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THE BIBLE METHODIST

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WALTER HEDSTROM

Alabama Conference President
1990–2017



From the Editor

In this issue you will read about Walter and Linda Hedstrom and their years of leadership in the Alabama Regional Conference of the Bible Methodist Connection of Churches. Walter Hedstrom resigned this summer from 27 years as Alabama Regional Conference President. It is a privilege to honor their years of sacrificial service to the Lord through the churches and Conference. You will read about the Lord's leadership in their lives bringing them together at God's Bible School and College. You will get a glimpse of their sacrifice for and influence on the Alabama Conference and the larger Bible Methodist Connection of Churches as well as their ministry among the Inter-Church Holiness Convention community. Please take a few minutes to peruse the pictures and reminisce about the blessing Hedstroms have been to the Lord's kingdom.

Thanks to Dr. Michael Avery, John Parker, and Melba Sams, as well as to those who wrote and submitted tributes to Rev. and Mrs. Walter Hedstrom. The willingness of these people to collect, write and submit material reflects their love for and commitment to this great couple.

21 DAYS OF PRAYER / PRAY AROUND THE WORLD

This is the second year The Bible Methodist Connection of Churches has organized a January focus on prayer. Please notice the poster on the back page that highlights this event. We encourage your participation in 21 Days of Prayer and Pray Around the World events. The focus is to take time during the month of January to seek the Lord. Your Pastor and Conference President have copies of a prayer guide designed to help you focus during 21 Days of Prayer and Pray Around the World. You may access the prayer guide and poster at www.biblemethodist.org/prayer.

G. Clair Sams
Editor

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TRIBUTES TO THE HEDSTROMS

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

In the rolling hills and valleys of southern Chautauqua County, New York, lies the historic city of Jamestown. It has produced a host of notable people but none more important to the Bible Methodist family than Walter Hedstrom. Walt was born there on July 9, 1951 to Alvin and Gertrude Hedstrom.

Walt's early years are filled with the pleasant memories of growing up on a small three acre farm in Kennedy, along with older siblings, Alvin Jr. and Patricia. His family raised vegetables and animals; enjoyed yard and table games; attended all the revivals and cottage prayer meetings possible; and faithfully joined together each day at the family altar.

Walt's family attended the Falconer Allegheny Wesleyan Church in Ellicott, NY for many years (this is the same church that Rev. H.E. Schmul attended as a young man). Lat-

er the family attended the Allegheny Wesleyan Church, in Ashville, NY. It was here that Walt received his call to preach in 1969. He became the fifth denominational leader to come from this little obscure church. One of the foremost of these leaders was Dr. Leslie Wilcox, our first Connectional Chairman.

Walt graduated from Randolph Central High School in 1969. He had planned to attend Kansas City Bible College that fall but God changed his plans and within a few weeks of the opening of the fall semester he was accepted at God's Bible School and College. Just a few days after his arrival on campus, he was asked to preach at the Sycamore Street Mission. The pastor of the mission was away, so he continued to preach there for several weeks. Later in the year, the building was condemned and the pastor resigned, so the school appointed him as pastor. He and

Carl Todd began to look for a new location to house the ministry. They found a two-story brick building on Main Street that was owned by a group of attorneys. After some discussion with the partner group, they decided to donate the building to the college for use as a mission. The college agreed to this provided that the students pay all the legal fees, cover the cost of necessary repairs and pay all the reoccurring monthly bills. By faith the Lord supplied all the finances from the handful of students attending the mission and the transaction was made. Walt pastored there for four years. During that time, a number of people found the Lord. Main Street Mission is still a thriving ministry today.

While a student at GBS, Walt needed a job to pay his school bill. Dr. Sam Deets, GBS president at the time, knew of an opening in a prestigious department store downtown. Dr. Deets told

Walt that if he got the job that he was not to quit for a long time and to make a good name for the school. Walt got the job and was immediately placed in the ladies hosiery and handbags department. For two years he worked hard helping wealthy women find the right shade and size of hose they desired or maybe an expensive pocket book. After working here for two years, he felt he had honored his commitment to Dr. Deets and moved on (with great relief) to a job at Proctor and Gamble.

Like all the other young men on campus, Walt was interested in finding a good wife. In the spring of 1970, Walt became very interested in a beautiful southern girl from Monterey, Tennessee. Her name was Linda Madewell. They began dating in April and were engaged in January of 1971. Walt and Linda were married that summer on July 31, 1971. After marriage, Linda worked on staff in the GBS bookstore and they both worked together at Main Street Mission for the next four years.

In 1973, the Hedstroms resigned from the mission and started attending the Mt. Carmel Bible Methodist Church that was pastored by Rev. and Mrs. John Dorsey. It was during this time they met Rev. V.O. Agan, the Alabama Conference president. Brother Agan visited the school looking for preachers and spoke at the Mr. Carmel church. He offered to find the Hedstroms a place in the Alabama Conference if they were willing to go south. So when Walt finished his school work at the end of the first semester in January of 1974, he and Linda moved to Pell City where Walt taught 7th and 8th grade until the end of that school year. It was during this time that the Hedstrom's first child, Joseph, was born.

During Annual Conference of that summer, Walt submitted his name to pastor a church. The Glencoe church extended a call and the Hedstroms accepted. They pastored here from 1974-1976. Alvin Hodge, a lay leader at Glencoe church, taught Walt the value of working on the camp grounds and showing up faithfully for all work days. A lesson he learned well and practiced faithfully all the time he served in Alabama.

In 1976, Walt and Linda accepted a call to pastor the church in Cordova, Alabama. At that time the church consisted of just a handful of ladies and one man. This small group could not promise a salary, but the Hedstroms took the church anyway. Over a period of seven years the Lord helped Walt and Linda to increase the attendance 10-fold! While serving at Cordova, Walt also served on several conference boards, made trips to the mission work in Mexico and held a number of revivals. At the closed of seven wonderful years they felt it was the Lord's will to resign. God had given them three more beautiful children while at Cordova—Benjamin, Martha, and Philip—thus completing their little family.

In 1984, the Hedstroms received a call from the church at Ada's Chapel. They accepted the call and moved to this beautiful country setting. The children really enjoyed life at Ada's Chapel. The move here also opened the door for the kids to attend Stanton Christian School and for Linda to teach there. During this time, Walt was elected vice president and then president of the camp. He was later elected Vice president of

the Conference. He served on the Sunday School Board and served in various capacities on the board at Stanton Christian School.

In 1989, the executive committee asked Walt to take a more active role in assisting Brother Agan with the conference work. Walt agreed and took on the task of holding the large majority of the quarterly meetings in the local churches. He travelled to churches in SC, AL, FL, GA, and TN in his memorable red 1974 Ford Pinto!

At the annual conference of 1990, Walt was elected conference president. The move from Ada's Chapel to Pell City was a major adjustment for all of the Hedstrom family, especially the kids. Upon assuming the Conference President's job, Bro. Agan kindly met Walt, gave him a few folders concerning the conference, grinned real big and said, "You will do a great job and the Holy Spirit will help you." And with that inaugural moment, Walt set off to lead the conference for the next 27 years.

Walt had no ambition to be the conference president and took the job reluctantly. But once accepting it, he gave himself fully to the work of promoting and building up the Alabama Conference. He visited every church in the conference (42) at least twice a year to hold quarterly meetings and encourage the pastors and their wives. Some weeks he would be in a different church Monday-Friday and two churches on Sunday.

Walt was a great supporter and promoter of Bible Methodist Missions. He made numerous trips to Texas and Mexico the first week of December to take used clothing for the mission field, preach in the Mexican churches and to pick fruit from the mission's groves to sell in Alabama and make money for Bible Methodist Missions. He traveled to South Africa and the Philippines to minister to our nationals there as well as to enjoy the fellowship of the great international family of Bible Methodist.

Walt visited all the Bible Colleges at least twice a year to meet prospective Christian workers and to make the work of Bible Methodism known to the students. He also provided the Bible Methodist paper to every employee of every College and to the Ministerial students as well. He served on the Board at GBS for a number years.

One of Walt's greatest joys as conference president was assisting church plants and planting new churches. He helped eight church plants move from pioneer status to organized church status. For several years he traveled extensively throughout the Mid-America section casting the vision to plant churches and organized them into a regional conference west of the Mississippi. He spread the news of Bible Methodism in every corner he could find traveling in Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Missouri. He started pastors' banquets to bring identity and fellowship to the licensed ministers of that region. He met with various pastors at various times in Wichita for a dinner, and would update them on missions and the ministry of Bible Methodism. He attended the new organization camp called the Heartland Holiness Association started by Dale Redman, held revivals and special services and shared in the Bible Colleges how



ABOVE: Conference Presidents Retreat – Rev. and Mrs. Walter Hedstrom, Rev. and Mrs. Clair Sams and Rev. and Mrs. Blake Jones

God was moving in the west. He started the “Heart for the Shepherd Seminars” to promote training and fellowship every March somewhere in the west to further the cause of a regional conference. Eight to ten states were normally represented. This particular initiative caught on in other places and soon Heart for the Shepherd Seminars were taking place in other locations. These seminars ministered to a number of bi-vocational pastors within the conference as well as other holiness ministers and pastors that were not able to attend their ministerial. God used these in a special way to give training, fellowship and bring unity and fellowship for many holiness ministers. The purpose of the seminars is to instruct, inspire, and provide fellowship for bi-vocational pastors, full-time pastors, and ministers among the holiness movement.

Walt was also key in establishing the Conference Presidents retreats for the Regional Conference Presidents. This provided a time of fellowship and planning for the conference presidents, as well as a better understanding of the ministry and challenges of the three regional conferences. He considered this time spent with Blake Jones, Great Lakes Conference President and G. Clair Sams, Heartland Conference President some of the highlights of his ministry.

Walt was known all across the conference as the “Pastor’s Friend.” He found ways to improve support and respect for the ministers and their wives. He encouraged churches to give five year calls and extended calls, which many did. He encouraged churches to sponsor their pastor to attend events like School of the Prophets, Aldersgate Forum, IHC, Hobe Sound Camp, Seminars, and the Bus and Outreach Convention. He provided books and resources for pastors and laymen to improve ministry in the local church. His encouragement of the annual October Pastor Appreciation Month and Laymen Appreciation Month proved to be highly beneficial to the health of many churches.

When the passion for Christian Education was alive and

well, Walt was at the heart of it, spreading the flame. He assisted various Christian Day Schools throughout the conference. Pell City Bible Methodist School, Stanton Christian School and Friendsville Bible Methodist School were all “Conference Schools.” Miltonvale, KS; Winston-Salem, NC; Mobile, AL; Chattanooga Temple, TN; and Enterprise, AL. were local churches that had school. Walt served on most of their boards. He mentored the staff, encouraged the supporters and spoke in their chapels to the students.

Walt had a passion for young men who were training for the ministry. He well knew the cost of education and wanted to do something to help. This passion led to action and he helped establish a scholarship fund for ministers at GBS in honor of his parents and grandparents. This led to other people responding to scholarships for various people in the Alabama Conference. In just a few years he had participated in raising scholarships for youth in the Bible Colleges that totaled far above \$100,000.00.

As President of the Alabama Campmeeting, Walt was able to lead the Camp to new heights and lead in making so many improvements to the campground. Some of the improvements include: 1) a doubling of the sewer system capacity for camp/school with several pumping stations and increased field lines. 2) a new commercial kitchen in the cafeteria with new ovens, walk in freezer, cooler, ice maker, stainless steel tables for preparation of food, and new convection ovens. 3) a new \$600,000 worship tabernacle that was named the Agan Tabernacle. 4) Remodeled the main restrooms by the tabernacle. 5) remodeled the Caretakers home. 6) Built a pole barn for storage. 7) Purchased a number of different camp vehicles. 8) Remodeled the old Tarrant dorm for a new boy’s dorm. 9) Remodeled the WMS Chapel 10) Did extensive paving. 11) Built a new family dorm called Heritage Hall (now named Hedstrom Hall) with a floor for senior citizens, a laundry mat, and an upstairs that can sleep over 100 campers. 12) Remodeled the old and new worker’s cottages. He also helped with a long list of other projects that are too numerous to mention.

Walt felt it was time to step down from the Conference Presidency in the summer of 2017. He ended twenty-seven years of excellent leadership to the Conference and forty-four years of active ministry. Walt and Linda lived lives before the whole Bible Methodist family that were characterized by true holiness. One didn’t need a theology book to understand what personal holiness looked like. One only needed to watch the lives of Walt and Linda Hedstrom. Their self-giving love, their careful walk, their gracious spirits pointed all of us to Christlike living.

Walt, your labors and leadership were marked by faithfulness, goodness, integrity, compassion and love for the lost. “Well done good and faithful servant” is more than a passage from scripture it is truly a description of your life. You have not marred your office by scandal or failure. You have lived with integrity, served with honesty, always been approachable, and never failed to reach out with those long arms of yours to offer a struggling brother a compassionate embrace. You have not withheld anything from the service of Bible Methodism. Not your time, your health, your tears, your car,

your personal funds – not anything. Without a doubt you were the most enthusiastic promoter of Bible Methodism the church has ever had.

Your love for the lost has challenged us all. I have never had a talk with you but what part of the discussion wasn't about some new venue or some new way to share the gospel or some new person you had shared the gospel with.

Walt I know you struggled with inferiority and insecurities. You never felt that you were as capable as some, as talented as others and as successful as most. But the truth is you have outstripped all of us. You have left a significant legacy on the Campground with new buildings and beautiful grounds. You have left a legacy of local pastor support – you stood by your men and they won't ever forget it. You have left a legacy of love for the Church – and we are all the better for it.

All I can do now is to say “thank you.” I can acknowledge the churches debt to you and offer some small token of appreciation. But someday, sooner than we think, the Master of the house will return to take an account of all our investments for the Kingdom. And this humble, one talent man, whom I seek to honor in this article, will be surprised when he sees that one talent has brought forth a 100 fold harvest and he hears those glorious words – “Well done Walt – you have been a good and faithful servant.”

Dr. Michael Avery

General Chairman

The Bible Methodist Connection of Churches

On behalf of the Heartland Conference of the Bible Methodist Connection of Churches, I congratulate you upon your retirement after serving the Lord these 27 years as the Conference President of the Alabama Conference. Thank you Sister Hedstrom, children, and extended family for your many sacrifices in sharing Brother Hedstrom with all of us. We pause tonight to express our love and appreciation. This journey would not have been possible without you and we honor you all.

Brother Hedstrom, your life and ministry have been one and the same. Your example for all to judge clearly testifies on your behalf. Your personal holiness - transformational! Your moral character - impeccable! Your visionary leadership - extraordinary! Your unashamed loyalty to family, friendships and the church - unquestionable! And most of all your passionate love for the souls of men - divine! Thank you for everything.

May I plead with you as a son would a father? Remain true to the God of your youth! Don't lay down your books! Don't stop dreaming big! Don't quit promoting the kingdom! Don't believe for a second that your journey has ended or that your friends have forgotten you! Rest! Rejoice! Your labors will follow you, the Lord has promised it (*Revelation 14:13*)!

Chris D. Cravens

Heartland Conference President

Walter Hedstrom has led the Alabama Conference of the Bible Methodist Church with distinction. Far beyond his local membership, he has blessed holiness people everywhere with his frequent communication and visits. His ministry has been marked by tears. His passion to build the church and to see souls won into the Kingdom has marked his life. We salute Brother and Sister Hedstrom for their years of service and pray God's best for the years to come.

James Plank

IHC General Secretary

Sis. Hedstrom's concern for the needs of others was very evident. She showed this many times at our ladies prayer meetings when she and Bro. Hedstrom visited our church.

It was a blessing to serve with Sis. Hedstrom on the WMS board. She made me feel so at ease at my first meeting as a new member of the board. There was no doubt that she really cared for our missionaries.

I consider Sis. Hedstrom as one of my dearest friends.

Connie Unger

Glencoe, Alabama

Congratulations to each of you as you celebrate this wonderful evening of honor and appreciation. Perhaps more than I can tell, I have agonized over not being present for these special moments. Please know how very much I wanted to personally come along beside you this evening.

Bro. Hedstrom, for the last sixteen years you, Bro. Sams and I have worked together as conference leaders of our three Bible Methodist Conferences. We have leaned on each other. We have supported each other. We have prayed for each other. We have shared accountability, challenges, dreams, goals, planning, Discipline work and a host of other details. With our wives we have stepped away for annual working retreats and mutual camaraderie. Those times have been rich and rewarding. We have looked to each other for encouragement and, sometimes, for a shoulder to lean on. Our relationship has made this a warm and fulfilling chapter in my life.

When I became conference president eighteen years ago, I looked to you, Bro. Hedstrom, for advice and help as I oriented myself to Bible Methodism and the responsibilities of my new position. You have not just mentored me, but you have been my friend. Thank you for your prayers, your willingness to share transparently and your strength.

You have served the Alabama conference with integrity and a passion for your pastors. Your early morning texts have been a part of your untiring work for the kingdom! The thousands of miles you have traveled have been recorded in Heaven's log book. Your endless concern for details have been rewarded. And, the joke that you used “The Discipline” for your devotions has only underscored your love and care for Bible Methodism.

Sis. Hedstrom, you have been a quiet source of strength and

stability. Your work, too, is celebrated this evening. Though you preferred to work in the background, please know that your efforts are not unnoticed. And your support of Bro. Hedstrom and his travels has been a huge blessing to your conference and The Connection at large. Thank you very much!

Bro. and Sis. Hedstrom, on behalf of the Great Lakes Conference of the Bible Methodist Connection of Churches, I want to express our deep appreciation for your ministry and service to Bible Methodism. Thank you for being the face of Bible Methodism to many of us as we merged into The Bible Methodist Connection of Churches. Please accept our small token of appreciation knowing that it is given in genuine appreciation.

May God bless your future ministry with the Holy Spirit's fresh anointing and clear guidance. We love you and pray God's kind blessing to rest upon you and all your family. Thank you, Bro. Hedstrom, for being my friend!

Blake Jones

Great Lakes Conference President

Linda Hedstrom was one of the nicest, loveliest, and kindest people I know. She was always the same.

The Hedstrom's often invited me to travel with them to General Conference and I enjoyed being with them so much.

Linda was always so supportive of Bro. Hedstrom but you weren't always aware of it, for she was a quiet person and you just didn't hear a lot out of her. She completed him. He couldn't have been who he was without her. When you talked with her, you always felt encouraged when you left for she expressed the real grace of God.

Mrs. Dot Brown

Pell City, Alabama



What a joy it has been to minister in unity with you and the Alabama Conference. Oh, certainly there have been times when we wrestled with each others strengths and weaknesses, and each Conference's uniqueness, but the years have been blessed with a strong sense of comradeship and singleness of purpose.

Words fail to describe the passion of Walt and Linda Hedstrom. Hebrews 6:10 says, "for God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister." I know of no one who has committed to more vigorous promotion of Alabama Conference and the Bible Methodist Community of Believers than the man we honor today. He has prayed, interceded, intervened, traveled, preached, led meetings, (posted signs) studied and counseled faithfully.

Thank you for your deep concern and interest in the local church. You also care for those needing to find Christ, new Christians, mature Christians, other Conferences and missions. Thank you for loving Linda and your family, thank you for loving us. Thank you for the example of integrity and grace in the heat of deep difficulties. Thank you for leading by example.

Participating with you during Conference President's retreats, the Discipline Review Committee, Connectional and Missions Committees has been a blessing. You will be missed.

I am praying for you. Praying the Lord will strengthen your body, lift up your spirits, and renew His presence in your life and ministry.

G. Clair Sams

Editor, The Bible Methodist

Thirty-eight years ago, Linda and I first met at the 1979 Pell City Camp and we have consistently crossed paths ever since. She has served in many capacities and has done them all well...wife, mother, pastor's wife, teacher, conference president's wife, WMS president, and I'm sure many other roles!

I have always enjoyed being with Linda when we could be together in our homes or at the different conference events and count her as a very dear friend!

Cathy Parker

Pell City, Alabama

Dad, in representing the family, let me say that we truly celebrate with you on reaching this milestone in your life. When I was first asked to give our story at this event I was overwhelmed and a bit intimidated. For one, how does anyone summarize years of perspectives and experiences into a few minutes and two, how many children have the opportunity to appreciate their father in a public setting instead of the intimate comforts of home? But as the four of us communicated with each other, it became increasingly clear that both of my initial concerns can be answered in one innate aspect of who you are and how you have served: that is your

passion for people.

Your passion to love people is what drove you twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week. One of us stated it this way: "Your passion that came through your voice and tears down your face is as real as my love for God, family, and people. You love people to a fault, but of all things to be guilty of - that's a good one." It's why we children have the privilege of sharing publicly - without your love for people we wouldn't have the extended family that we call the Bible Methodist Connection of Churches. To be honest, although there were times where your job took you away from us and we were frustrated and felt bitter, it was your passion and love for people that presented the opportunity for the church community to love us back. In one sense, you allowed us to go to work with you every day - and no one ever complained about it. Instead, they spent time with us, counseled us, and treated us as one of their own.

Every experience that I can think of - both good and bad - goes back to this passion that is behind everything you do. We always thought that was normal - but as we grew up and had our own children, we quickly realized that wasn't the case. The uniqueness behind your leadership is that you are initially open and vulnerable to others allowing them to show what kind of person they really were. You had no bias as to denomination, skin color, or socio-economic status. Sure, there may have been times when you were taken advantage of or scorned by others, but at the end of the day even if people disagreed with you, they knew they were loved by you. In the unfortunate situations where you were unjustly attacked for accepting people the way you do, you would remind us "that the easiest way to remove mud is to let it dry and just flick it off." It's an obvious conclusion to say that how you loved people was and is contagious. While your beliefs are important, people respond to your leadership because of how you love them.

I think it's been clearly stated that your passion for people is universal - and that is why we are so excited for your retirement. We know your love for God and his children has already turned your attention to Salem where you've been acquainted with much of the community and we know you will make a difference there. But more importantly, enjoy turning your attention to Mom in this new stage in your life. Your responsibilities aren't being reduced, just becoming more focused. It may be uneasy for you in the coming days by not having every day scheduled with people all over the nation and world, but remember you have an individual right beside you that deserves all the attention you can give her. We love you dad and we are proud to celebrate your life with you today.

Mom, as far as we see it, this day is as much about you as it is for dad. In our sibling reflections, it was Philip who made sure to say that no matter what was done or said today, make sure you include Mom! Of course we wouldn't have it any other way. You have been the model of dedication, devotion, and loyalty. From the beginning you came to a place where you had no family and knew no one, but I never ever heard one complaint or negative phrase come out of your mouth.

You've never preferred the public setting, yet you took on the responsibilities with grace and dignity, and did a superb job I might add. For our family, you are the rock - in the times when our family could not be together you are the one that we knew would be waiting for us when we got home. You were always supportive - of dad - you always kept challenges of the church to yourself. And of us - you allowed us to be normal kids - you wouldn't get upset if we started laughing about statements Dad would make while preaching like "the Christmas lights were tinkling and sprinkling" or if we could tell the next point of his sermon. You wouldn't say anything or add to it, but we did see your eyes twinkle as you looked off in the distance as if you really didn't hear what we did. I'm sure many feel this way about their own mother, but we really think we have the best mom ever. You would never say it, but we feel that this is a transition that you have longed for. We are looking forward to you replacing church trips, hosting business meetings, and "cleaning that camp stove every year" with fishing, planting the garden, and squeezing the grandkids!

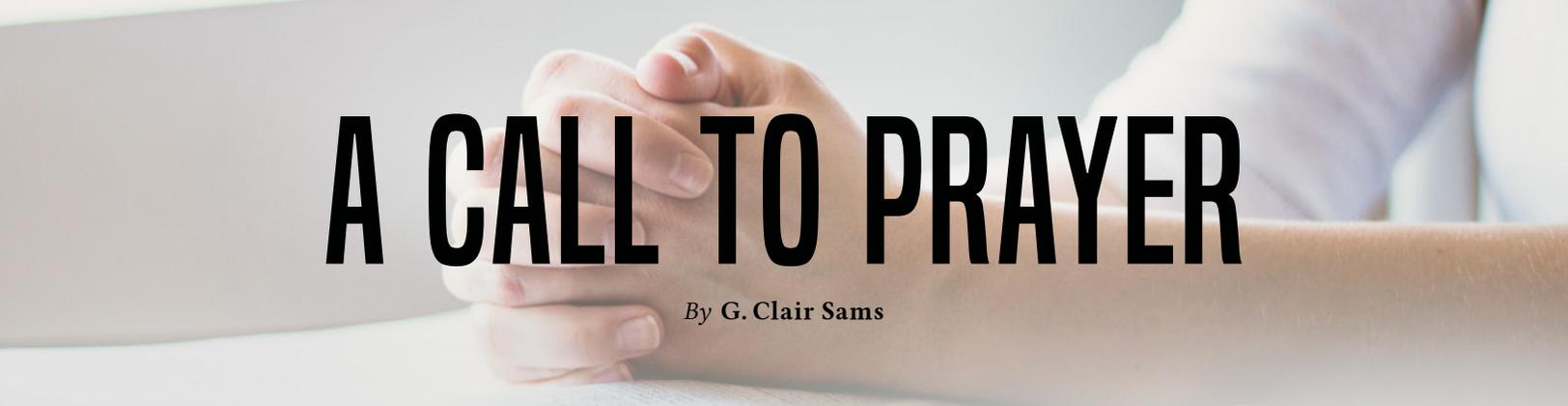
Martha summarized it best:

"Your love is fierce. You raised us kids while Dad raised a conference. Both worlds were given privacy to grow and it is with a grateful heart to celebrate you today. Thanks for making our house a home and not a business as much as you could. You lived to pursue God's dream for Dad and now I could not be happier to see you live that dream He placed in you in retirement. The family and conference we share is a direct result of your prayer, faith, and care. We rise up and call you blessed, you are a treasure."

Joey and Ben Hedstrom

Sister Hedstrom was very supportive throughout our 27 years and worked diligently by my side. Packed suitcases, traveled thousands of miles, entertained guests, patiently waited as we had business meetings and special times of lay leaders and ministers confiding in us, and taught in Christian Schools to provide Christian education for our family. Every time we would pull out of the driveway, she would pray for the pastors, services and safe travels. The pastors wives looked forward to her fellowship. She carried a burden for missions, Christian Education, local church and has a keen interest in the Mid-America District churches and ministries. She has been a diligent intercessor for the conference, pastors and our ministry. Special thanks and appreciation from me as her companion for the patience, prayers and maintaining a Christlike spirit throughout the years of ministry in the Alabama Conference. ■

Walter Hedstrom



A CALL TO PRAYER

By G. Clair Sams

Nestled deep in the warmth of a quiet study on a cold winter morning is a great time to communicate with the Lord Jesus. But even sequestered in the most optimal location, prayer is likely a spiritual battle. Author and Pastor, Max Lucado, wrote, “Our prayers may be awkward. Our attempts may be feeble. But since the power of prayer is in the One who hears it and not in the one who says it, our prayers do make a difference.” Exercise in prayer has deep and lasting value for the person praying and for the Lord’s kingdom.

Prayer, both private and public is the incredible privilege of Christians. A.B. Simpson said, “Prayer is the link that connects us to God.” The invitation to enter into communication with God is by far the most amazing invitation a Christian enjoys. Just getting a glimpse of the privilege offered by the Trinity to enter and participate in the Divine communication is a startling, yet a strengthening blessing. E.M Bounds’ thoughts remind us that, “Prayer should not be regarded as a duty which must be performed, but rather as a privilege to be enjoyed, a rare delight that is always revealing some new beauty.”

The reality of joining the Divine communication means the Christian has some understanding of responding Biblically. In other words, we don’t just stumble into God’s presence. We are invited in, and though there is not a dress code, position or proper language necessary for true prayer, there are some clear Biblical expectations. Nathan Brown wrote, “A study of the various Scriptures on prayer reveals that there are conditions to effective praying. I must not hold a grudge against another person (Mark 11:25), I must not pray with selfish motives (James 4:3), and my requests should always be in harmony with your [Divine] will (John 5:14-15). To pray effectively, my faith should be in you [The Lord], not in the object of my request.” These are the expectations God puts on praying. Communicating with the Lord may be done casually, but never carelessly. Though the invitation is almost beyond believable and the most humble and immature is welcome in His presence, there are clear Biblical expectations. You may not effectively enter the Lord’s presence in a spirit of rebellion or carnal selfishness and expect Lord to respond to your demand.

English Pastor, of a couple generations ago, Charles Spurgeon, wrote, “True prayer is neither a mere mental exercise nor a vocal performance. It is far deeper than that – it is spiritual transaction with the Creator of Heaven and Earth.” In a similar train of thought, Dr. Wesley L. Duwel wrote, “God waits for you to communicate with Him. You have instant and direct access to God. God loves mankind so much, and in

a very special sense as His children, that He has made himself available to you at all times.” The Lord desires to join you in carrying your burdens, fighting your battles and enjoying the blessings of life. His purpose in redemption is to interact with you through out the seasons of life.

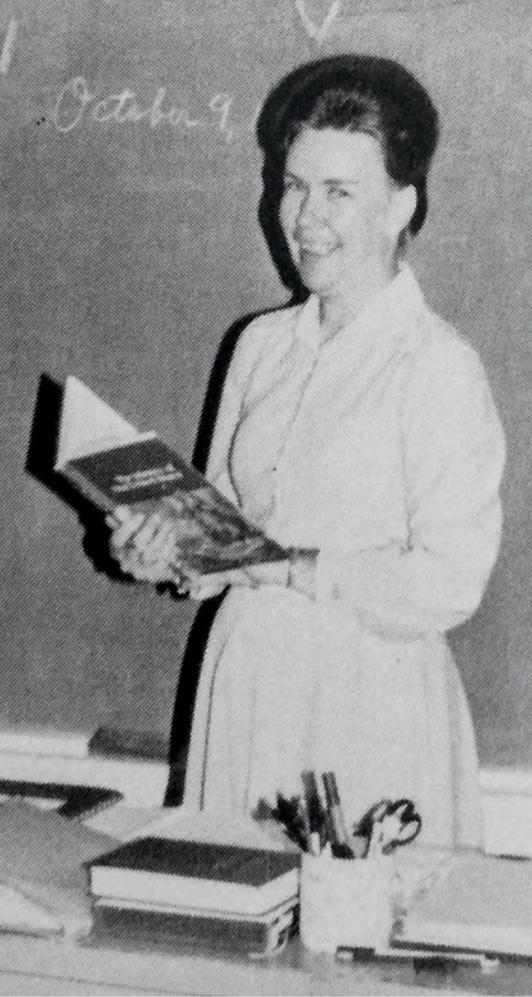
Remember, true prayer involves listening as well as speaking. Even in a public prayer time it would be valuable to quietly spend a minute or two listening to the voice of the Lord. Mother Theresa said, “God speaks in the silence of the heart. Listening is the beginning of prayer.” There is value in stopping and listening to the Word and The Spirit. It is not your eloquence that the Lord desires, His heart wants to hear the desires of your heart. His mind wants to communicate with your mind. He deeply desires to interact with you. He wants to hear your heart but He also wants you to hear His heart.

Spiritual and eternal transformation are the results of prayer. If you will not allow the Lord to change you, you will not pray. If you will not pray, there will be no moral or spiritual change in your life, family or church. Prayer is the work of the Christian. Prayer prepares us to do the ministry of a Christian. Communication with the Lord about the reality of life helps us remember who is Lord. Prayer offers a place where we can bring our family and friends and present them to a God who knows them and loves them even more deeply and passionately than we do. He knows the intricacies of human interaction and desires to offer you wisdom and the leadership if His Spirit as you walk through the maze of daily life. Taking time in His presence helps bring peace and a sense of direction. Your daily life can be a ministry of Divine grace as you open yourself to His leadership.

The Lord also desires to communicate with us about ourselves. He knows your strengths and weaknesses. He is fully aware of your tastes, preferences and opinions. Your time of prayer has the potential to mold and form you into the person His calls you to be. His Word and Spirit has the power to build on your strengths and minimize your weaknesses so as to enable you to live a confident and victorious Christian life. You see, prayer is much more than just a daily discipline. It is personal and corporate interaction with the God of the universe. Prayer makes available to you all you need to be all God wants you to be.

Gather with other Christians and join with them in prayer. Finding time to meet and purposely pray together will strengthen those who join in the exercise as well as bring a new sense of God’s work. Whether the gathering is regional, local or a small group, find time to pray together.

Let’s Pray. ■



LINDA MADEWELL HEDSTROM

By **Melba Sams**

On the western edge of the Cumberland Plateau, you will find the town of Monterey, TN. It is ninety miles southeast of Nashville and ninety miles west of Knoxville on Interstate 40. What makes this town important to us is not the two state senators who call it home, nor the country singer that hails from there. It is our well-loved Linda Hedstrom, the former First Lady of the Alabama Conference.

Linda was born January 4, 1949 to Ed and Jolene Madewell. She had two older brothers and a younger sister. They were all very close in age. A baby brother was added to the family ten years later. Linda and her sister grew very close playing and doing chores together.

The Madewell family were not Christians but taught their children to work hard, to live right and to play together. The four older children loved playing in the woods; climbing trees, walking the trails and swimming in the ponds and the girls loved taking care of baby brother.

Linda started first grade in Monterey and graduated from high school in June of 1967. While in the first grade she heard about God for the first time. One day the teacher asked the class who it was that made the world. Some of the children answered, "God!" Linda recalls thinking, "Who in the world is God?" If He made the big trees and everything else then He had to be a very, very big person!

When she was in the 2nd grade the family moved to the country. A country doctor in the area owned a large tree farm which his sons inherited from him. As all his sons worked in other

places, they contacted Mr. Madewell about living on the property as an overseer. Linda had a happy childhood growing up on this place. But something was missing! She had a desire to know God—and, thankfully, God was working in her life. One day a member of the doctor's family gave as a gift to Linda's family. It was Egermeier's Bible Story Book. Linda's mother read the stories to the children, thus increasing this desire to know God.

A simple man who worked on the tree farm took an interest in the family. He attended the local Pilgrim Holiness Church. The church would have attendance drives and he would beg Mrs. Madewell to allow her children to go to church. Finally his persistence won and the children began to attend.

In school, Linda was a diligent and excellent student. All of her teachers were her favorite, but she well remembers her sixth grade teacher, Miss Dolly. This teacher had a senior citizen friend who came to the class and challenged the students to memorize a certain amount of Scripture to earn a Bible. Linda longed to earn a Bible and tried hard but did not memorize enough verses within the time frame. So, when she was in the seventh grade she saved her lunch money (\$.25 a day) to buy a Bible.

When Linda was an 11 year-old, the church had an evening VBS. It was in the classroom at the invitation of the teacher that Linda and her sister gave their hearts to Jesus and got saved. Her parents came to pick them up and on the way home Linda told her mother that she got saved. Her mother was not happy about this.

TOP: Linda Hedstrom teaching at Pell City, AL

ABOVE: Linda teaching at Stanton, AL

Even without anyone to disciple her, Linda always wanted to do what was right. At 14 she began praying that God would show her how to know that she was really saved. One morning while waiting for the school bus and with an expectant heart that God would show her, a miracle happened! A soft-drink delivery truck came down the road. As the truck passed her and her sister, an arm came out and dropped some papers on the ground. Curious, Linda picked them up; they were tracts telling how to be saved with Scriptures that supported it. God answered prayer. Through these Scriptures God gave Linda the assurance she was saved!

Linda's high school homeroom teacher would have devotions everyday with the students using "Streams in the Desert" as a guide. Someone told her she might someday get in trouble with the authorities if she continued. Her reply, "I am going to have devotions with the students until they come and carry me out." Linda enjoyed these times of learning.

During High School, Linda not only earned excellent grades, she worked for the school. The Government had a program where students could do various jobs in the cafeteria and other areas. Linda worked in this program keeping the records and time schedules of the other students. She also helped do the cafeteria's laundry.

When Linda was 15 she got her first "real" paying job at the Dairy Queen. In the 12th grade she quit her job so that she could concentrate on studies for graduation. In June of 1967 she graduated Valedictorian of her class. On her last day of school she got a job sewing at a pants manufacturing factory. She began saving her money for college.

During high school the Pilgrim Holiness Church would sponsor youth to go to the Conference Youth Camp in Jamestown, TN. It was at one of these times that Linda was sanctified. God was real and she was growing in her Christian walk.

Linda's friends encouraged her to attend a community college but God had other plans. During a missionary service the Missionary President was reporting on one of the fields the church supported. She told how the missionary had started a Bible School to train pastors and laymen to work for Jesus. Linda thought about Bible school and felt it was a good idea. Her pastor told her about two Bible Schools in the US that he knew of; one in Florida and one in Ohio. Not long after that, Rev. R.W. Dunn came to her church with a quartet from God's Bible School, introducing Linda to the school in Ohio. The rest is history!

In the fall of 1967 Linda enrolled in GBS as a work student. She worked for Miss Florence Carlson in the Revivalist office. In December of her second year her family's house burned and they lost everything. Second semester, Linda returned home to help the family. While there she worked in a government office that helped poor people. She longed to go back to Cincinnati and return to school.

Returning to school a month before the fall semester, she began working for Mr. Albert Muir in the press room as his secretary.

One day Linda's roommate confided in her that there was a young man she wanted her to meet. She thought Linda and the young man, Walt, would make a great couple. They began dating in April, 1970. Walter Hedstrom and Linda Madewell were married in July, 1971. Linda could not work as a work

student after their marriage but needed a job. Rev. Dunn hired her in the Bookstore as a staff worker while Walt had been asked to pastor the Main Street Mission. They moved into the small apartment across from the mission. Linda needed three classes to finish her schooling and Rev. Dunn wanted her to take one class a year and still work in the bookstore. Linda chose to take all three classes in one year and graduated in June, 1972. She graduated as Valedictorian with a BA in Liberal Arts majoring in English.

In the summer of '72 the young couple were able to rent an old farm house that Dr. Kenneth Stetler knew about. Walt enrolled in his final year of college that fall and Linda took a regular job. Walt finished classes in December of 1973 and in January the couple moved to Pell City, AL to teach in the Bible Methodist Christian School at the invitation of Bro. V. O. Agan. Walt taught 7-8 grades and Linda was a substitute teacher. They lived in a small trailer on the campgrounds.

June, 1974 was an exciting time! Joseph was born, and when he was two weeks old they moved to their first pastorate, Glencoe Bible Methodist Church. Pastoring in Glencoe was a busy but happy time. The first year Linda drove to Pell City and taught in the school. She also was responsible for the Children's church.

God's plans moved the Hedstroms to a new pastorate in Cordova, AL. It was here that Benjamin, Martha and Philip were added to the family. The Hedstroms pastored in Cordova for seven good years. Linda's love for teaching children had her teaching Sunday School and Jr. Church along with raising her four children.

Their next church was Ada Chapel in the heart of Bibb County, AL. They pastored seven years in Ada Chapel and six of those years Linda drove to Stanton, AL where she taught in the Christian School. She taught High School English and substituted where needed. Jan and Henry Miller were pastoring in Brent, AL at the same time and driving to Stanton to teach in the school, also. One year the mothers stayed home but had to substitute so much they decided they should have just taught all year.

While teaching at Stanton the school switched to ACE curriculum and Linda became a Learning Center supervisor and did the office work as well.

In 1990 her husband, Walter, was elected Conference President of the Alabama Conference and the family moved back to Pell City. Linda and the children travelled with Bro. Hedstrom when the children were not in school. She also graciously entertained the Conference guests, worked tirelessly on the campgrounds and uncomplainingly preformed the endless duties required of her. She also taught at the Pell City School for two years (1997 and 1998).

After Martha Snider resigned as WMS President, Linda was elected and competently led the Alabama Women's Missionary Society as president from 1998-2010.

On a personal note, I enjoyed the 16 years of close association with Linda Hedstrom. The times of fun and fellowship at Conference President's Retreats were times I will never forget. We would shop together, prepare meals together, pray together and just hang out! Thanks Linda for all those memories!

You have been a blessing and an encouragement to me and I appreciate you. ■

WORLD MISSIONS

NEWS UPDATE

TIMOTHY KEEP | MISSIONS DIRECTOR



The Gospel is Bearing Fruit in China

By Becky Keep

In early October, I was privileged to accompany my husband to Southwest China where we spent nearly two weeks with our missionaries Paul and Esther T. and family.

The City Lijiang is lovely and nestled in a valley surrounded by mountains, the grandest being “Snow Mountain” whose peak, on most days, towers into the clouds where it remains hidden from view. This is the place where Paul and Esther live, work, study language, and share their lives with the Chinese people around them.

I was captivated by the beautiful and colorful Chinese culture that I found there. Due to jet lag, Tim and I would awaken at 3 a.m. and after having coffee, we’d head out for our morning walk. We walked for several miles along tree-lined, brightly lit sidewalks. It was very quiet. Apart from the street sweepers, most people are not out and about early in the morning. We did encounter several elderly people out early doing exercise routines. One old gentlemen was doing what looked to be some sort of kickboxing. I was impressed!

We were delighted to join Paul and Esther as they taught their classes at the local academy. Paul teaches English and Esther music. Paul and Esther are a wonderful blessing to this school, and to David and Jill Sun, our Chinese friends who founded the school and are laying down their lives for the gospel. It was so wonderful to witness their love and care for these young people; many of whom come from homes that are not Christian.

On Sunday we were asked to visit a Chinese house church where Tim was honored to preach. We joined 20-30 fellow believers who sat in a simple, sparsely furnished apartment on chairs that lined the wall. God’s presence filled the room as they sang a hymn, prayed, sang another hymn, prayed again, and so on. I was so humbled by their simple and yet fervent worship. I was struck by the fact that there are not many “fake” Christians in this country. These precious people weren’t gathering to worship for any reason other than to love and obey God. They were risking much to be there.

We enjoyed a wonderful lunch that day with a man and his wife who were faithful communist party members before

finding Christ. They were led to the Lord through the witness of their teenage son who found Jesus while studying in the academy where Paul and Esther are working. We met others who have been converted through the academy as well, including an 11 year-old girl from a devout Buddhist family. David and Jill told us that even at this young age she is standing firm in her faith and making a bold witness for Christ.

Paul and Esther T. were great hosts and one of the great highlights for me was being able to spend time with Esther and their three children, Menita, 7, Isaiah, 4 and Yoshua, 2. These kids are amazing. They are comfortable in the culture and it was great to see how Paul and Esther include them in all their activities. We have all prayed so much for little Isaiah who has struggled with severe health issues and has had to be tube fed for much of his life. It was so much fun for me to watch this little guy eat. He loves to eat! And that is an answer to all our prayers!

We are so blessed to be joining hands and hearts with missionaries like Paul and Esther. They are serving in a place that is no friend of God. And yet they do so joyfully, sacrificially, and effectively. I count it a privilege to have been able to see some of what God is doing in China.

Please continue to pray for Paul and Esther and their children, as well as David and Jill Sun and the student of Eagles Wings Academy.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Tim Keep with 11 year old girl who has given her heart to Jesus; Becky Keep with Esther T.; Paul T. teaching in the academy; the T. children



Clair and Melba Sams visit Paris BMC

By Melba Sams

Early in the morning on September 30, 2017, Clair and I boarded a Eurostar train in London, England. We were headed under the water, through the channel, and on to Paris, France where we were met by Sister Daisy Comilang and Sister Elvie Bosque. We were excited to meet these Filipino sisters and share a few days with them. They were gracious hosts and showed us the sights of their city; the Eiffel Tower, Seine River, Notre Dame Cathedral, the Louvre, the Arc de Triumph, and many more sights of the city. But the best part

of our three day visit was the times of worship. Saturday night, after an Uber car ride out to the warehouse where the Paris Bible Methodist congregation worships, we had a good time of singing, praying, testifying and studying God's Word together.

Service on Sunday started at 2:00 p.m. and ended around 6:00. First was Sunday School taught by Julius Banda. It was a rich time of worship around the thought of God's love and grace overflowing in our hearts and lives changing not only us, but

spreading to others.

After Sunday School, the morning worship service started. About 60 believers gathered to sing, pray and worship. Clair preached and many hearts were touched by the preached Word. After service we had a time of fellowship.

We are thankful for the privilege of visiting with and being hosted by these precious believers. God's church is alive in a city where evil abounds.



OUR YOUNGEST MISSIONARY

We rejoice with Brennan and Ivon Muir, and give thanks to the Lord, for the safe arrival of **Jared Stuart Muir**! He was born at 2:03 p.m. on November 28th, coming in at 7lb 7oz and 20.25 in.

ALABAMA REGIONAL CONFERENCE NEWS

JOHN PARKER | CONFERENCE PRESIDENT



Thank You from the Hedstroms

Thanks to the Alabama Conference, various general leaders, friends, and guests of the Bible Methodist Connection for your prayers, cards, and the expressions of your love and support for the last 27 years. The Alabama Conference graciously gave us \$27,000.00 as a 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
Phone: 205-812-6271



Rev. William and Martha Snider Welcomed Back to Alabama

We are so blessed to have Professor, Rev. William and Martha Snider back home in Alabama! After many blessed years in pastoral ministry, teaching and leading the Ministerial Department of Hobe Sound Bible College, all while very actively researching church history and leading small tours to significant historical places, the Sniders have settled back in Alabama! They were warmly welcomed by the Talladega church family with a special Sunday and fellowship meal. The Sniders have purchased the former Conference parsonage and office where William is setting up his hobby of collecting and selling rare and collectible books. They are currently filling the role of Interim Pastor at the Stanton Bible Methodist Church. The church family there is loving the ministry of the Sniders. WELCOME HOME SNIDERS!

Alabama Camp Becomes Hurricane Evacuation Location for Hobe Sound Bible College

Local Media very positively covered the Bible Methodist Campground becoming the temporary home for Hobe Sound Bible College students, Staff and Faculty. We are blessed to be able to be a help during these times of crisis!





Fall Ladies Retreat

Ladies gathered September 14-16 from several states here in the Hodge Conference Center for the annual fall Ladies Retreat. They enjoyed much laughter and fellowship, wonderful food prepared by a volunteer kitchen staff of the husbands of several of the ladies, and the rich and challenging ministry from their Guest Speaker, Rachel England. A number of young ladies who had never experienced such an event were powerfully impacted by their time at the retreat and made commitments to make some adjustments in their lives. The Ladies are excitedly looking forward to next fall's retreat



▲ **Laura "Darlene" Turner** of Arkansas City, KS, wife of Rev. David Turner, Pastor of the Miltonvale, KS Bible Methodist Church passed away on September 18, 2017 at her residence. Funeral Services were held September 22, 2017 in El Dorado, KS. Rev. Walter Hedstrom represented the Bible Methodists at her funeral. Sister Turner was a beloved pastor's wife and a blessing to so many.

◀ **Margaret Ruth Baker** of Louisville, TN, wife of Rev. Earl Baker, passed away suddenly on November 28, 2017. Sister Baker leaves behind many lives powerfully impacted by her life and ministry. For many years she led the Children's Ministry at our annual Camp Meetings as well as many Summer Vacation Bible Schools in numerous churches. She was a gifted musician and singer, and a great helper to her husband in his many, many years of faithful pastoring! Sister Baker was always a beautiful example of a godly lady in every way. She provided a wonderful illustration and testimony of holiness for many to pattern their lives after. She and Bro. Baker loved Missions dearly, especially the Bible Methodist Missions work in Mexico. They travelled to the Latin American Bible Institute to do Child Evangelism training and she was always looking for little projects and ways to support Child Evangelism in Mexico! What a wonderful legacy she leaves behind!

ANNUAL ALABAMA BIBLE METHODIST INDOOR CAMP MEETING

JANUARY
23-28, 2018
7 PM / 6 PM Sun.

Ada Chapel
Bible Methodist Church
 12540 N. Scottsville Rd.
 West Blocton, AL 35184
 Steve Vernon: (334) 507-0464



Rev. David Black
 EVANGELIST



Jonathan &
 LuRhe Edwards
 SINGERS

GREAT LAKES REGIONAL CONFERENCE NEWS

BLAKE JONES | CONFERENCE PRESIDENT



New Conference Preachers in Great Lakes

Rev. John Beardslee has joined the conference as a conference preacher. He is a student at Hobe Sound Bible College, and is serving as the Dean of Men as well as the pastor of Chapel by the Sea. Rev. Beardslee has served as a private contractor for a number of years. His wife, Jani, is the daughter of Rev. and Mrs. Dennis Johnson.



Rev. Steve Bills is the newest conference preacher in Great Lakes. He and his wife, Angela, and their boys have recently moved to Blind River, Ontario, Canada. As well as being on staff at the All Tribes Lighthouse Mission, Rev. Bills is the pastor of youth outreach to outlying areas through Community Youth Programs using Blind River as their hub. A former safety director, Steve is presently studying through Shepherd's Global Classroom.



Fall Family Retreat

Rev. John Forsee was the guest speaker for the Annual Family Retreat. A pie contest, family farm olympics, food, and fun were a part of the weekend. Jonathon and Abigail Langstaff and Rev. and Mrs. Ward led the retreat with the theme: "Homegrown, it all begins with family."



Bristolwood Bible Methodist Church

An exciting addition is being added to the Bristolwood Bible Methodist Church in the Grand Rapids, Walker area. The main level will provide handicap entry access and restrooms, a cry room looking into the sanctuary and a conference room that can be opened for sanctuary overflow. The basement will provide a teen room for their teen ministry that is effectively reaching into inner city areas.



Rock Lake Bible Methodist Celebrates Thanksgiving Communion

The Eucharist was celebrated at Thanksgiving time with particular gratefulness for the gift of salvation. Everyone sat around tables arranged as a cross and many shared the story of their conversion. Communion was shared around the table setting.

Hillsdale Bible Methodist Thanksgiving Meal

The Hillsdale Bible Methodist Church is a satellite congregation of the Concord Hilltop Chapel making Rev. Rosa the overseeing pastor. The congregation has come under the Conference Extension Committee which arranges for supply pastors on a weekly basis. The Hillsdale group sponsored a Community Thanksgiving Day meal as part of their ministry outreach. They had 35 present with new community people present.



HEARTLAND REGIONAL CONFERENCE NEWS

CHRIS CRAVENS | CONFERENCE PRESIDENT



ABOVE: Heartland's Executive Committee 2017-18 (Left to right) Duane Thomas, Steve Miller, Jack Hooker, Chris Cravens, Deron Fourman, John Manley, and Bennie Durr



LEFT TO RIGHT: Worshipping at Ministerial; Rev. John Zechman preaching; Over 100 ministers and spouses gathered for three days of challenge, fellowship, worship, and anointing!

OPPOSITE PAGE: 1) Lot's of work & miracles at Beulah Grove! Garage doors & complete playground set donated!; 2) Fairmont, West Virginia BMC is reaching out and touching lives!; 3 & 4) Conference President Chris Cravens hanging out with some of the ministerial students at UBC & GBSC!; 5 & 6) Warren, Ohio BMC moves into their new, spacious property! Meet the people of the West Mecca Bible Methodist Church!; 7) God is working miracles at Calvary Chapel BMC in Coshocton, OH! Pray they are in their new church by summer!; 8) Experienced a wonderful Sunday service at Kenwood BMC!; 9) Great Sunday with Bible Methodist pastors at the Bible Holiness Church in Frankfort, IN; 10) Pastors Fourman & Crosley, along with a few good guys at Port Clinton! God is moving mightily at PCBMC!



THE BIBLE METHODIST

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The BIBLE METHODIST CONNECTION *of* CHURCHES

21 DAYS OF PRAYER

January 8-28, 2018

PRAY AROUND THE WORLD

Jan. 28, 2018
6:00 PM EST

Jan. 29, 2018
7:00 AM Philippines

