THE

BIBLE METHODIST

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BIBLE METHODIST CONNECTION OF CHURCHES



From the Editor



Connectional Chairman Michael Avery is challenging us to create a culture of prayer – to make prayer a primary focus. As we begin a 21-day Focus on Prayer, let's deeply consider allowing the Holy Spirit to move us beyond a simple prayer focus to being people for whom prayer is a primary identifier.

We are also celebrating the 50th Anniversary of *The Bible Methodist* magazine. As we consider the past years, the editors of this periodical have offered some strong and sound counsel and emphasized some valuable areas of spiritual life. But Dr. Avery's call to a culture of prayer and to authentic holiness are at the heart of our real understanding of the Lord's intention for us.

Directly connected to the call to prayer, you will read Conference President Blake Jones' call to fasting. Intentional prayer and fasting have historically been the twin disciplines that have sought the face of God in a way that enlivens the participants and creates a heart of godliness.

This issue will include a pull-out section that lists each church and pastor in the various conferences as well as an updated list of missions conferences, pastors, and churches. Please removed the section and use it as a tool for your prayer group, family prayer, and personal time in the Lord's presence. Paul instructs us to pray for one another. Let's do that intentionally.

G. Clair Sams
Editor

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

SUBSCRIPTION MANAGER

Monte Stetler

1447 Melinda Lane, Erlanger, KY 41018 mstetler@fuse.net

LAYOUT & DESIGN

Shane Muir smuir@gbs.edu

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BIBLE METHODIST CONNECTION OF CHURCHES

CONNECTION OF CHURCHE

CONNECTIONAL CHAIRMAN

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

MISSIONS DIRECTOR

Rev. Timothy Keep 4473 Forest Trail, Cincinnati, OH 45224 tbkeep@yahoo.com

ALABAMA REGIONAL CONFERENCE PRESIDENT

Rev. John Parker

40 Skyview Lane, Pell City, AL 35125 johnparker@juno.com

GREAT LAKES REGIONAL CONFERENCE PRESIDENT

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Box 5, Cedar Lake, MI 48891 bejones@nethawk.com

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16346 TR 166, Arlington, OH 45813 chriscravens@biblemethodist.org

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1116 SW 57th St, Oklahoma City, OK 73109 darrellstetler2@gmail.com



WHEN A CHURCH FAMILY FASTS

Our Bible Methodist Connection shares the call to an extended fast as the new year begins. I think it is a wonderful benchmark for every body of believers. God, who wants to be known, is inviting us into closer intimacy with Him and the passion of His heart. As such, the days of an extended fast should be celebrated by church leadership as a privilege. Although it will call for persistence and focus, these are not 21 days to be endured. This is an opportunity given by God to re-orient ourselves to what really matters and embrace afresh the God of all grace. However, it has to be approached with grace and wisdom.

If a family with children responds to this call, we would naturally expect parents to shape the plan to fit the children and adults differently. The plan may enlist very small children to give up candy for a day, while older children and parents take much different routes.

With an understanding of similar variety, we will call our church family to the grace and discipline of fasting. As a pastor, I know that not everyone will participate. For some it seems very forced and frightening. For others, it will look more like a time of self denial than a period of fasting food. Clearly, the Bible affirms self denial as supportive of fasting. And for sure, these times of media restrictions, social limitations, or whatever seems fit, need to be commended and celebrated. Perhaps most of the participants will engage in a partial fast that cuts out certain foods or preferred beverages for the allotted days. It does seem that fasting in the scripture is always associated with food. Finally, fasting a meal a day, or more, will be embraced by a few. However, you will probably not hear about their sacrifice.

In a healthy church family there will be participation at all sorts of levels. Faithful endurance and persistence need to be encouraged and supported. We are not very adept at embracing hard things. Somehow modern Christianity has been separated from holy discipline and rugged warfare. But the church that embraces the fight will enjoy the results of

spiritual growth and victory through the year.

While we are calling for rugged participation, we should be pointing our people to greater intimacy with Christ. Fasting is not cold and cruel punishment. It is moving away from common things that consume us and entering into Christ, into His intercession, into His passion for others. It is to be our intended purpose to redirect the cravings to a hunger for God and His will.

So, church family, let's embrace the call to fasting with anticipation. Whether new to this discipline or seasoned in intercession, may God enable us to seek Him with diligence and with delight. – *Blake Jones*

This past year, our usual January 21-Day Fast had an even greater impact on our lives. As a family, we chose to do a media/technology fast. We usually choose this as we appreciate the reset that it gives our day-to-day lives, but this year it sparked something so much bigger. Instead of ending after 21 days, we found ourselves embarking on a journey that we didn't anticipate. We discovered that when we aren't so distracted by the virtual world, we are much more focused on the realities of this world. We have more time for prayer and to read our Bibles and we spend more time together as a family.

Instead of being relieved that our fast was over at the end of the 21 days and ready to dive right back into our feasting on social media, movies, and video games (for the kids), we found ourselves somewhat reluctant – did it really have to end? Did we have to go back to our old ways – or could we make this type of fasting a lifestyle in today's media crazed world? After only a week of going back to the virtual world, we decided to return to our fast. It has now been almost a year since we made that decision. Our current media reduced life style isn't quite as strict as our initial fast, but the Xbox is gone. Phones for the kids are gone as well, and other forms of screen time are greatly reduced for all members of the family.

There have been some surprising results. We take it day by day. We are intentional. We lean closer toward God as we make decisions that affect our children and what they view. We also do more together as a family. Our four children have fewer discipline problems, are less bored, less whiny, and are more active, more creative and have happier dispositions. Our teenager is less moody and has rejoined the family. There has been a distinct change in our children that many have commented on – most not even knowing our decision. Our 21 Day Fast has extended far beyond just 21 days as our entire year has been spent drawing closer to God and closer as a family – AND we don't plan to stop. – *Lisa Janofski*

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Every year as we approach January, I know what is coming. There's going to be a call at our church for everyone to join in a time of fasting. I always have to try to prep myself for this...figuring out how to participate, without actually participating. I have a history with fasting. In High School I tried everything I had ever heard to get God to hear me. I

sang the hymns, I spent the time alone in a prayer closet, and of course, I fasted. So many lunches... So many hours alone in the chapel of the school I attended. Kneeling before a "god" I was scared of, but desperate for him to hear me. I would beg him to change the circumstances I was in. I would try so hard to do the right thing so that he would hear me and see me. Instead, what I "learned" was that no matter how many of the right things I did, he chose not to see me or hear me. That perception stuck with me into adulthood.

I would pray for other people, but knew somehow I wasn't good enough to be heard for my own needs. So now – 20 years later – I find myself in a church that asks for us to fast and pray at the start of a year...to seek God's face. But I still carried the lie that God didn't want to show me His favor or His face.

In the last couple of years, I have done some deep trauma work around those lies and the circumstances that I was begging God to take away. I have asked the tough questions about where He was and why He didn't see me. I have been angry, and I have learned that He can handle that. In fact, He has wooed me with the trueness of His character. As the "doer" within me struggled to be enough, He showed me that all He asks of me is to BE, and to rest in His goodness, and to let His love for me be the Touchstone where I find my value and calling.

When I am serving a God I'm scared of, it makes my inner, strong-willed child act out in defense when asked to do something, like fast, because all the other Christians are doing it. But, oh, the difference, when we ask that same "scary god" to show us His true self. When we walk a journey towards wholeness and healing and discover He's walking it with us. That path of discovery looks different for everyone. For me, I found that the God of the universe was, indeed, sitting in that prestigious, cold chapel with me, holding me as I begged for Him. That, as I beat my little hands against his proverbial chest screaming for him to answer, He was weeping with me.

As I have grown in my relationship with Him, it's really been about learning to trust, in those times I cannot see or feel Him. To trust His goodness when things aren't good. How does fasting play into that? Fasting isn't merely about the "giving up". It's not simply a time to start a new healthy habit, or do a reset on technology, or suffer the grumpiness of coffee-less days. Fasting is - at its core - about taking a season of time to specifically connect with our Father and get filled up for servant-living...to worship in a way that is out of the routine! And when we break up our routines, amazing things can happen. When it's no longer about the giving up, but about the "taking in"... we grow! And when we grow, we spillover to those around us as we live out the hands and feet of Jesus.

This year, fasting will be a little new to me. I'm still not sure what I will fast. But that's not really the point. It's more about finding something that helps point my focus back to Him, then pursuing it wholeheartedly, single-mindedly, for a chosen season. If fasting is new to you, too, maybe you could join me with baby steps. Maybe start by asking God to simply reveal Himself to you in a new way as you choose to break routine and focus on Him. I believe that it could be the start of something full of hope and eternal beauty! – Amber Jones

THOU HAST A NAME

LIVE UP TO IT

By George Vernon, Former Editor, The Bible Methodist

In an interesting and pertinent article which appeared in the *Church Herald*, Mr. William R. Buitendorp wrote, "No doubt more than once in your purchases you have seen a name on the outside of the package that reads, 'Container Corporation of America.' This company will make a box or carton to ship or package anything from an IBM machine to a bottle of perfume. When he started his little company, Walter P. Paepeke was meeting with his lawyer to draw up the proper legal papers. When he said the name of the company would be 'Container Corporation of America' the lawyer said to him, 'Don't you think this is a rather big name for so small a company?' Mr. Paepeke replied, 'We'll take the name and grow into it.' Today it is internationally known."

This is a challenging story to the "Bible Methodist Connection of Churches" – in the words of Mr Paepeke, "a big name for small a company."

The emphasis of the apostate church world, and one world church, is not on blessedness but on bigness; and the ecumenical movement is marked and marred by the nebulous mission, a neutral message, novel methods and a "New Morality." The early Church was marked by unfailing love for the brethren, an untrammeled liberty in the Lord, and an unmistakable likeness to Christ in their sacrificial devotion to the Father's will.

If we are to grow into the challenging name which we believe that the Lord has given us:

- 1. WE MUST BE ESSENTIALLY EXCELLENT. We must be vessels unto God's honor molded and motivated by the power of the Holy Spirit. There is not substitute for godliness both in character and conduct. Shoddy "containers" are a shame to both the cause of Bible Methodist and Bible holiness.
- 2. WE MUST BE ENERGETICALLY EVANGELISTIC. Our chief business is not to sing the praises of the "company," or to promote a program, or even to preserve its purity; but to seek to bring sinners to a personal knowledge of God's regenerating and sanctifying power and to build them up in Bible faith and faithfulness. The Spirit energizes that we may evangelize.
- 3. WE MUST BE EARNESTLY EXPECTANT. We must pray persistently, earnestly and believingly that the Holy Spirit will prosper every effort that is put forth for the Glory of God. Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it; but the Lord is faithful.

Spiritually energized employment will enable a "small company" to grow into a multitude of believers who will bring great honor and praise to the God of all grace.

We have "a rather big name" – let's grow into it. ■





DID YOU PASS BY THE ALTAR?

By Philip DeLemarter

After the fifth or sixth day of reading the 46th chapter of Ezekiel, I opened the Bible once again in an attempt to write a devotional based on that chapter. Seemingly, I was getting nowhere. Like previous mornings, my eyes got heavy and my mind was getting numb as I started reading it one more time. Nothing was registering and I nearly gave up. Then, an inner voice said to me, "Are you reading this for what interests you or are you trying to understand what it is saying?"

Oh, ouch! That hit me right between the eyes. For indeed that was what I had been doing. Since nothing in the chapter seemed to relate to our modern kind of worship services or our kind of church buildings I was basically tuning it all out. It seemed so irrelevant.

To get a clearer understanding of what I was reading, I found a sketch of Ezekiel's temple and then began to read the 46th chapter, again. As I walked through the temple Ezekiel was describing, things began to take on a whole new meaning to me.

Initially, I kept pondering why there was no West Gate. I assumed that it was because of where the Sanctuary was located. Then, I saw a spiritual lesson: There is no back door into God's House; into God's Presence. Sadly, I thought of the thousands of Jews who storm the Wailing Wall each day, the Western Wall of the old Temple, calling out to God.

In fact, Ezekiel even tells us there is no front door into

God's House, into God's Presence. Elsewhere in the book, God makes it clear to Ezekiel that no one could enter through the East Gate. It was only open on the Sabbath Day and for the New Moon. The prince could worship at the gates and the people could worship under the porch, but no one could pass through the East Gate; the reason being that it was the gate that the Lord had passed through.

No front door, no back door, but God has provided us a Way into His house, into His presence, through the side gates, north and south. God makes it clear to Ezekiel that if worshipers enter by way of the South Gate they must exit by way of the North Gate. If they enter by way of the North Gate they must exit by way of the South Gate. It all seemed puzzling to me until I looked at the sketch of the temple. To go from the North Gate to the South Gate or vice a versa, you have to pass by the altar. Look at the sketch.

In the vision of the temple God gave to Ezekiel, the altar is at the very center of the temple complex. A few lessons seemed to surface in my mind. Our altar is the cross upon which the Lord Jesus Christ died. Upon Him, all of our sins were laid, and through his death our sins were fully paid for. Question: When we enter the house of God, do we pass by this altar (not the piece of furniture at the front of the church)? Do we worship this One who took our place, this One upon whom all of our sins were laid, making us worthy

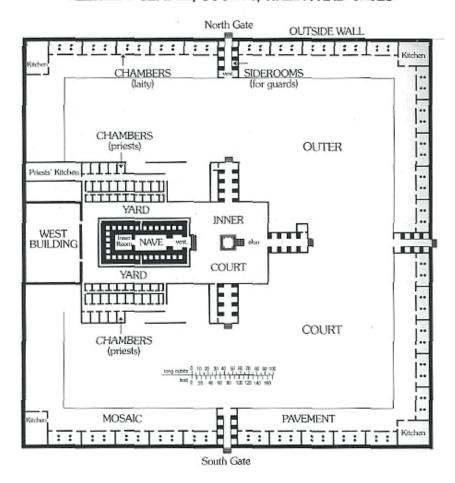
to enter God's House?

When we enter God's House if all we do is to sing, and pray, and give, and listen; we do not pass the altar and we leave the same way that we came. But if we worship this One who died on the cross for all of our sins, who freely took upon Himself all of our shame and bore our guilt; if we recognize that He, and He alone, makes it possible for us to be in God's House, then we will go out a different way than we came in.

In our modern ways of worship, perhaps we are too careless and cavalier in our church services. We come to hear a sermon, we come to hear the singing, we come because our family comes, we come to see what others are wearing, we come because we have always come, we come to see who else comes...if that is the basis of our going to the House of God then we go home the same way we came.

Oh, dear friends, let's not fail to pass by the altar as we enter into God's House and into His Presence. Regardless of what others do, in every service, seek the One who died for your sins and worship Him. Pass by the altar. When you do, you will go home a different way than you came.

EZEKIEL'S TEMPLE, COURTS, WALLS, AND GATES



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WORLD MISSIONS

NEWS UPDATE

TIMOTHY KEEP | MISSIONS DIRECTOR



Taking Jesus Into the Mess

On this trip to The Asia Highlands I had the wonderful privilege of teaching Apologetics to twelve university students. Aware of the dangers of meeting, these young believers would arrive one or two at a time, and after two or three hours leave the same way. And, each morning before our classes would start, someone would draw the curtain of the big picture window so that curious eyes wouldn't see our "illegal" gathering.

Ironically, or perhaps providentially, one of the most difficult questions we pondered during our sessions, is a question many non-Christians (especially) are asking: "If God is truly the powerful, loving God that you Christians say He is then why doesn't He DO something about the suffering, the decay, the injustice, the brokenness all around us?"

"The question is indeed a difficult one", I said, "but God has done something—everything really! He sent His Son to participate in our suffering and to sacrifice Himself for the root cause of all human suffering—sin. His suffering, death, and resurrection promises that a perfect, painless day is coming to all who trust Him. And not only that, but, through His Church, filled with His Spirit, God is sending His saints into the

world to offer the healing, restoring, forgiving, transforming life of Jesus to all its broken places! Christ's Church is His Body on earth bringing hope to a suffering world. Through His Church, Jesus is showing up day after day in the most forsaken places."

The question we then pondered is this: Are we carrying Jesus to the broken places in our world—our broken relationships, our broken homes, our broken marriages, our broken church families, our broken villages, towns and cities? It's much easier to complain about the mess around us than to be the embodiment of the sacrificial life of Jesus within the mess. But this is our calling! What a joy to teach and mentor these precious young people!

From November 1–13 a wonderful team came together for a week of teachers conference and relationship building in the Asia Highlands. This trip could not have gone better! David and Christina Black, Steve Oliver, Susan Coleman, Janet Burton and Marilyn Pfaehler connected so well with the students and teachers of Eagles Wings Academy, and they were such a blessing to Paul and Esther, and school administrators David and Jill.





















What a privilege to work along side and fellowship with our Christian brothers and sisters in the highlands of Asia! Once again I was reminded that Christ died for the whole world. I love to travel but never dreamed of the possibility of going to this area of the world. The landscape was beautiful, but it was more beautiful to instruct the teachers of the ACE school in the learning styles students prefer to process new information. The teachers were very receptive and it was exciting to hear them apply their new knowledge in small work groups. The teachers expressed much appreciation for helping them understand their students and how to better teach them. I was able to be at the school for 2 days and work with the dedicated teaching staff. I saw their love for the students in action as they interacted with them in the learning center. It was fun to play with some students at a break-but I found out quickly that I'm not as young as I used to be! Please pray for the school's administrators, David and Jill, and their team as they endeavor to teach English and the word of God to their wonderful students. - Janet Burton

The opportunity of visiting the Asian Highlands with the mission team in November was a life changing experience that has enriched my life and relationship to God. What a blessing it is to know that people of every nation and tongue can serve the same amazing God and experience wonderful fellowship together. I will never forget the beautiful sights, but the joy of meeting new people has filled my heart to overflowing. I count the experience of working with Brother Keep, the Blacks and members of the team among the greatest thrills I have ever known. – *Marilyn Pfaehler*







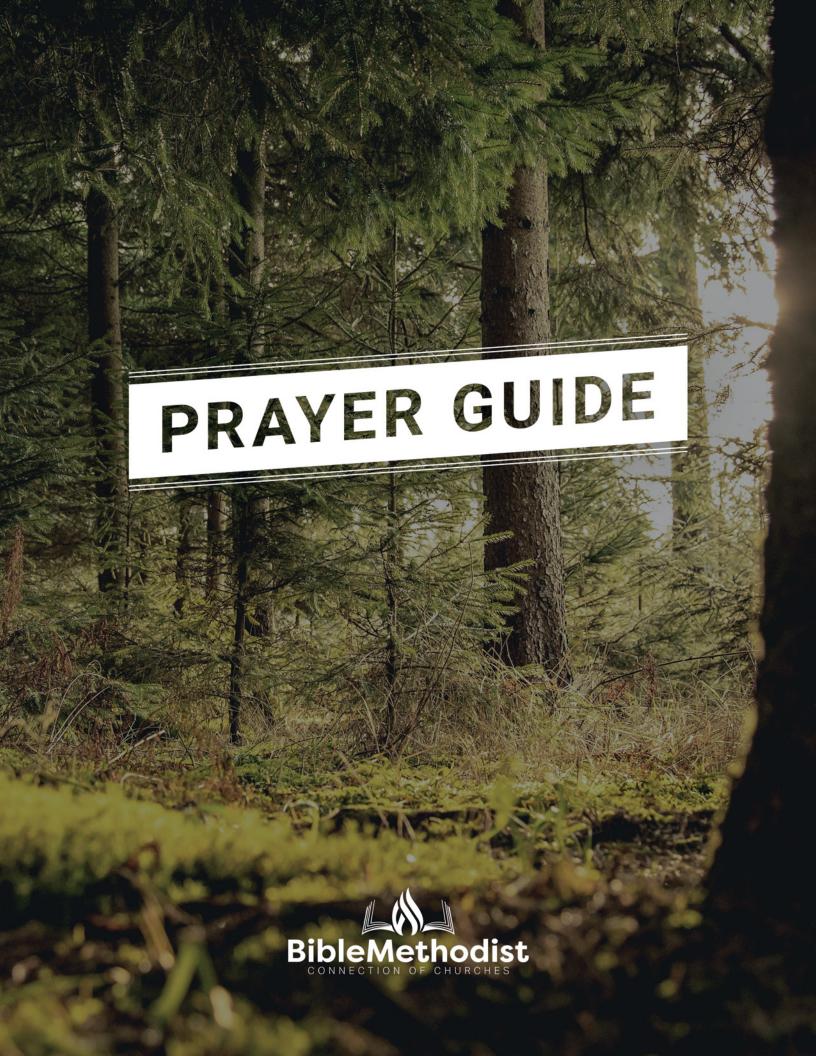
Prayers, like the words of the Prophets, are sometimes expressions of the poetic and emotional aspect of life. Prayer is not initially an avenue for social reform or an influence for changing culture. It is first and foremost the vehicle of interaction between persons. It is most effectively felt, when it rises from the eloquently and vibrantly expressed words of the person praying. In other words, finding a way to explain those most deeply held thoughts, burdens, joys and hopes rises through feelings and thoughts to the heart of God. The eloquence and vibrancy does not need to be clearly articulated. It is rather the heart-felt expression of one spirit to another.

In our culture, we often think of prayer in practical and rational terms. We want to talk; to tell our list of needs. We want to explain to God the situation and provide a solution to resolving those concerns. But far deeper is the Biblical understanding that prayer is actually a relational and emotional interaction between the Eternal God and a finite person. He knows our needs and burdens and invites us to bring them to Him. Yet, in an infinitely deeper sense He invites us into His presence, list or no list. True prayer is actually a relational interaction between persons who care for one another.

Prayer allows our praise, battles, yearnings and emotions to be expressed through faith. It allows hope to rise. It allows interaction to be expressed and felt through words and thoughts.

Prayer is a discipline that challenges each Believer. It seems to me that one great hesitation to participating in prayer rises from a misconception about the discipline of the practice. Too often we make prayer an exercise that rises from human strength and ingenuity. As a result it becomes a time of human thought and expression that is primarily one-sided. Thomas Merton wrote, "...(It) is not sufficient to rush into church with a desire for contemplation or to do a lot of good works and acts of virtue with a desire for sanctity. In all the aspects of life supreme contemplation and virtue are nothing. The first movement in all prayer, together with faith in His presence, ought to be desire to know His will and to abandon oneself entirely to His disposition and intentions for us." In other words, prayer should be seen as much more than a discipline, it is active involvement in relationship and communication. The heart of this expression for the Christian is a heart open to God's Word and the Holy Spirit's presence. It is about being surrendered to Divine will.

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Alabama Regional Conference

Conference President - John Parker

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- Bland, Virginia Pastor & Mrs. Brian Consley
- Brent, Alabama
- Cordele, Georgia
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- Flat Rock, Alabama Pastor & Mrs. Gary Smith
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- Waycross, Jasper, Alabama Pastor & Mrs. Bryan Shields
- Wesley Bible Chapel, Crossville, Tennessee Pastor & Mrs. Earl Fields
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Conference President - Blake Jones

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- Evart, Michigan
 Pastor & Mrs. Brian Bailey
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- Garfield Country Church, Kalkaska, Michigan Pastor & Mrs. Kimberland Hough
- Greenville, Michigan Pastor & Mrs. Bryon Fling (Supply Pastor)
- Hilltop Chapel, Concord, Michigan Pastor & Mrs Adrian Rosa
- Hillsdale, Michigan (Provisional Church)
 Pastor & Mrs. Adrian Rosa
- Ironwood, Frankton, Indiana Pastor & Mrs. Jason Lindahl
- Rock Lake, Michigan Pastor & Mrs. Blake Jones Pastor & Mrs. Titus Byer
- Saranac, Michigan (Sunday Evening) Contact person – Mrs. Connie Troyer
- Stanton, Kentucky Pastor & Mrs. Scobie Faulkner
- Vandercook, Michigan Pastor & Mrs. Chris Hilling

Heartland Regional Conference

Conference President - Chris Cravens

- Auburn (Hamilton) Ohio Pastor & Mrs. Steve Gresham
- Beech City, Ohio Pastor & Mrs Joseph Stephani
- Calvary Greenfield, Indiana Pastor & Mrs. Mike Mater
- Calvary Chapel, Coshocton, Ohio Pastor & Mrs. Rodger McCreery
- Community Bible, Binghamton, New York Pastor & Mrs. Randy Brown

- Community Gas City, Indiana Pastor & Mrs. Sean English
- Community Holiness, New Lexington, Ohio Pastor & Mrs. Kenneth Teter
- Columbus, Indiana Pastor & Mrs. Shane Rocker
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- Early Methodist, Connersville, Indian Pastor & Mrs. Philip Mahoney
- Fairmont, West Virginia Pastor & Mrs. Wesley Grissom
- Findlay, Ohio Pastor & Mrs. Travis Johnson
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- Grace, Hustontown, Pennsylvania Pastor & Mrs. Norman Blowers
- Grawn, Michigan Pastor & Mrs. Dennis Johnson
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- McDonald, Pennsylvania Pastor & Mrs. David Hamer
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- Peoria, Illinois
- Port Clinton, Ohio Pastor & Mrs. Deron Fourman
- Salem, Ohio Pastor & Mrs. David Crosley
- Toronto, Ohio
- Village Park, Westfield, Indiana Pastor & Mrs. Duane Quesenberry
- Voice of Victory, Waynesfield, Ohio Pastor & Mrs. James Baker
- Water of Life, Newport News, Virginia Pastor & Mrs. Rick Alexander
- Wesley Redeemer, Fort Wayne, Indiana Pastor & Mrs. Mike Eavey
- York, Pennsylvania Pastor & Mrs. William Reese
- West Mecca, Ohio Pastor & Mrs. Mike Shiery
- Zanesville, Ohio
 Pastor & Mrs. William Blair

Mid-America Regional Conference

Conference President - Darrell Stetler II

- New Hope Salina, Kansas Pastor & Mrs. Todd Hurst
- Miltonvale, Kansas Pastor & Mrs. David Turner
- Oklahoma City, Pastor and Mrs. Darrell Stetler II
- Ponca City, Oklahoma Pastor & Mrs. Ron McCormick
- Servant's Heart Chapel, Clovis, New Mexico Pastor & Mrs. Darrell Underwood



Continued from page 10

One of the great blessings of prayer is the joy of conversation with God. Matching that joy is the ministry of service under His direction. The joy and ministry then focus on His presence in our lives. Through the joy and power of prayer real ministry rises. From that ministry comes the affirmation of spiritual life. The interaction with the Lord and the people to whom we minister strengthens our involvement with both. Even when there is passionate interaction with the Lord over what appears to be slowness or lack of change, there is the strength of relationship. The reality of actual interaction between, we, the supplicant and God, the recipient, builds strong relationship. The interaction, even when we think that God is not listening or responding as quickly as we would like, can build a deeper long-term connection, because then we exercise faith in His Word. True interaction includes the knowledge that God knows and cares even when appearances seem to be otherwise. The result of the interaction is a living and deepening relationship.

Whether we are always aware of His investment in the relationship or not, He will remind us, from time to time, that He is there. He allows people to embrace His expectations and disciplines or refuse them. For instance, His anger at sin reminds us that He is real and just. On the other hand, when we respond to His Word, in love and worship, He responds by affirming the investment He has made with a sense of His presence. You see prayer is not just about your good feelings. It is not about crying a few tears and walking away to live your day. It is about the joy and pain, it is about the time and attention, it is about investment in a deep and eternal relationship.

Daniel Henderson references the human-Divine interaction in his book Transforming Prayer. He writes, "In a sense, prayer is a continual conversation between our hearts and God's." Part of our interaction with the Lord God is the influence and power of His Word and presence in our lives. You cannot truly pray and not be influenced and changed.

C. S. Lewis is said to have expressed, "I pray because I can't help myself. I pray because I'm helpless. I pray because the need flows out of me all the time, waking and sleeping. It doesn't change God. It changes me." True prayer will impact the person who engages in the practice.

Again Henderson wrote, "...(The) crucial component for transforming prayer...is from a heart passionate for Christ and with a language springing from His Word." He quotes Andrew Murray, "The entrance His words find in me will be the measure of the power of my words with Him. What God's words are to me, is a test of what He, Himself is to me, and so of the uprightness of my desire after him in prayer.™ A central component of prayer is understanding that it is a conversation between the supplicant and the benefactor. The Lord gives us His Word and Spirit to speak to us as we intercede with Him.

The present call to Bible Methodists is a question about corporate prayer. The question is, will we immerse ourselves deeply in a culture of prayer? Connectional Chairman Dr. Michael Avery has repeatedly expressed the desire that the Bible Methodist community of churches be a people who embrace a culture of prayer. Knowing that the Lord invites us

to prayer and that Scripture illustrates the power of praying together with other Christians, will we participate?

Passionate personal worship and prayer will influence how we participate in church. Carrying that passionate, personal worship to church will influence the worship and ministry of your local church. Understanding and engaging in interaction with the Lord God, creates a desire to bring that same sense of worship to other Believers. When you participate in worship and prayer you will want the people with whom you worship to enjoy that communication as well.

The Book of Acts repeatedly reminds us of the power of praying together. They prayed together as a discipline, they prayed together for boldness, they prayed together because there was persecution, they prayed together in times of blessing, they prayed together for direction. They prayed because they had watched their Lord talk with His Father, they prayed because the needed the strength of God with them.

The Book of Acts chapter 6 tells of the Church facing a conflict over responsibility for ministry. There was dissension over who would care for some of the widows. The Apostles gathered for prayer and concluded that their primary responsibility was to give themselves to the Word and prayer. Their decision and direction was not from a lack of care for or interest in the needs of the widows. They were clearly cared for them and appointed men like Stephen to help, but they understood the critical role of leadership.

The early church understood the importance of prayer as a tool of united participation. Prayer united them, encouraged a sense of trust, gave them a clear path to mission and enabled spiritual worship. Daniel Henderson wrote, "When leaders pray openly and honestly with their people in pursuit of the face of God, hearts are united with Spirit imparted affection and understanding. Health overflows."⁵

When prayer is a primary focus of the Church the door is open for an invasion of Divine presence and participation. That does not mean simply an influx of people, it does mean meaningful and effective ministry to the unbelievers and the church.

I have been deeply influenced by the Christians in the Philippines. During my time among them, watching and listening to them in prayer was both challenging and convicting. They take seasons of prayer seriously, and gather with the intention of spending significant time in the Lord's presence. May the Lord inspire us to make prayer central to our lives and the lives of our churches.

- 1 Thomas Merton, The Sign of Jonas, page 112
- 2 Daniel Henderson, Transforming Prayer, page 108
- 3 The fictional C.S. Lewis in the movie *Shadowlands* (played by Anthony Hopkins)
- 4 Andrew Murray, With Christ in the School of Prayer
- 5 Daniel Henderson, Old Paths, New Power, page 205

ALABAMA REGIONAL CONFERENCE NEWS

JOHN PARKER | CONFERENCE PRESIDENT



Alabama Ladies Retreat

The Alabama Ladies Retreat was held September 13–15. Mrs. Martha Snider and Ms. Janet Burton were the speakers. Mrs. Linda Shields did special music for the event. Our ladies enjoyed great fellowship and spiritual refreshing during this time together on the campgrounds!



Regional Inter-church Holiness Convention

Alabama churches participated in the regional Interchurch Holiness Convention. Rev. Rodney Loper led and preached, the Frank Heidler family led singing, and Pastor John Forsee preached. Conference President John Parker and Alabama Pastors, Jon Earls and Bob Blankenship participated.



Ministerial Seminar

On November 2–3 Dr. John Neihof, President of Wesley Biblical Seminary did a Seminar for 16 of the Alabama Pastors in the new Conference Office. It was a rich time of challenge and insight. The response was overwhelmingly positive!



Intercollegiate Ministerial Fellowship

On September 28-29, the Alabama Conference hosted the Intercollegiate Ministerial Fellowship. A wonderful group of Ministerial Majors from our Bible Colleges met together here to be challenged and fellowship during these two days.







Honoring Rev. John Willett Vess

June 6, 1929 — September 13, 2018

Rev. John Willett Vess, Sr, a key figure in the formation of the Bible Methodist Connection of Churches, and leader in the Alabama Conference for many years, arrived in heaven on September 13th after a long battle with cancer. He and his dear wife, Mary Nell, served our conference faithfully as pastor in nearly every church in the conference, conference leader and in many days of labor on our campground. Bro. Vess was an outstanding and anointed preacher of the Word! God used him mightily in revivals, camp meetings and conventions all across the country and around the world.

He served as Bible Methodist General Missions' Secretary, and left a legacy of building up the work, often with his own hands in physical labor, as well as in passionate ministry.

He was a friend to pastors! Always willing and ready to take on a project or preach a revival (while doing work projects in the day) for any church that invited him. He was legendary for his ability to turn wrecks into usable vehicles and to transform parsonages and churches into livable buildings with his skills! Whatever he did, he did with fervency and speed! He was a man's man, unafraid, adventurous and filled with the joy of life! Yet, he was tender and loving! His mentoring and counsel to young pastors and nurturing ways impacted so many of us in the critical years of our early ministry.

I personally owe Bro. Vess a great debt of gratitude and appreciation for believing in me and encouraging me through some difficult times. His precious wife, a true southern Alabama lady, is the epitome of gracious, joyous love! Her sweet smile and loving spirit nurtured so many of us again and again. They were always a team, the best illustration of a devoted married couple through 68 years of marriage.

Rev. Vess was preceded in death by his parents, Rev. Arthur L. and Olive Vess, and his brother, Wesley A. Vess. He is survived by his loving wife of 68 years, Mary Nell Lindsey Vess; children, Libby (David) Hall of Mechanicsburg, PA, Ronda (Dan) Whisner of Mt. Vernon, OH, Joy (Eddie) Beaver of Eas-

ley, SC, and John Willett (Melissa) Vess, Jr of Easley, SC; and sister, Margaret (Amos) Glendenning of Leitchfield, KY. He also leaves behind 10 beloved grandchildren, 24 great-grandchildren, as well as a host of nieces and nephews.

Rev. Vess's grandson, Pastor Jon Whisner shared a lengthy poem which so beautifully and perfectly described his grandfather at Bro. Vess's Memorial Service. Here are a few excerpts from the poem he titled $7.W.\ Vess-A\ Life.$

J.W. Vess - A Life

With unswerving devotion He taught us to love Jesus most For each morning he'd rise early and seek God first. In his slippers with a cup of coffee, he'd hunger and thirst Pursuing the Lord with Mamaw by his side, They'd feed on the Scriptures
Then offer up blessings for each in the family and cry.

With unfathomable energy, He taught us how to work and make the most of a day...

With unusual unction, He taught us how to pray,
How to moan in prayer, how to groan in prayer,
How to come boldly to the throne in prayer,
How to watch for one hour, cry out in power,
And wait patiently for the Holy Spirit's anointing shower.
He could move heaven and earth with unbridled petition
And tenderize the hardened soul with unmatched contrition.

With unabandoned zeal, He taught us how to preach, How to preach God's truth at home and away, In the Philippines, or Japan, or Russia, or Nigeria or in those backwoods churches in Carolina red clay

With a warm heart and with passion. How to start low, and go slow, then rise higher and catch fire. He was John, the son of Thunder Exalting God's glory and splendor and wonder

He taught us how to preach a simple message

He preached with the burden of the Lord, Courageously unsheathed and wielded the mighty sword. Held up high God's Holy Word, and thrust it through the soul deterred

Exposing the inner man inside, so Christ could cleanse and satisfy. He delivered God's gift of salvation with a tender heart, Gave the gospel at every funeral to offer a brand new start. Was unafraid to preach on heaven and hell and sin, To welcome the prodigal back home again.

With unwavering courage He taught us how to die. With a heart like Secretariat he faithfully ran life's track. Never yielding to defeat, never, never, never turning back. He taught us how to die without regret and shame; To live a life that pleases the Lord and honors Jesus' name. He ran hard, he ran long, he ran the race so great. He finished well and he touched the tape.

Written in honor of my grandfather, J.W. Vess by his grandson, Jon Whisner – September 13, 2018

GREAT LAKES REGIONAL CONFERENCE NEWS

BLAKE JONES | CONFERENCE PRESIDENT



Hillsdale Bible Methodist Church

The Hillsdale Bible Methodist Church has organized as a provisional church in the Great Lakes Conference. As they search for a pastor, Rev. Adrian Rosa serves as the official pastor of what has been a satellite church of his Hilltop Congregation. A Sunday afternoon Kids' Adventure Hour has added healthy excitement to this church plant. If you have contact information for a possible pastor, please contact: Rev. David Ward, Church Extension Director, at (231) 250-7111.







Fall Family Retreat

Mrs. Charlotte Frederick was the guest speaker for our annual Fall Family Retreat. She shared practical instruction for families and grandparents. The weekend included hayrides, an ice cream vendor, quilting, rides and bounce houses.









Bristolwood Bible Methodist Church

The Bristolwood Church has finished the left hand side wing on the sanctuary. It provides a welcome and bright entrance, restrooms on the main level, a cry room, a classroom that can open into the sanctuary for overflow and a basement youth class. Pastor and Mrs. James Durr and their people have moved their bus route to Sunday evening rather than Sunday morning and created a Sunday School outreach in the evening. At this point the shift in time has almost tripled the number riding their bus. Chip and Joy Durr are serving as Outreach Director.







HEARTLAND REGIONAL CONFERENCE NEWS

CHRIS CRAVENS | CONFERENCE PRESIDENT



Heartland Ministerial

Higher Ground Conference Center was the host for the 2018 Heartland Ministerial. Special thanks to the sponsors of this event that made it possible for every minister and their wife to attend free of charge. Special speakers included Dr. R.G. Hutchison, Rev. Glenn Black, Dr. David Gibbs, Jr, Randy and Tanya Brown and Rev. Rowan Fay. The theme of "The Anointing" powerfully impacted every session.











Coshocton, Ohio

The congregation and many friends of the Calvary Chapel Bible Methodist Church celebrated the dedication of their new church. This service was the climax to many months of hard work and excited anticipation.





Men of Integrity

The annual fall retreat, Men of Integrity, was held September 20-22 at Beulah Grove Campground. Approximately 150 men gathered to hear sessions on the theme, *Leadership from God's Perspective*, and to participate in various activities, prayer groups and fellowship. Speakers were Jonathan Witter, deputy director of the US Department of Defense agency, Defense Finance and Accounting Service, and Rev. Blake Jones, president of the Great Lakes Conference.







Village Park, Indiana

The congregation of Village Park Bible Methodist Church celebrated their mortgage burning on November 11, 2018. Joining Pastor Duane Quesenberry were former pastors Rev. Monte Stetler, Sr. and Rev. John Parker.



Gas City, Indiana

President Chris Cravens officiated at the installation of Rev. Sean and Becky English as pastor of the Community Bible Methodist Church.



Beulah Grove Campgrounds

The project committee met this Fall with contractors to review final plans for the new Bathhouse Project. Construction is scheduled to begin early in 2019.

Special Recognition

Rev. Jack and Jane Hooker were honored at the 2018 GBSC Homecoming as *Alumni of the Year*.



MID-AMERICA REGIONAL CONFERENCE NEWS

DARRELL STETLER II | CONFERENCE PRESIDENT



Shepherd's Heart Chapel

Servant's Heart Chapel has been busy serving the community. First, we had a First Responder Appreciation Cookout. More than 130 fire fighters and police officers enjoyed good food, fellowship, and information on our church. It wasn't without challenges. When our grill failed to heat up, the ladies got on it and used the fire station's kitchen to cook up as many hot dogs and burgers as they could. Thanks to them, the rest of the event went smoothly.







For the second project, we worked with Lighthouse Mission to move three elderly people from an unsafe apartment building. After learning no one in the building had water, gas service, or working security lights; we brought over cases of water, assessed the situation, and coordinated support for those who needed it.





Salina, Kansas

One of Pastor Hurst's many talents is playing the banjo and it is a favorite of the residents at the nursing home for which a group from our church holds services every Sunday morning. His banjo case was 30+ years old and falling apart. The church bought him a new case and filled it with a love offering for pastor appreciation month.







One of our parishioners' neighbors is a Vietnam veteran who broke his leg and ankle recently. He burns wood to keep his house warm in the winter. He was unable to split and stack all the wood. A team from our church brought in a splitter and split and stacked enough wood for him to make it through the winter.

Oklahoma City Outreach

Pastor Darrell Stetler II and the congregation at Oklahoma City, impacted the community with a "Trunk or Treat" outreach. Several families from the church decorated their cars or spaces with lights and filled them with treats. The people also provided food for those who attended.













THE BIBLE METHODIST

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