experience, your kindness and encouragement, your hospitality and friendship, and your prayers and generosity poured upon their family during these months of travel will provide priceless memories (for them and you) and strengthen their hearts for the work God has entrusted to them. Thank you for always caring for your BMM missionaries. It makes an eternal difference.



## A Milestone in Generosity

**Several months ago** Tim offered Joshua, Jabez and Nehemiah Conferences in the Philippines a \$10,000.00 matching challenge to raise funds for a much needed kitchen and dining hall at the PBMC National Office and Conference Center. While this center was dedicated in 2009, a kitchen and dining hall was never built. All these years we have used only temporary, makeshift structures for cooking and dining; a situation quite unsanitary and inconvenient. To say that a kitchen and dining hall are needed is a vast understatement.

Recently, during a July General Assembly where nearly 1,000 people gathered for a day of worship and Bible teaching, Philippines BMC National President, Rev. Brendel Macadangang, presented Tim’s matching challenge and ask our BMC members to give generously. An offering was taken. To everyone’s astonishment over \$600,000 pesos in cash (more than \$12,000.00) poured in, along with 200,000 pesos (\$4,000.00) in pledges to be collected by October! This is clearly a milestone in generosity for our Filipino congregations, a mark of maturity, and without doubt, a boost to their faith!

## A New Chapter in the Asia Highlands Ministry

**Paul and Esther are thankful** to everyone for your prayers during a season of increased scrutiny of Christian ministries. They felt very blessed and calmed by those prayers. Paul writes, “There are a lot of people being questioned now, and the uncertainties are many. I will say that I didn’t have to field [any questions] more difficult than I already have. It had crossed my mind what questions I could not respond to, but it didn’t come to that!”

Please continue to pray for the churches and learning centers here. Sometimes being uncertain what will happen next can be the most debilitating thing. I feel this keenly for them, but we know who holds the future.”

In the midst of this the Lord has opened a door to a brand new ministry for Paul. In cooperation with the International School in their city Paul has begun work on an English as Second Language (ESL) bridge curriculum for high schoolers. He is very excited about this opportunity to offer (evening) Christian based curriculum for public school students. Since Asia Highland students are only permitted to attend private schools for the early grades, this curriculum will be a tool for Christian teachers to provide after hours Christian worldview education to students all the way through high school.



## Shepherds College Graduate Church Planter

**Along with the Gospel Light** church plant, one of our Shepherd’s College graduates of several years ago has been faithfully church planting in a village in Joshua District. The Lord has blessed Pastor Raymond’s life and ministry with souls and this congregation will be building soon. We praise the Lord for how He is using our Bible School graduates.

# HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

**A very humble beginning** to be sure. But this is how most of our Gospel Light churches begin. The latest church plant (pictured above) is in a very remote village of Cabayo, Kayapa, Ifugau a place only accessible after several hours of arduous hiking. Road development is underway, but it could be many months, even years, before it is completed.

To this remote place the Lord has called one of our newest Gospel Light trainees, Pastora Julie. This little house church is only temporary, for one day, as the Lord prospers this ministry with souls, as new believers are grounded in their faith, as this newly formed congregation has joined together in prayer and in giving for a new chapel, as land is purchased and cleared, as a sacrificial counterpart has been raised by the members, and as the Lord places a burden on the hearts of those of us here in the USA to share in this project another new church will be built! Let us all continue to pray for Glen and Julie Inway and family, that the Lord will use them to win lost souls in Cabayo. Thank you for the continuous prayers and support for the Gospel Light vision to reach Luzon’s tribes with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

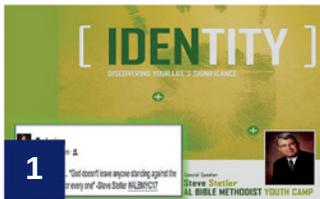
# ALABAMA CONFERENCE NEWS

JOHN PARKER | CONFERENCE PRESIDENT



## Youth Camp: June 5–9

Rev. Steve Stetler was used of God in an awesome way to address the theme “IDENTITY: Discovering Your Life’s Significance” at the Alabama Bible Methodist Youth Camp 2017! Many youth learned and experienced God’s love and plan for their lives in wonderful times of seeking God throughout the week.



1: 2017 Youth Camp logo



2: Youth enjoying a banquet



3: Cooks at Youth Camp

## Camp Meeting: July 4–9

We are still rejoicing in the wonderful blessings of the Alabama Camp Meeting and Conference! This was our Conference President Rev. Walter Hedstrom’s last conference of his twenty-seven years before retiring, and many made it a priority to come to express their appreciation to the Hedstroms.

The week began with a wonderful Conference Sermon preached by Pastor Mark Potter on Monday evening. Throughout the week God moved on hearts and many found renewed spiritual help and victory through the powerful and anointed messages by Dr. Michael Avery and Pastor John Ingram. Offerings went over the top to meet the financial needs of the Camp Meeting through generous giving.

### Ordination

Saturday morning was a very sacred and meaningful Ordination service for five ministers and their wives.

### Honoring Hedstrom’s

The special Saturday evening Celebration of the Hedstrom’s 27 years of leadership in our Alabama Conference was a touching and special time for them and for many who love them. A Retirement Love Offering of \$27,000.00 was presented to them (\$1,000 for each year of Conference leadership).

At the end of the Saturday evening service, Rev. John Parker was installed as the new Conference President of the Alabama Conference. A beautiful reception for the Hedstroms followed the service in the dining hall.



4: Camp meeting congregation

5: Dr. Michael Avery speaking

6: Heartland Conference President Cravens gave a tribute, former Heartland Conference President Clair Sams presented a letter and gift to Hedstrom, honoring their years of service.

7: Newly Elected Alabama Conference President John Parker being presented a gavel by outgoing President Walter Hedstrom

8: Darrell and Melissa Underwood; George and Ruth Vernon; Don and Melinda Shirk; Eric and Nancy Going; Dr. Tim and Cheryl Boyd



## Alabama Looses Longstanding Elder

The life and legacy of Sister Ruth Hooker was celebrated in a beautiful Memorial Service in Franklin, Ohio on July 28. She served the Conference for over 27 years. Conference President, John Parker, represented the Conference in the service.

## Thank You from The Hedstroms

Thanks to the Alabama Conference, various general leaders, friends, guests of the Bible Methodist Connection for your prayers, cards, and expressions of your love and support for the last 27 years. The Alabama Conference graciously gave us a \$27,000.00 retirement gift; the Heritage Hall was renamed Hedstrom Hall by the Camp Board in our honor; a beautiful reception was given in the dining hall. For these and all the kind cards and gifts, and especially your presence on the special evening, we humbly say thank you with all our hearts.

**Rev. and Mrs. Walter Hedstrom**

313 Lee Road 2049  
Salem, Ala. 36874

Email: [walthedstrom@gmail.com](mailto:walthedstrom@gmail.com)  
Cell Phone: (205) 812-6271



# GREAT LAKES CONFERENCE NEWS

BLAKE JONES | CONFERENCE PRESIDENT



## Family Camp

- 1: Evangelist, Dr. Michael Avery, counseling at the altar
- 2: Evangelist Rev. Harry Plank, with the Davis Family (Children's Workers)
- 3: The Edwards Family, Song Evangelists
- 4: Men's Afternoon Prayer Connection
- 5: Baptismal Service
- 6: Rev. and Mrs. Gene Davis led the children's services. The children raised over \$1,100 for audio text books for Jessie Keep's college classes at GBS.
- 7: Rev. Steve and Beth Stetler were honored for their years of missionary service in Mexico. The reception highlighted a Mexican meal, gifts and cards, and a special plaque from the Great Lakes Conference.
- 8: The first Sunday morning and afternoon of Rock Lake Camp are designated as Missions Services. It was our delight to welcome the Stetlers and the Muirs to these services!

9: Rev. and Mrs. Dennis Johnson celebrated their 50th anniversary at a reception during camp meeting. Right to Left: Matt, Lisa, Dennis, Joan, Janie, Doug.

10: Jessie Edwards leading the Youth Choir

## Youth Camp

- 11: Youth Camp service in the Tabernacle
- 12: Aerial View
- 13: Left to Right: Rev. Titus Byer, Rev. Deron Fourman, Evangelist, Mr. Doug Derscheid, Conference Youth Director
- 14: The Winning Team! Each team accumulates points during sports events, Bible Bowl and drama presentation.
- 15: Water anyone? Rev. Nathaniel Tucker keeps the campers hydrated!
- 16: Youth games





# HEARTLAND CONFERENCE NEWS

CHRIS CRAVENS | CONFERENCE PRESIDENT



## Heartland Family Camp

Summer 2017 brought exciting improvements and events to Heartland!

The new RV park project was begun and is close to completion on the Beulah Grove Campgrounds. President and Sis. Sams invested their time and energy undertaking this project, the Conference is grateful for their dedication. On Tuesday at the close of Conference, the ribbon was cut and 40 new RV spaces were quickly filled for camp meeting.

Resigning Conference President, G. Clair Sams and his wife were honored on Monday, June 19, for their 16 years of leadership. Following the Conference sermon preached by Rev. Mike Shiery; the Sams family members, colleagues and friends gathered for an evening of tributes. A reception followed in the dining hall with an "Israel" theme to go along with their anticipated trip to the Holy Land.

Monday of Annual Conference, Rev. Chris D. Cravens was elected as the new president of the Heartland Conference. This transition was solemnized on Sunday, June 25 during the morning service at Beulah Grove. The congregations and clergy of the Heartland Conference congratulate President Cravens and wish him God's blessing and guidance.

Around 700 attended the final Sunday of Camp meeting! We enjoyed the preaching of Dr. Allan Brown and music of Jonathan and Jalena Glick! Gene and Angie Davis ministered to our children and the youth were challenged by Pastor Jay Slagenweit.

On Saturday, Rev. David Crosley and Rev. Joseph Ratcliff were ordained by Rev. Clair Sams. Throughout the week, Beulah Grove was alive with people fellowshiping, worshipping and seeking God.

As summer fades and fall approaches, the Heartland Conference looks ahead to great plans, great events and a God-anointed future.

## Heartland Youth Camp

Youth Camp bulged with over 250 campers packing the dorms, cabins, ballfields and tabernacle! It was a week of fun, teamwork and spiritual impact. There were seekers every evening as Conference President Chris Cravens spoke on the life of Jonah and the call of God. So many pastors, parents, volunteer staff, along with our Youth President, Mike Mater provided us a youth camp event not soon forgotten.

*1: Installation of newly-elected Conference President Cravens*

*2: Evangelists. Left to right: Jalena and Jonathon Glick, Drs. Allan and Nadine Brown, Rev. Chris and Julie Cravens, Rev. Gene and Angie Davis and Family*

*3: Ordination Candidates. Left to right: Rev. and Mrs. G. Clair Sams, Rev. and Mrs. David Crosley, Dr. and Mrs. Michael Avery, Rev. and Mrs. Joey Ratcliff and Rev. and Mrs. Chris Cravens*

*4: First campers in the newly installed RV park*

*5: Rev. Bennie Durr presents appreciation plaque to Clair and Melba Sams*

*6: Youth camp crowd*

*7: Youth worshipping*

*8: President Cravens preaching youth camp*

*9: Wacky Sports*

*10: Volleyball*

## To Heartland Regional Conference Executive Committee and Annual Conference:

Thank you very much for the kind words, stately prayers, generous gifts, abundant cards, and beautiful reception given us following our resignation as Conference President. The kindnesses offered us are beyond our ability to fully respond.

G. Clair and Melba Sams



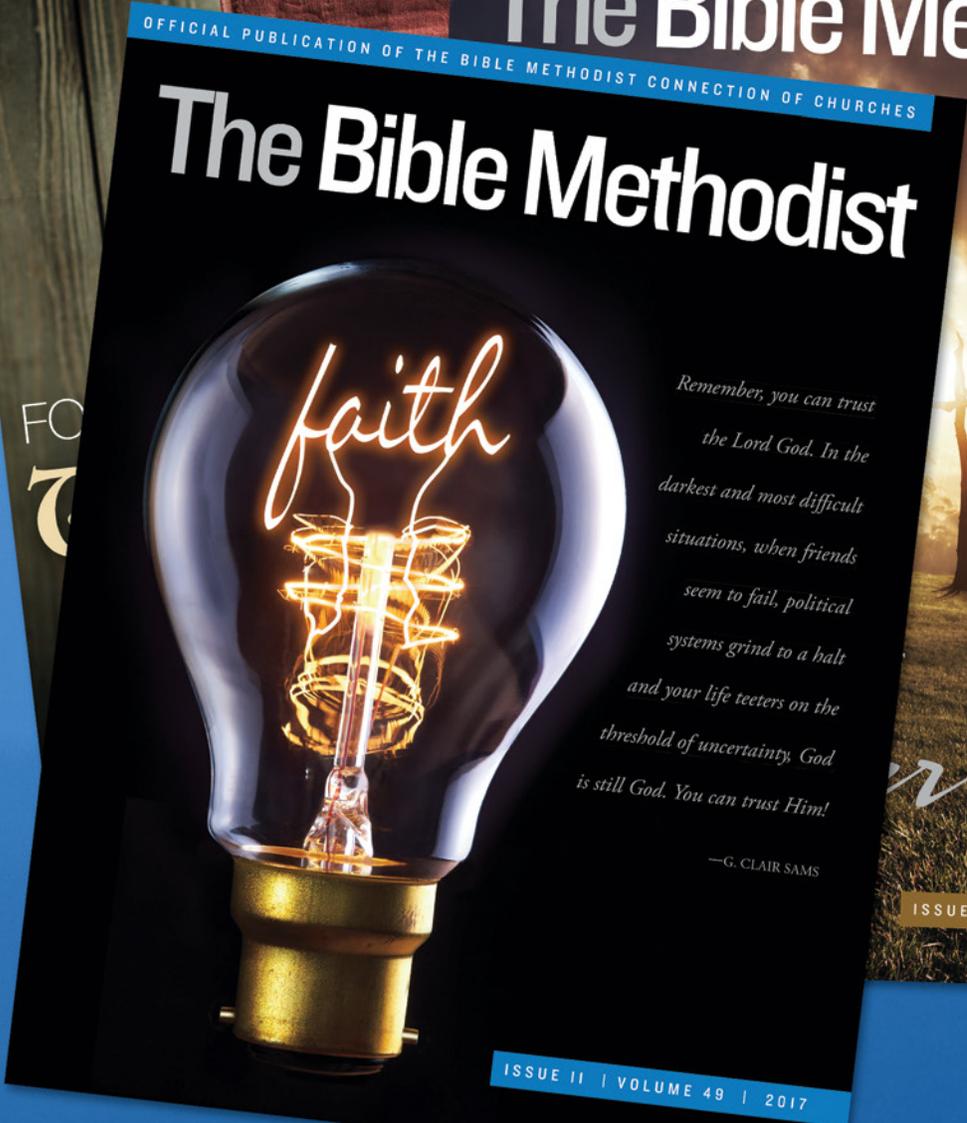
# SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

Your Bible Methodist connection  
to news and inspiring articles.

Nonprofit Org  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Shoals, Ind.  
Permit No. 18

## THE BIBLE METHODIST

Deron Fourman, Subscription Manager  
990 S. Wonnell Rd.  
Port Clinton, OH 43452



**\$10**  
PER YEAR