THE BIBLE METHODIST

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15th GENERAL CONFERENCE



15th General Conference Delegates of the Bible Methodist Connection of Churches



FROM THE EDITOR

TRAVIS J. JOHNSON

This summer marked two significant milestones in my life: thirty years of pastoral ministry and thirty years as a member of the Bible Methodist Connection.

When I first came into the Connection, I never intended to stay. I had already received my local preacher's license in another conference, and my plan was simply to spend a few years with the Bible Methodists before returning to pastor for them when a church became available. But God had other plans. It did not take long for me to realize that I had found a home.

What convinced me then still convinces me today.

First, I found a genuine commitment to unity. Over the years, I have watched spirited debates take place on the conference floor. Brothers have held strong convictions and expressed them with passion. Yet when the discussion ended, they continued to fellowship, pray together, worship together, and labor together for the cause of Christ. They understood that Christian unity is not found in unanimous agreement but in a shared commitment to love one another in Christ.

Second, I found a commitment to expository preaching. By and large, what sets us apart as a Connection is that the pulpit is not viewed as a platform for personal opinions, agendas, vendettas, or the latest trends. Instead, there is a shared conviction that God's people need God's Word faithfully explained and applied. That commitment has shaped both our churches and our ministers which is why our preachers are among some of the best.

Third, I found a commitment to theological triage. We know that not every doctrine carries the same weight (1 Cor. 15:3). We gladly confess and contend for the essential truths of the Christian faith, faithfully uphold our distinctive Wesleyan theological convictions, and extend charity where faithful believers may differ on secondary and tertiary matters.

Finally, I found what John Wesley called a "catholic spirit." We are unapologetically Bible Methodist, yet we rejoice wherever Christ is faithfully preached. We are convinced of our convictions without believing we have a monopoly on God's grace or the work of his kingdom.

After thirty years, I can say with gratitude that I am thankful God led me here. The Bible Methodist Connection has become far more than a "denomination" to me. It has become my family and my home.

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THE ONENESS OF CHRISTIAN UNITY

By Travis J. Johnson
Editor of the Bible Methodist Magazine

Every four years, pastors, delegates, and families from across the Bible Methodist Connection gather for General Conference. This year, people came from across the United States, Canada, and even the Philippines. We came thankful for what God has done over the last four years in the Connection and eager to seek his direction for the days ahead.

This year's conference also marked an important leadership transition. After faithfully serving the Connection as General Chairman for the past four years, Rev. Blake Jones was concluding his term of office. Before the business sessions began, he opened the conference by preaching God's Word. His message from John 17 set the tone for everything that followed.

Christ's Prayer Before the Cross

Rev. Jones began by taking us back to the Upper Room. Jesus had just instituted the Lord's Supper. He had broken the bread and shared the cup with his disciples, knowing the cross was only hours away. Yet Luke tells us that, almost immediately afterward, the disciples began arguing over which one of them would be the greatest.

Rev. Jones invited us to imagine that moment. Christ is preparing to give his life for the world, while his closest followers are consumed with their own importance. Their conversation could not have been more out of step with his heart.

It is in that setting that Jesus prayed what we often call his High Priestly Prayer. In John 17, he asked the Father to keep his followers, sanctify them, and make them one. It was that final request that became the focus of the evening.

What Does Biblical Oneness Mean?

Rev. Jones reminded us that unity is often misunderstood. It is possible to be united without having true unity. He illustrated the point with an old saying: "Tie two cats together by the tail and throw them over a clothesline. They are certainly united, but they have no unity."

Biblical oneness is not the same as unanimity. It does not require everyone to think exactly alike. Neither is it uniformity, where everyone looks and acts the same. Nor is it simply belonging to the same denomination or organization.

Instead, Jesus points us to something much deeper. In John 17, he speaks of three relationships:

» believers united with one another,

» the perfect unity shared by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

» believers sharing in that divine fellowship.

The unity Christ prayed for finds both its pattern and its source in the Trinity. Within the Godhead there is no rivalry or competition. The Father honors the Son. The Son delights to do the Father's will. The Holy Spirit points people to Christ. Each Person glorifies the others in perfect love. That is the kind of unity Christ desires for his people.

More Than a Pattern

Rev. Jones then made an important distinction. God is not only the pattern for our unity; he is also its source. He illustrated this by recalling the sewing patterns around the house during the early years of his marriage. A pattern may show someone how to make a garment, but the pattern itself cannot cut the fabric or sew the pieces together. The same is true of Christian unity. We cannot produce it simply by trying harder. Through the new birth we are brought into the very life of God. Our unity grows out of our shared life in Christ, not merely our shared opinions.

Reflecting Christ or Resembling Him?

One of the most memorable parts of the message came when Rev. Jones distinguished between *reflecting* Christ and *resembling* him. A mirror reflects an image but never becomes what it reflects. God intends something far greater for his children. He transforms us so that we begin to resemble his character.

When God revealed himself to Moses in Exodus 34, he described himself as merciful, gracious, longsuffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity and sin. As God's grace shapes our lives, those same qualities begin to mark our relationships with one another. He stressed that Christian unity is not maintained by personalities or programs. It is produced as God's character is formed within his people.

A Witness to the World

Perhaps the most challenging part of the message was the reminder that Jesus connected our unity with our witness. If we had been praying in the Upper Room, we might have asked Christ to make us bold preachers, effective evangelists, or fearless defenders of the faith. Instead, Jesus prayed, "that they may all be one...so that the world may believe." Our love for one another becomes visible evidence that Christ truly has come into the world.

Rev. Jones shared the story of a young couple rescued from alcoholism who found themselves deeply impacted by the genuine love they experienced in the church. Before they fully understood our doctrine, they experienced something they had rarely seen: people who truly loved and cared for one another. He also offered an observation that brought both laughter and conviction: "I've learned I can trust a man's *heart* even when I sincerely question his *head*." We do not have to agree about everything to love one another.

Using an illustration from Chuck Swindoll, he asked whether we are more like marbles or grapes. Marbles are hard, independent, and noisy. When they strike one another, they leave marks. Grapes are different. They grow together in clusters. They are soft, yielding, and connected. When pressed together, they blend rather than break apart.

General Conference gives us the opportunity to be grapes. It reminds us that we belong to one another because we belong to Christ.

Keeping Our Eyes on Christ

Rev. Jones concluded with one of A. W. Tozer's best-known illustrations. If one hundred pianos are each tuned to the same tuning fork, they will automatically be in tune with one another. The same principle applies to God's people. We do not preserve unity by watching one another or policing conformity. We preserve it by keeping our eyes on Christ. As each believer walks closely with him, the Holy Spirit binds us together in love.

As the service ended, Rev. Jones invited us to participate in what he called "a bread-breaking service without bread." Recalling

a childhood tradition from his roots, he encouraged us to move beyond the symbol to the reality.

As the congregation sang "The Family of God," pastors, delegates, guests, and laypeople filled the aisles, exchanging handshakes, embraces, and words of genuine Christian affection. It was a fitting beginning to General Conference. Before we addressed the work of the church, we were reminded that our greatest testimony to the world is not simply what we believe, but how we love one another

Looking back, Rev. Jones' message could not have been more appropriate. As he concluded four years of faithful leadership as General Chairman, he reminded us that that before we accomplish the work of Christ, we must first live out the prayer of Christ.

In closing, the Connection expresses sincere appreciation to Rev. Jones for his faithful service and leadership over the past four years. We also congratulate Dr. Mike Avery upon his election as General Chairman and assure him of our prayers as he leads the Bible Methodist Connection into the next quadrennium.



OUR HERITAGE

MICHAEL AVERY, GENERAL CHAIRMAN

Help Preserve Our Heritage

The General Connection is establishing an Archives to collect, preserve, and safeguard the rich history of the Bible Methodist Connection of Churches for future generations. This important endeavor depends upon the help of the entire Bible Methodist family.

We are seeking historical materials such as:

- General Conference Minutes.
- Regional Conference Minutes.
- Copies of *The Bible Methodist*, *The True Wesleyan*, and *The Bible Methodist Challenge* (any issue).
- Photographs of our churches, pastors, leaders, camp meetings, conferences, and other events of historical significance.
- Any other documents or memorabilia that help tell the story of God's work through the Bible Methodist Connection.

If you have materials you would be willing to donate or allow us to copy, we would love to hear from you.

For more information, please contact Michael Avery, Connectional Chairman, at (513) 218-8502, or mail your materials to:

Michael Avery
3739 Moorhill Drive
Cincinnati, OH 45241

Together, we can preserve the heritage God has entrusted to us and ensure that the story of God's faithfulness through the Bible Methodist Connection is available to inspire future generations.



Rev. Clair Sams recognizes Rev. Blake Jones for his exemplary leadership as Connectional Chairman.



WORLD MISSIONS NEWS UPDATE

R. G. HUTCHISON, MISSIONS DIRECTOR





Missionaries on the Ground in Mexico

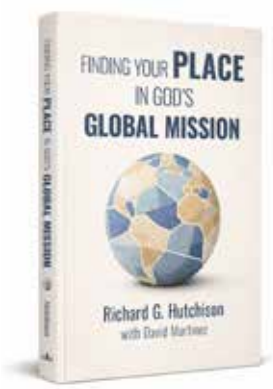
We are thankful that now the Muir and Martínez families are on the ground in Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca, Mexico! David and Diana have rented a house in the city, and Brennan and Ivon have secured a small piece of property nearby where they are preparing to establish their home base.

In May, our entire Mexico/Latin America team of missionaries, including the Slavens family, met in Puerto Escondido with Dr. Hutchison. They enjoyed a few days of fellowship, prayer, and team building discussions. The Slavens also spent additional time in Mexico, learning, exploring, and gaining valuable orientation experience with the Muirs.

Stay tuned for more news as things continue moving forward in Mexico!



Finding Your Place in God's Global Mission



Throughout the summer, Dr. R.G. Hutchison has been traveling on behalf of Bible Methodist Missions, sharing the vision of world evangelism and introducing his new book, *Finding Your Place in God's Global Mission*, co-authored with missionary David Martinez.

If you've attended camp meetings, conferences, or other events this summer, you may have already picked up a copy. If not, now is the perfect time.

Whether you have served on the mission field, supported missionaries for years, or are simply asking how God can use your life to reach the world, this book will challenge and inspire you to discover your place in God's global mission.

Order your copy today: biblemethodist.org/finding-your-place/

Bible Methodist Missions App



What are our missionaries doing right now? Download the Bible Methodist Missions app today to stay up to date with what is happening. You can receive notifications when a prayer request or news update is going out. And you can access all the most recent news in one place without having to search through your emails or a Facebook feed. Try it out today!

biblemethodist.org/missions-app/







Key Missions Statistics from General Conference Report

Here are a few of the key statistics that were shared in the Director's report to the 15th quadrennial General Conference. While numbers only capture a small part of the whole story, they nevertheless help us to measure some key areas of ministry impact over time. Thank you for your continuous prayers and support for the work that is happening in these various fields of gospel work!

Philippines

- » 112 local churches + 27 pioneering works
- » PBMC: 6,000 members, 300 baptisms, 8 new church plants, across 4 regional conferences (past 4 years)
- » PBMC Training Works: 10 Shepherd's College graduates; new SGC program trained with up to 57 participants in one semester and several earning certificates for completing SGC courses.
- » Gospel Light Church: 50 churches, 19 pioneering works, 123 baptisms (past 4 years), 20 newly commissioned pastors, across 7 organized geographical areas.

Mexico / Latin America

- » Ezra Biblical Seminary (EBS) grew from 18 students (2019) to 75 (2025)
- » 100+ unique participants from 8 Latin American countries, across all 20 SGC courses
- » New training/church-planting center launching in Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca

The Africa 85 Initiative

- » Launched 2020–21; now 28 training programs in 22 countries
- » 30 pastors trained in a Zambian refugee camp
- » 100+ pastors trained by one Ugandan contact
- » New partnership with Ethiopia's national evangelical council

Papua New Guinea

- » Partnership continues to develop with Bible Fellowship Church of PNG: 60–70 holiness churches
- » 3 Director visits completed; next delegation planned for September of this year, and plans being made for some short-term mission teams to minister there in the next few years.

A Special Visit from Rev. Brendel & Delma Macadangdang

We were especially honored with the presence of our National Overseer of the Philippine Bible Methodist Church, Rev. Brendel and Delma Macadangdang. They represented the PBMC at our U.S. General Conference, ministered in some churches, and participated in our mission's rally at the Heartland Regional Camp Meeting. Pastor Brendel has now served as the Philippine National Overseer for twenty years and has just been elected for another four-year term. Please keep him and Sis. Delma in your prayers as they continue leading this growing and expanding work in the Philippines.









GREAT LAKES CONFERENCE NEWS

DAVID WARD, PRESIDENT



General Conference

It was an honor for the Great Lakes Conference to host delegates from across the Bible Methodist Connection of Churches for its Quadrennial General Conference, held this year on the Rock Lake Campground.



The Newly Elected Connectional Committee

Back row (left to right): Mark Russell, Dewey Murray, Rev. Doug Eads, Bob Pickett, Rev. John Parker, David Armstrong, and James Shiery.

Middle row (left to right): Doug Derscheid, Rev. Chris Cravens, Rev. Deron Fourman, Leslie Crawford, Rev. Chris Hilling, and Rev. Aaron Johnson.

Front row (left to right): Treasurer, Chelle Durr; Discipleship Director, Rev. Darrell Stetler II; Vice Chairman, Rev. Richard Miles; Chairman, Dr. Michael Avery; Missions Director, Dr. Richard Hutchison; Secretary, Rev. Bob Blankenship; and Communications Director, Rev. David Ward.



The Connectional Missions Committee along with Rev. and Mrs. Macadangdang.

From left to right, Mrs. Judy Eads, Rev. Doug Eads, Rev. Steve Bills, Dr. Michael Avery, Rev. Chris Cravens, Dr. Richard Hutchison, Rev. Aaron Johnson, Rev. Brendel Macadangdang, Delma Macadangdang, Rev. David Fogleman, Rev. Deron Fourman, Mrs. Viola Durr, Rev. David Ward.



God's presence was evident in our times of worship, the conducting of business and the opportunities for fellowship.



Rock Lake Welcomes New Pastor

The Rock Lake congregation welcomed Rev. Seth and Heidi Wetherald as their new pastoral family, taking the place of Rev. Blake and Saundy Jones who are retiring after many years of pastoral ministry. In addition, Rev. Jones has served with excellence as Great Lakes Conference President and, most recently, General Connectional Chair. We wish the Jones well in this new chapter of their lives and are happy to welcome the Wetheralds to the Rock Lake Church Family.



Great Lakes Conference and Family Camp

We had a great team of workers for our Family Camp this year. Rev. Chris Cravens, President of the Heartland Conference, was our Evening Evangelist. Dr. Mark Bird was our Bible Teacher, focusing on Apologetics and Witnessing. The Rev. Joel Byer family made a return to Rock Lake as our Song Evangelists. Mark Langstaff, of the Dawn Valley Church, where Rev. Byer once pastored, was our Youth Worker. Rev. Gene and Angie Davis again served as Children's Workers, along with their son, Kent.



Great Lakes Youth Camp

Rev. Gabe Norris did an excellent job speaking and relating to the assembled campers at our Great Lakes Youth Camp this year. This year's Youth Camp was the first for Eli Albring to serve as Conference Youth Director. We appreciate his service and are thankful for the good team he has surrounding him.





Pastor Steve Bills brought a challenging Conference Sermon to the delegates and guests on the Friday night of Conference.



This marks the 21st year the Davises have worked with our Great Lakes Kids. This is the highlight of Campmeeting for many of our youngest attendees.



It was a real treat to have the Rev. Timothy Slavens family returned to the Great Lakes as the newest missionaries under appointment under the Bible Methodist Connection of Churches.



Great Lakes Family Camp is always a place where families are welcomed. In this photo, Jeffery Byer led our Youth Choir in the last Sunday afternoon Family Service.



HEARTLAND

CHRIS CRAVENS, PRESIDENT

CONFERENCE NEWS











Heartland Family Camp

Praise God for Campmeeting 2026!

The business of the conference went smoothly on Monday. On Monday evening, Elder John Burroughs challenged us with the Conference Sermon. Rev. Peter Linko was ordained as an elder in the conference, and the service concluded with Communion.

The camp services were anointed by God. Hungering souls sought God regularly in response to anointed preaching, teaching, worship, and singing, testifying to the presence of the Holy Spirit among us.

God certainly used our workers: Evangelist Rev. Deron Fourman, Bible Teacher Dr. Phil Brown, singers the Castles, Children's Worker Becky Simms, and Youth Evangelist Dr. Matt Hallam.

Saturday was a special day as we celebrated our nation's 250th anniversary with a color guard, golf cart parade, and annual softball game.

The total offering was $140,000. Throughout the camp, we enjoyed the newly expanded snack shack, and the children played on the brand-new playground.

To God be the glory for meeting us again at Beulah Grove!



















Rev. Paul Stelter



Heartland Youth Camp 2026

A total of 210 young people and nearly 250 support staff and family members gathered at Beulah Grove for the annual Heartland Youth Camp. God blessed the week with beautiful weather and a wonderful awareness of His presence.

Youth President Rev. Titus Byer and Vice President Patrick Dewhurst provided leadership for the camp activities and services. Rev. Paul Stetler challenged the youth through timely and anointed messages, and several young people sought God's grace at the altar of prayer.

The days were filled with fun, fellowship, and activities from early morning until late at night. Friday brought a wonderful conclusion to the week with the Bible Bowl All-Stars competition, volleyball and softball finals, and the closing awards assembly.

Award recipients included Luke Cravens, Male Camper of the Year; Hannah Jeffries, Female Camper of the Year; and Jackson Caplinger, President's Award recipient. The Levites were recognized as the winning team for the week.

Haley Hallem was the Bible Bowl champion, earning more than 1,000 points throughout the week, with Jackson Caplinger finishing in second place.

Heartland Youth Camp continues to make a lasting spiritual impact on the lives of our young people. Mark your calendars for Youth Camp 2027, scheduled for July 19–23.









The Levites Team









SOUTHERN CONFERENCE NEWS

DOUG EADS, PRESIDENT

The summer months are a very busy season for us as Bible Methodists. It is a blessing to participate in General Conference, Youth Camp, Annual Conference, and Family Camp. What is particularly meaningful to me is watching so many people come together to make these events possible. Truly, many hands make light work.

We are building upon the shoulders of those who have gone before us. John Parker reminded us during campmeeting that we have been blessed with a rich heritage. May we continue to keep the faith and move forward with confidence, knowing that God is working among us.



Conference VP Bob Blankenship, Con. Pres. Doug Eads, and Con. Sec. William Snider



Dwight Crosley is "retiring" as Youth Camp President! Thank you for a job well done!



The Delegates from the Southern Conference who attended General Conference in Michigan.



During Youth Camp we had a surprise visit from Uncle Sam, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Donald Trump, and Ronald Reagan.



It is a joy to have former Conference Presidents Parker and Hedstrom attend Annual Conference. They are so supportive and encouraging to the rest of us.



Carson Scarbrough has been attending Annual Conference for decades! This year his "favorite" son-in-law Jeff Hunt was a delegate from Crandall Bible Methodist.



It was good to have John Parker and George Vernon home for Camp.



It was an honor to have Rev. Curtis Going back to Campmeeting!



Sometime when a song is needed you just go back to Steve, Kay, and John! Thank you, Katherine Stetler, for playing for them.



Children's Church is a highlight of Campmeeting.


Priscilla Vernon and her sidekick Racheal Craig did an outstanding job of showing that Jesus is our Rescuer!



So many good things are happening with Bible Methodist Kids!


Four very hard-working ladies for Bible Methodist Missions and MMK. Tamara Crawford, Judy Eads, Karen Blankenship, and Laurie O'Dell. They were missing SMS VP Carole Cravens this year.



A great group of kids have earned their MMK badges. Missions has a bright future.


The crowds at camp were tremendous again this year. Thanks to everyone who came for a great week.


What would campmeeting be without bicycles and scooters?


So many lifetime friendships are formed at camp.



SOUTHWEST CONFERENCE NEWS

AARON JOHNSON, PRESIDENT



The Southwest Conference had a blessed 2026 camp meeting. Our camp workers, from left to right: Jonathan and Jalena Glick and family, Mikayla and Brian Betts, Melissa Johnson, Rev. Aaron Johnson, Rev. Eric Hughes, Dr. Mike Avery and Dr. Randall McElwain



Camp Evangelist Dr. Mike Avery



Dr. McElwain Playing the Offertory



Camp Evangelist Dr. McElwain



Dr. Avery Speaking from the Heart



Slavens Family, Missionaries in Training



The Glick Family



Jonathan Glick Leading the Singing for our Family Camp



Sunday Ordination Service



Melissa Johnson Leading the Ladies Meeting



Ladies Meeting Together on Thursday Morning at Camp



Trey and Abby Dodsworth with Chandler and Melissa Witter



Saturday Night Children's Program



Conference Vice President Darrell Stetler II



Sunday Morning Youth Program



Conference Pres. Aaron Johnson



The Future of Our Conference

THE BIBLE METHODIST
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CHRISTMAS CARDS

FOR OUR BIBLE METHODIST MISSIONARIES

The Christmas season is a wonderful opportunity to remind our missionaries that they are loved, supported, and remembered in prayer. Each year, we invite you to join us in sending a Christmas card and a small love gift to the missionary families serving through the Bible Methodist Connection. A personal note of encouragement can mean so much to those who are serving far from home, and your generosity helps make the season a little brighter. Let's come together once again to bless our missionaries and let them know how deeply we appreciate their faithful service around the world.



Shirley Fogleman

R.G. & Sarah Hutchison
Missions Director



Maricka Herrer



David & Diana Martinez



Brennan & Ivon Muir



Tim & Rebekah Slavens

Deron & Kimberly Fourman
Missions Treasurer

Please send your cards and support to:

P.O. Box E, Port Clinton, OH 43452