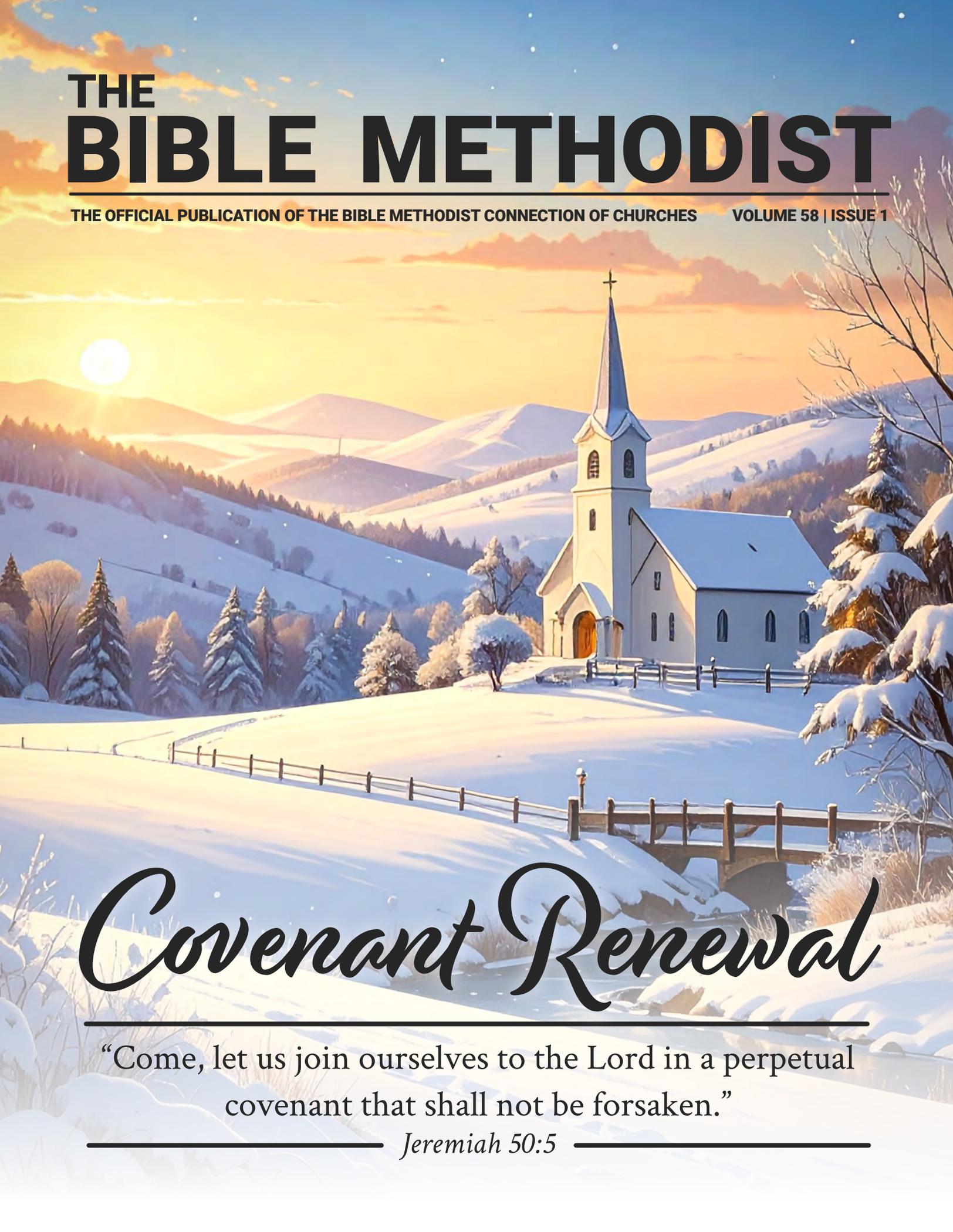


THE BIBLE METHODIST

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BIBLE METHODIST CONNECTION OF CHURCHES

VOLUME 58 | ISSUE 1

A serene winter landscape featuring a white church with a tall steeple and a cross, set against a backdrop of snow-covered hills and a sunset sky. The church is surrounded by snow-laden evergreen trees and a wooden fence. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm glow over the scene.

Covenant Renewal

“Come, let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forsaken.”

Jeremiah 50:5



FROM THE EDITOR

TRAVIS J. JOHNSON

As we enter a new year, it is worth reflecting on the depth and seriousness of covenant commitment with God. In the Christian life, devotion is not like dating promises, which can be fleeting, conditional, and reversible. True covenant devotion, like marriage vows, is public, solemn, costly, and permanent. It involves surrendering our autonomy, prioritizing God above all, and choosing permanence over preference.

The Old Testament provides vivid examples of this covenantal commitment. At Gilgal, before entering the Promised Land, Israel renewed their covenant through circumcision and Passover (Josh. 5). They remembered their identity as God's people and the source of their victories. At Shechem, Joshua called the people to choose whom they would serve (Josh. 24). Renewal required more than emotion—it demanded decisive, practical loyalty, removing competing allegiances and setting their hearts fully on God.

In the New Testament, covenant renewal is internalized. Paul urges believers to present themselves as living sacrifices, offering their whole selves to God in response to His mercy (Rom. 12:1-2). This ongoing, Spirit-empowered surrender continues the pattern of Israel's covenant, rooted in grace rather than ritual. It is a daily reality: remembering who we are, turning from idols, and allowing God to shape our minds, hearts, and lives.

On this theme, our readers will find inspiration in an article by Rev. Larry Smith, a scholar, preacher, and church historian in the Bible Methodist tradition. Originally published in the *God's Revivalist* in 2002, the article is as relevant today as it was then. Bro. Smith has long guided readers in understanding the richness of Methodist spirituality and its biblical roots. Here, he explores the historic Covenant Service instituted by John Wesley and its enduring significance for modern Christians. Through historical insight and pastoral wisdom, Smith reminds us that covenant renewal is more than tradition; it is a call to wholehearted, grace-enabled devotion to God, inviting believers to reflect on their identity, renew their commitments, and live out their faith in obedience and love.

As we read Bro. Smith's article, let it challenge us to lay ourselves anew on the altar of God's will, reaffirming the covenant that shapes our identity, guides our choices, and secures our hope in Him.

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A detailed oil painting of John Wesley, an elderly man with long, wavy white hair, wearing a dark coat and a white cravat. He is looking slightly to the left with a thoughtful expression.

Renewing the Covenant with God

John Wesley's Call to Surrender, Faithfulness, and Holy Living

by Larry D. Smith

"If I perish, I perish on Thy shoulder; if I sink, I sink in Thy vessel; if I die, I die at Thy door." These determined words punctuate the famous Covenant Service held in early Methodist societies, especially on the first Sunday of the New Year. John Wesley instituted the service in 1755 and spoke frequently of it thereafter. "At six in the evening," he noted, "we met in the church ... to renew our covenant with God. It was a blessed time; the windows of heaven were open, and the skies poured down righteousness."

Never was there any doubt about its purpose, for the Covenant Service pointedly called those present to remember what God had done for them and what they owed Him in return. Its challenge could hardly have been more gripping. *"Choose Christ and His ways, and you are blessed forever. Refuse and you are undone forever. Which wilt thou have, the cross or the curse?"*

To choose Christ meant to choose His will, even in pain and reproach. For there were some services He asks of us "wherein we cannot please Christ but

by denying ourselves ... sailing against the wind, swimming against the tide, steering contrary to the times, parting with our ease, our liberties, and our accommodations for the name of our Lord Jesus." In every case, His claims were final and absolute. To be a Christian was to submit to them without argument or qualification.

It is no wonder, then, that eternal value and eternal consequence weighed heavily upon those sturdy Methodists as they pondered the "cross or the curse." Soberly they sang the hymn Charles Wesley had written for the moment:

*Come, let us use the grace divine,
And all with one accord,
In a perpetual covenant join
Ourselves to Christ the Lord.*

The second verse was more specific:

*Give up ourselves through Jesus' power,
His name to glorify;
And promise in this sacred hour,
For God to live and die.*

Just as the relationship between husband and wife is based on holy, binding, and irrevocable covenant, so also is the relationship between us and God; and in either case, the commitment is the same: "Put me to doing; put me to suffering. Let me be employed for Thee or laid aside for Thee, exalted for Thee or trodden under foot for Thee. Let me be full; let me be empty. Let me have all things; let me have nothing. I freely resign all to Thy pleasure and disposal."

Here is the heart of the covenant to which we, too, are called. Granted, we will not do this the way our ancestors did, for a century has passed since the Covenant Service echoed throughout our churches. It is our tragedy that we are worlds removed from this type of solemn rite and this type of earnest Christianity.

Even the language of the old service would seem jolting in today's "seeker-sensitive" congregations where itsy-bitsy choruses and itsy-bitsy sermons and itsy-bitsy dramas entertain itsy-bitsy Christians who go to church primarily to be "blessed" by "fulfilling" emotional experiences. These have never taken the Lord God as "head and husband"; nor have they ever vowed to "love, honor, and obey Him before all others." Indeed, anyone who suggests that they should do so should prepare for anguished howls of "legalism." Legalism is contemptible, of course, since it is our attempt to bypass grace to save ourselves by keeping rules. Covenant, on the other hand, is all about grace; for it is a solemn, yet joyful, contractual agreement which we make with Heaven and which Heaven makes with us, all within the framework of Heaven's offered grace enabling our offered response.

Covenant with God does take seriously what that grace requires as well as what it offers. This means "that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world" (Titus 2:12-14). This means undivided



loyalty to “the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” This means holy vows, steadfast purpose, and accountable obedience. “Whoever desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mark 8:34).

But even in the “holiness churches” like ours, there are many who never deny themselves of anything and never take up their cross to follow Jesus. Constantly they shrug off their shabby, slothful, and sensual lives with the excuse that they’re “under grace, not law.” This is what the theologians call “antinomianism,” which claims that the grace of God releases us from the law of God; and like legalism, it is damning heresy. But since we are as determined to be religious as we are determined to be sinful, antinomianism is precious to those whose religion is a sentimental mixture of “warm-fuzzies and sloppy agape.” St. Paul made short work of this. “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” he asks, then answers bluntly: “God forbid! How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?” (Rom. 6:15–16).

“Come, let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forsaken” (Jer. 50:5). This call to ancient Israel was basic to John Wesley’s Covenant Service, and it is personalized in us as we affirm its forthright terms, which we now consider:

First, this covenant is personal. Each of us is called to make holy transaction with the living God. He is infinitely beyond us and above us, and yet for our blessing and benefit He stoops down to all who believe the promises which He gives and respect the obligations which He imposes. In the “New Covenant” which He instituted by the sacrifice of His Son and sealed with His blood, He embraces the world with hope and gladness. This is contracted and confirmed by each of us at the moment of our New Birth, but it must be continually affirmed thereafter.

High heaven that heard that solemn vow
That vow renewed shall daily hear;
Till in life’s latest hour I bow
And bless in death a bond so dear.

Second, this covenant is pervasive. It includes everything we are and everything we have—absolutely and unconditionally! Thousands have wept at our altars, prayed, and claimed all kinds of

“experiences” but have never known the piercing joy of right relationship with God, because they have never “placed all on the altar.” From the very moment we begin to follow Jesus, the Christian life is the surrendered life; for by a decisive, unrelenting, and continuing act of our will, He is made Lord of everything. “For better for worse; for richer for poorer; in sickness and in health.” Emotions may soar or falter, friends may affirm or deny, conditions may be pleasant or horrendous. The covenant embraces all of it, and all of it belongs to Christ.

Third, this covenant is perpetual. Never is there any provision for its modification or dissolution. “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” This is our firm and considered choice: we will be entirely the Lord’s, and “this to the death!” All trifling, compromise, and backsliding are treason against Him and His Kingdom. Yet God is faithful, even when we are not; and in our worst failures, He invites us to return and “renew the covenant.” The condition which He requires is that “we walk in the light as He is in the light”; and He assures us that as we do so, “we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.” Light given here will lead us finally to the light which will be given us hereafter.

“If I perish, I perish on Thy shoulder; If die, I die on Thy shoulder; if I perish, I perish on Thy ship.” This is the “fixed bent of the soul”—as those old Methodists would have called it—with which we “renew the covenant” with the Lord. We are now His “covenant-servants,” as they concluded in that old service which Wesley prepared for them; and He is now our “Covenant-Friend.” “And the covenant which I have made on earth,” we add, as did they, “let it be ratified in heaven!”



Larry D. Smith is a longtime leader in the conservative holiness tradition, having served as editor of God’s Revivalist and Bible Advocate and as a professor at God’s Bible School and College in Cincinnati, Ohio. An ordained minister, educator, and historian, he has spent decades teaching, writing, and mentoring with a deep commitment to Scripture, Christian heritage, and holy living.



WORLD MISSIONS

R. G. HUTCHISON, MISSIONS DIRECTOR

NEWS UPDATE



Pastor Conference in Alibago, Ilagan City, Philippines



Pastor Conference in Caborruguis, Quirino, Philippines

Philippines

In January, Dr. Hutchison and Dr. William Snider (Southern Regional Conference) traveled to the Philippines where they ministered in two pastor conferences. About a week later, a BMM work team of twelve people from Heartland and Southern conferences also came to the campus of the Philippine Bible Methodist Shepherds College, where they spent several days working alongside the college staff, students, and area pastors on some campus improvement projects. Special thanks to Rev. Doug and Judy Eads for organizing and leading this team! These team visits are about so much more than just ministry. They build and maintain bonds of connection with our Bible Methodist family on the other side of the world! We're including lots of pictures, just to give you some glimpses of these special times of ministry and connection with our brothers and sisters in the Philippines.



Dr. William Snider, Philippines Pastor Conference



Bible Methodist Gospel Light Pastors



BMM Work Team in the Philippines



Touring the Library at the Bible College



Sunday Worship at the Caramutan Bible Methodist Church



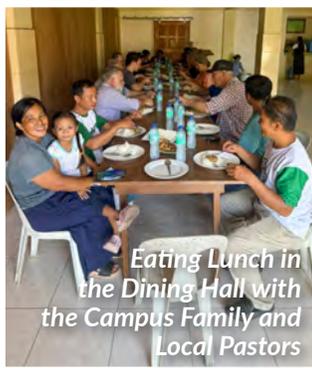
Work Team with Bible College Students



Ryan Paulus on a Tricycle



Shopping for Food in the Public Market in the Philippines



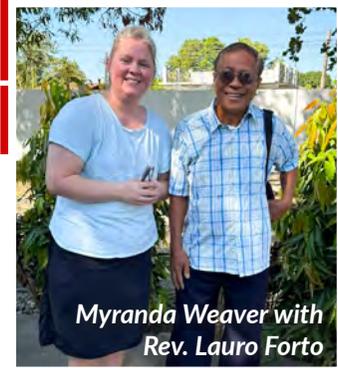
Eating Lunch in the Dining Hall with the Campus Family and Local Pastors



Wes Holden Praying over the Bible College Students



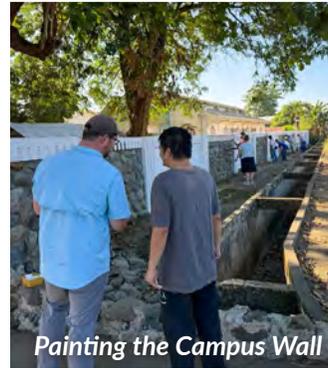
Rev. Doug Eads in the Philippines



Myranda Weaver with Rev. Lauro Forto



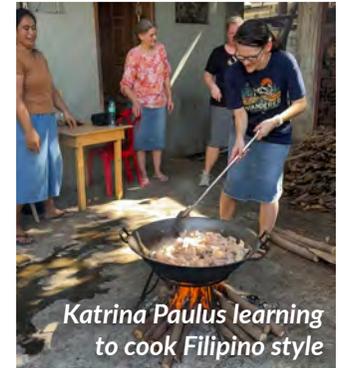
Work Team Painting the Gymnasium Floor at the Bible college



Painting the Campus Wall



Bob Pickett Painting in the Philippines



Katrina Paulus learning to cook Filipino style

Thank You!

Dear Bible Methodist Family, Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your overwhelming love and generosity to us during the Christmas season! Thank you for the cards, the love offerings, and expressions of love and support! It is such practical help to us during the holiday season. And, even more so, we are greatly strengthened just knowing that you thought of us. May God richly bless you for your kindness.

The Entire BMM Missionary Team: R.G. & Sarah Hutchison, Deron & Kim Fourman, Brennan & Ivon Muir, Maricka Herrer, David & Diana Martinez, Tim & Rebekah Slavens, Shirley Fogleman, Paul & Esther Troyer

Martinez Family

Little Jose Martinez is doing well! And David and Diana are adjusting to their new roles! Later this year, God willing, they will be moving back to Oaxaca to be with the Muir family. Our Mexico team is excited to be able to work together in the same location once again. Please pray as the search for housing and a ministry base intensifies between now and then.

Slavens Family Language School

After a brief Christmas break, the Slavens family is continuing their language and cultural training at the Rio Grande Bible Institute. It is intense! And they appreciate your prayers for the whole family, and especially for a solid foundation in Spanish-language ministry.

Muir Family

After a successful Share Support tour last year, the Muir family has now returned to Mexico! They are now prayerfully and diligently searching for a place in or near Puerto Escondido where the entire Mexico missionary team can base Ezra Biblical Seminary and begin planting a church. Please pray that God will lead them to the right place for their housing and ministry base.

Africa 85 Initiative

God continues to open new doors for training indigenous leaders to establish their own training centers using Shepherds Global Classroom curriculum. Dr. Hutchison is looking forward to joining Dr. Randall McElwain and missionary Maricka Herrer for a training event in Ethiopia mid-March.



GREAT LAKES

DAVID WARD, PRESIDENT

CONFERENCE NEWS

It was a joy for the Connectional Leadership Team to gather for their Annual Conference President's Retreat. This year, we enjoyed the wonderful facilities of the Shunem House in Noblesville, Indiana.



The Shunem House team are always great hosts and joined us in some wonderful times of worship. In addition, we enjoyed times of fellowship in other nearby venues as well.



This annual occasion provides an invaluable time of building relationships and sharing new vision to meet the challenges of our individual areas of responsibility. Unfortunately, President Cravens had to leave the meeting early due to illness and was unable to be present for the photos.

The Evart Bible Methodist Church is the parent organization to Daystar Christian Academy. It serves the family of the church and partners with other nearby churches. This year's Christmas program was a delight.



Utilizing a realistic looking time travel machine, the actors teleported back in time to help the audience witness the arrival and impact of the Christ child.



Daystar has a talented group of students led by some very creative staff members. You have probably seen some graduates of Daystar featured in recent Bible College dramatic productions.



The Pastor's Holiday Dinner is a highlight of our Great Lakes calendar year. This year's weather greatly impacted our attendance but we still had a good group. The ladies of Pilgrim Bible Church in Cedar Springs did an awesome job of hosting. This event is low key and relaxed by design and provides a great time for our pastors and Executive Committee members to enjoy food and fellowship.



Pastor Joe Krohn of the Dawn Valley Ontario Church challenges his congregation to read their entire Bible each year. In order to encourage even the youngest reader, the church makes sure each child has a Bible. In addition, each person who reads their Bible through receives a certificate and award. This year, 28 individuals in this rural congregation successfully completed Pastor Joe's challenge. We applaud their emphasis and commitment.





HEARTLAND

CHRIS CRAVENS, PRESIDENT

CONFERENCE NEWS



Heartland Ministerial is a major highlight in our annual calendar! Sponsors join with the Conference to make sure this important event is 100% free to all our ministers and spouses! We had over 90 attendees! This past event was one of the best yet!



The church at York, PA has done a tremendous amount of work renovating their parsonage. It looks beautiful! Congratulations to Pastor Jeffrey and the York congregation! Pray that York finds a pastor.



Heartland churches participating in "Operation Christmas Child" sent 1,032 boxes this Christmas. The congratulations that reported were Beach City, New Life, McDonald and Westfield!





Auburn Bible Methodist dedicated their multi-purpose building “debt free” January 18, with over 100 people attending the dedication! Praise the Lord, Auburn!



Conference Rally Service at Fairmont caught their “Missionary Ushers” in action! Fairmont loves missions!



Danville hosted the conference president for a special Christmas Sunday. Danville is praying for a pastor!



Heartland elder Glenn Dotson’s funeral was October 31, 2025. Conference President Cravens and elder Steve Gresham spoke in the service.



Port Clinton adds a new sign. God is blessing Pastor Fourman and the congregation!



Coshocton Bible Methodist church’s young ushers taking their job seriously! Pastor George Carr has ministered faithfully to this congregation for the past few years.



President Cravens represented Heartland during World Changers at Union Bible College.



The conference enjoyed a Christmas Sunday at Salem Bible Methodist Church! God is blessing Salem!



SOUTHERN

DOUG EADS, PRESIDENT

CONFERENCE NEWS

One of my greatest joys is seeing so many of our people actively involved in ministry. Some go on mission trips, lead youth services, or teach Sunday School. Others direct the Christmas program, while many faithfully serve behind the scenes—preparing snacks for Junior Church and cleaning up afterward. Stay involved! Your efforts matter, and God takes notice. Whether your service is big or small, visible or unseen, keep up the good work.



It is always a joy to visit with Bible Methodist folks in Thomasville, NC. Pastor Jonathan and Emily Heath do a phenomenal job reaching their community through the Journey to Bethlehem event. Visiting with David and Christina Black and Marc and Melody Sankey just makes the trip complete while in North Carolina.



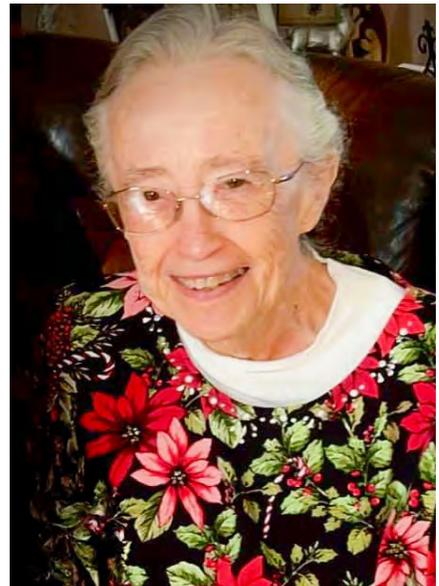
Southern Conference Men's Retreat at the Campground in Pell City is a great time of refreshing fellowship. So many men draw close to the Lord during this event. The food cooked over the open fire is not bad either.

Nathan and Amy Bryant have been our Campmeeting cooks for 13 years. Recently, Nathan went to be with the Lord after his battle with cancer. We recognize the fact that heaven is getting sweeter every day.





The Honduras Medical Brigade hosted by EFM has attracted many Bible Methodist over the years. This trip is hosted by Daniel Melton from Easley Bible Methodist. Judy Eads, Joyce Shirah, Charity Brown, Jessica McKim, and Steven Postol, made the trip along with some of the Melton family. God uses this trip to touch a multitude of lives physically and spiritually.



Rev. Harold Watson from Chattanooga Temple Bible Methodist was honored for 50 years of serving in the ministry.

Happy 70th Birthday, Steve Vernon.

Happy 90th Birthday, Sis. Charlotte Parker



SOUTHWEST

AARON JOHNSON, PRESIDENT

CONFERENCE NEWS



Fall and winter outings of the youth group at the Bible Methodist Church in Moberly, Missouri.



DeRidder Bible Methodist Church spread Christmas cheer as 28 people gathered for an evening of caroling, traveling by trailer and truck while sharing songs and distributing cookies throughout the community.



New addition on the fellowship hall of the Durant Oklahoma Bible Methodist Church.



THE BIBLE METHODIST

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biblemethodist.org/magazine

SUMMER CAMP & CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Bible Methodist Connection General Conference

June 2–4, 2026

ROCK LAKE, Vestaburg, MI (Great Lakes Conference)

**Great Lakes
Conference**

**Heartland
Conference**

**Southern
Conference**

**Southwest
Conference**

July 9-19

ROCK LAKE
Vestaburg, MI

June 22-28

BEULAH GROVE
Mendon, OH

June 29-July 5

EDEN
Pell City, AL

July 28-Aug. 2

ARROWHEAD
Cleburne, TX

Youth Camp
June 22-26

Youth Camp
July 20-24

Youth Camp
June 8-12

Youth Challenge
March 19-21



BibleMethodist
CONNECTION OF CHURCHES