THE

BIBLE METHODIST

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BIBLE METHODIST CONNECTION OF CHURCHES VOLUME 55 | ISSUE 2



FROM THE EDITOR



Travis J. Johnson Editor

The Christian faith is a creedal religion by its very nature. Jesus once asked his disciples, "Who do you say ye that I am?" Peter declared with authority, "You are the Christ, the son of the Living God (Matthew 16:15-16). In essence, Peter proclaimed a creed. Whenever we state that "Jesus is Lord," we are issuing forth a creed. Throughout the ages of church history, the church has repeatedly expressed itself in creeds. The Nicene Creed serves as an excellent illustration of this. For the last sixteen hundred years, it has served as the definitive statement of Christian orthodoxy. Peter Salon, in the Credo Magazine (Volume 10, Issue 3) states "Creeds are God's gift to the Church - arising from listening attentively to God's Word, the Creeds use liturgical repetition to draw us into deeper experiences of hearing what God really says to the Church."

The Nicene Creed does just that as it plays a crucial role in today's church as a unifying declaration of the core beliefs of the Christian faith. It encapsulates the essential beliefs that bind orthodox believers together. This confession has held steadfast for almost 1700 years, ensuring doctrinal continuity across various denominational lines. The Nicene Creed serves as an invaluable touchstone for followers to articulate, instruct, and defend their faith with conviction. The beliefs confessed in the Nicene Creed are not secondary matters, but are essential. Quite simply, what we believe matters.

It is unfortunate that the Nicene Creed is rarely read or given much thought, resulting in a lack of appreciation for its significance in preserving biblical orthodoxy today. In this issue of the Bible Methodist, readers will be introduced to the Nicene Creed to help equip the next generation with the ability to confess the unchanging faith handed down from generation to generation.

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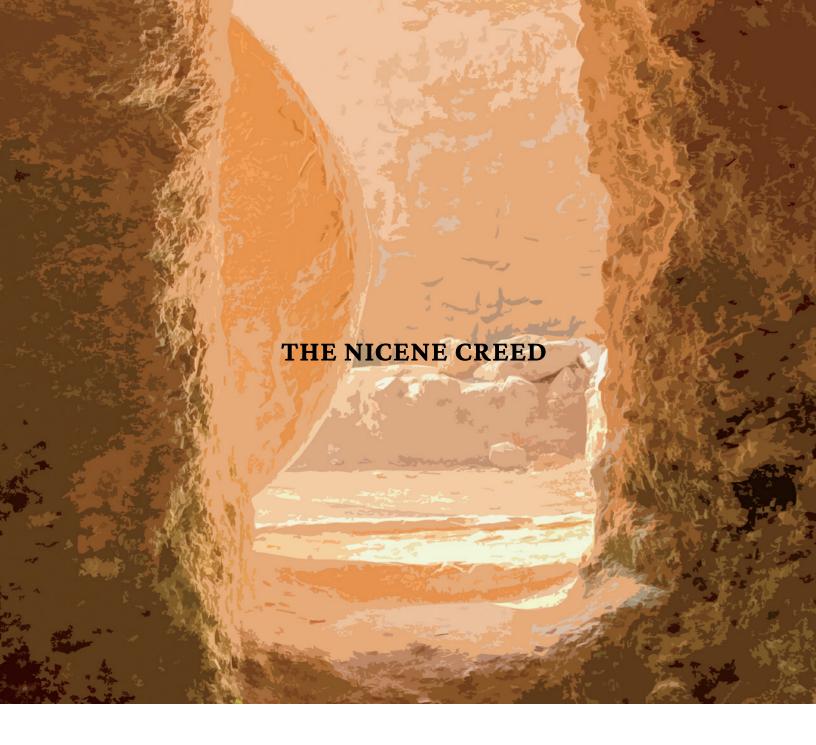
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I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

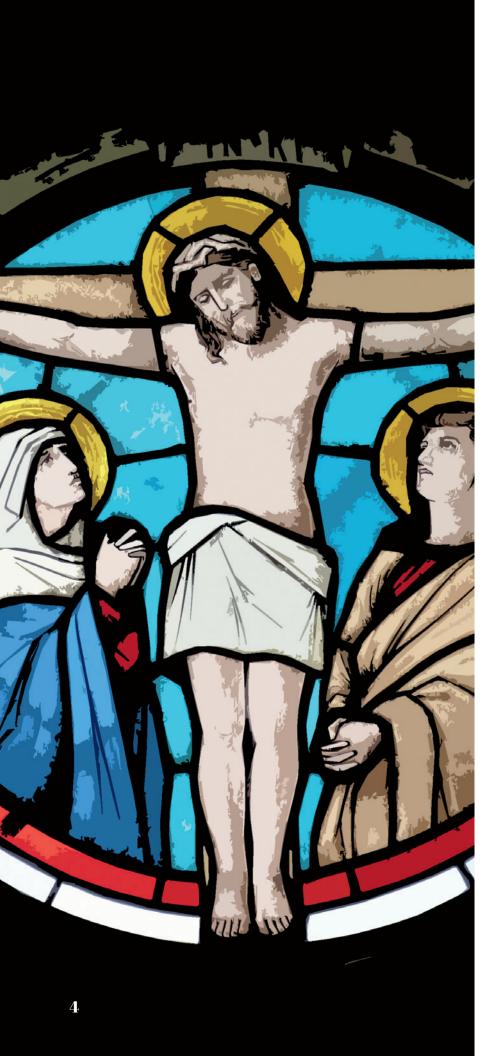
And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

Who, for us and for our

salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.

And I believe in one holy universal and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.



ONLY A TRUE GOD CAN TRULY SAVE

By REV. TRAVIS J. JOHNSON

lated at the First Ecumenical Council at Nicaea in AD 325. The Roman Emperor Constantine convened the council to combat Arianism and to assert the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father. Prior to the council at Nicaea, the church was facing a crisis on two different fronts. First, the church was desperately trying to define the nature of Christ and the character of his work. While for the first time in the church's existence, it was facing an emperor who was friendly to the church. Author Mark Noll called it a "potent combination." To grasp a greater understanding of the Nicene Creed, we must understand more clearly the heresy it was

The Nicene Creed was formu-

The heresy was known as Arianism and was promoted by Arius (c. AD 256-336), who lived

trying to combat.

and taught in Alexandria, Egypt, during the early fourth century. He received his education from the theological school in Antioch under its teacher Lucian. It was from Lucian that Arius received his heretical views. In his book, *The Creed*, Luke Timothy Johnson summarizes this doctrine when he says,

In defense of God's absolute uniqueness and transcendence, Arius argued that God's essence (ousia) could not be shared, for such sharing in nature would imply a division in God. The Word of God cannot be therefore fully God, but must be a creature that the Father formed, and as a creature, then the Word had a beginning and was subject to change (p. 33).

It essentially denied the eternality of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Arius taught that Christ was of a different essence or substance from the Father. Arius went so far as to say, "God had an existence prior to that of his Son." Arius believed that the Son had a beginning; there was a time when he was not. Naturally, such thinking would inevitably reject the deity of Christ as well as the Trinity and as a result affect salvation.

The quarrel between Arianism and Trinitarian beliefs was the first major doctrinal confrontation in the Church after the legalization of Christianity by the Roman Emperor Constantine. The controversy over Arianism rose in the late third century and extended over the greater part of the fourth century. Church historian Mark Noll, in his book, Turning Points, states, "From the time Arius began to air his views in 318 to the time the council met at Nicaea seven years later, a tangled series of meetings, letters, arguments, and debates took place." (p. 49). The debate became so intense that there was even rioting in the streets. The onslaught of this heresy was so relentless that for a time it seemed that it would engulf the whole church had it not been for the great heroes of orthodox faith, Alexander and Athanasius.

We know relatively little about Alexander's early years. As a priest, he witnessed the bloody persecution of Christians by Galerius, Maximinus, and others. Because of Alexander's acknowledgment of the unity of the Trinity in one of his sermons, conflict between Arius and Alexander arose. Arius responded immediately by incorrectly labeling Alexander's statement Sabellianism, a heresy already condemned that taught that there were no distinctions between the persons of the Godhead, rather God manifests himself at different times and for different purposes in three different "modes" or "aspects." As the controversy intensified, Arius' followers increased rapidly. His heretical teachings gained the support of several deacons and at least one presbyter. As Arius continued to draw even more attention and support, Alexander convened two separate assemblies

of his priests and deacons to discuss the issue. Both assemblies reached no definitive conclusions, nor did they contribute to limiting the spread of the heresy.

Alexander then convened a synod in 320 of the church of Alexandria to address this issue. At the synod, thirty-six presbyters and forty-four deacons, including Athanasius of Alexandria, condemned Arianism and signed a statement to that effect. Arius remained successful in spreading his doctrine elsewhere, however, particularly in Libya, where Arius convinced other bishops to join him. Because of Arius' success in dividing the church's leaders, a schism was likely to occur.

In response to this, Alexander convened a general council of the entire church in 321. There were over one hundred participants in the council. At this council, Arius continued to argue his earlier position that the Son could not be co-eternal with the Father, and even said that the Son was not similar to the Father in substance. When Arius' last statement was heard, the assembled council, which had placed him under anathema until he recanted, was aghast. As a result, Constantine summoned the Council of Nicaea.

The other hero of Nicaea was Athanasius (c.296-373). He was born in Egypt and received his theological training in Alexandria. In 319, Alexander of Alexandria ordained him as a deacon. He served as his secretary during the First Council of Nicaea in 325. When Alexander died in 328, Athanasius was the obvious choice to succeed him despite the opposition of the followers of Arius. Because of his theological

and political struggles with the Emperor and with the Arian churchmen, he was banished several times from Alexandria during his lifetime. Author Brian Moynahan in his book *The Faith*, briefly, yet so profoundly, states that, "Exile was a paltry price to pay in the struggle for eternal truth" (p. 122). Athanasius was one of the greatest defenders of Christian doctrine that the Church has ever known and in his lifetime he earned the title of "Father of Orthodoxy." He devoted his entire life to defending the faith that was codified at Nicaea.

Because of the intense debate that threatened to divide the church, Constantine summoned all 1,800 bishops of the Christian church (about 1,000 in the East and 800 in the West) to Nicaea in Bithynia (present-day Iznik in Turkey). Constantine paid all of their expenses and protected them during their stay. Many bishops in the West were prevented from attending because of poor travel conditions and language barriers. Only a few representatives from the West attended the council. While historians have differed on the number of bishops who attended, the most consistent number is 318. Roger Olson in his book The Story of Christian

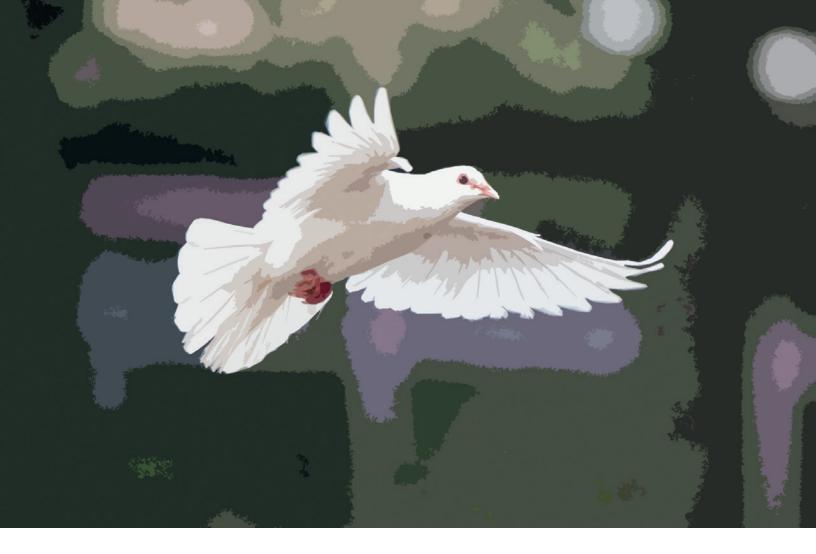


Theology states:

Of the 318 bishops present at the opening of the council, only 28 were clearly Arians from the beginning. Arius himself was not allowed to attend the council as he was not a bishop. He was represented by Eusebius of Nicodedia and Theognis of Nicaea. Alexander of Alexandria led the prosecution against Arius and Arianism and was aided by his young assistant Athanasius, who would succeed him as bishop a few years later (p. 153).

Wearing his finest purple and gold attire, the emperor sat on a throne raised above the meeting hall. The council lasted two months and covered many issues facing the church at that time, including the timing of Easter, what to do with bishops who moved from one see to another, and even the ordination of eunuchs. However, these issues were only tertiary. This council was primarily concerned with resolving the Arian controversy.

As soon as the debate began, someone called for a reading of the Arian position so that everyone present would be aware of what was being discussed. Bishop Eusebius stood before the body and read a clear denial of Jesus Christ's deity. He stated that he is a creature and not equal to the Father. Before he finished reading, one bishop grabbed the manuscript from his hand, threw it on the floor and stomped on it. Roger Olson makes this interesting observation,



Apparently, in spite of circulating letters written by Arius and Alexander before the council, most of the bishops were naïve about how clear-cut the issue really was. They had come to the council hoping to hear something moderate—a mediating position between these two opposite views. When one of their own expressed the Arian side in such stark terminology, making clear that they considered the Son of God a mere creature, they were convinced that this was heresy. After the hubbub died down and the emperor restored order, the council turned its attention to finding a solution (p. 154).

In the following days, the council asserted that the Father and the Son are of the same substance and are co-eternal, asserting that this was

the traditional Christian belief handed down from the Apostles from the very beginning. This belief was eventually expressed in the Nicene Creed. During the debate, the Arians and their followers argued vehemently for use of biblical words only. Alexander and Athanasius recognized the strategy behind this. As with the Jehovah's Witnesses of today, the Arians were very adept at twisting the Scriptures in order to interpret the terminology of the Bible in their favor. To resolve the issue, it was necessary to use extra-biblical terminology (homoousios) that clarified and articulated the unity of the Father and Son as

equal within the Godhead. There was only one letter that separated heresy from orthodoxy. The term homoiousios means "similar essence" and homoousios means "same essence." According to those who adopted homoiousios, Jesus was not the same as God, but simply had a "similar essence." According to those who argued for homoousios, Jesus and God had the same essence.

Trevin Wax in his book
The Thrill of Orthodoxy says,

Athanasius...knew that one extra vowel changed entirely what it means to confess that Jesus Christ is God the Son who came down for us and for our salvation. One vowel would place Jesus on the side of the created rather than the Creator. A single letter. Of course, not every letter in theology is as important as that one...but the debate over that vowel shows us why certain details matter, a lot (p. 158).

For the church, this was a watershed moment. It had a profound theological and historical impact. As a matter of doctrine, it was essential because it concentrated not only on the person of Jesus, but also on the work he performed as Savior. The whole Christian faith was at stake. If Christ

was not God, then his death for sin was futile, for only God can forgive sins. Additionally, the salvation of the Christian was at stake. It is impossible to separate Christ's work from his person. Man's condition is so dire that he cannot save himself, only God can save him. Thus, it is impossible for Christ to be our Savior if he is not God. Only a true God can truly save.

The Council of Nicaea, however, was not sufficient to prevent Arianism from spreading. The debate lasted for another fifty years and finally ended at the Council of Constantinople in 381. In addition to putting the finishing touches on the Nicene Creed, it established a formal doctrine of the Trinity developed by Athanasius and the Cappadocian fathers (Gregory of Nyssa, Saint Basil, Gregory Nazianzus, and John Chrysostom).

The Nicene Creed has been a cornerstone of Christian theology and liturgy for over 1,600 years. For the church, the Creed serves as a statement of faith, a rule of faith, a definition of faith, and a symbol of faith. The Creed serves as an interpretative lens for Scripture and a guide to practice and worship. Theologically, historically, and politically, it has had a profound impact. It succinctly, yet powerfully restates the realities of the nature of Christ and the Trinity. Its core beliefs have stood the test of time for nearly two centuries. It is that living relationship with the Triune God, expressed in the Creed, that is the fundamental distinction between Christianity and other faith traditions.

WORLD MISSIONS

NEWS UPDATE



R.G. Hutchison
Missions Director

Dear Bible Methodist Family, Just recently, as we celebrated the resurrection of our Lord, my Facebook news feed included many pictures from our brothers and sisters around the world as they joined in proclaiming the timeless anthem that "Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!" Although the expressions of that message were clothed in a variety of cultures and climates, the significance remains the same. There is power in the name of Jesus! As you read some highlights from Bible Methodist Missions from the past few months, I hope you will see beyond just projects and events, and rejoice with me

R.G. Hutchison,

around the world.

Director, Bible Methodist Missions

in the power of the Gospel and

beauty of the Body of Christ

PHILIPPINES [1]

R.G. and Sarah Hutchison

spent the month of February in the Philippines, visiting with national leaders and pastors, and also disposing of personal belongings. They were especially thankful to be joined by Judy Eads and Karen Blankenship, who assisted Sarah with packing up items to be shipped back to the U.S. It was a very meaningful time as the Hutchisons were able to wrap up their transition from the field back to home base in the U.S.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA [2]

While in the Philippines, R.G.

Hutchison traveled from Manila to Papua New Guinea where he met up with Missionary Shirley Fogleman and Rev. Mike Covington (Southwest Conference) in the Mt. Hagen. There, they ministered in a pastor's conference for the Bible Fellowship Church of PNG. This is the group of churches where Shirley has been serving. They also joined with the faculty and students of their Bible School in Mt. Hagen for a chapel service. This was R.G.'s first time to have an opportunity to meet with the leadership of the PNG Bible Fellowship Church. They are continuing to discuss ways in which Bible Methodist Missions can partner with their national leadership, particularly in focused areas of teaching and training that they have identified as areas where missionarytrainers would be helpful in the ongoing development of their pastors and leaders.

AFRICA 85 [3-4]

Bible Methodist Missions and

Hope International Missions are currently conducting a joint fundraiser with a goal of raising a total of \$25,000 for the annual operating budget for the Africa 85 Initiative. This budget will make it possible for Missionaries Maricka Herrer (BMM) and Glenn and Stephanie Gault (HIM) to travel to various parts of Africa for upcoming training events in countries such as Ghana, Zambia,

Cameroon, and others as God continues to open doors. It will also help them with other operational costs for this partnership. You can give to the Africa 85 project through your local or conference Bible Methodist missions department. There is also a direct online link specifically for the Africa 85 initiative at africa85.org which has been set up by HIM for this purpose.

MEXICO [5]

Following their strategic

planning retreat last December, the national board in Mexico is continuing to work through the process of implementing the new Bible Methodist Discipline. In recent months, Missionaries Brennan Muir and David Martinez have created an official Facebook page (in Spanish) for the Mexico Bible Methodist Church. They have also helped the national leadership to establish effective lines of communication with each other. so that there is a more efficient flow of information within the conference. David Martinez has also been producing a series of videos in which he is systematically teaching through the Bible Methodist statement of faith. These lessons are being posted on the Facebook page, and pastors are accessing and using them in their local congregations. Brennan and Ivon Muir are also ministering to the youth in the San Gabriel Bible Methodist Church and Ivon is

leading a weekly women's Bible study. You can follow conference updates and videos on the Mexico Bible Methodist Facebook page at: facebook.com/iglesiabiblicametodista.

EZRA BIBLICAL SEMINARY [6]

Ezra Biblical Seminary is continuing to train disciples

locally, in other parts of Mexico, and even in some other countries. From their classroom space in San Gabriel, they are continuing to teach both in-person and online students by simulcasting the class lectures for their online audience. Brennan and David are able to receive live questions and comments from their online students, and likewise, the online students are able to hear the questions and comments

from the students attending in-person. Recently, they have enrolled students from the Mexican states of Oaxaca, Guanajuato, Veracruz, as well as Mexico City, and have also taught students from Bolivia, Honduras, and the U.S. (Michigan and California).













GREAT LAKES

REGIONAL CONFERENCE NEWS



David WardConference President

BIBLICAL EDUCATION [1-5]

Biblical education is an invaluable foundation. The Great Lakes Conference is blessed with a multitude of families who strive to provide exactly that for their children and grandchildren.

The Evart Church has been blessed to have Daystar Christian Academy to serve the educational needs of their church and community. The school has a committed staff who sacrificially serve with distinction and honor. Pictured are students from this year's graduating class and some who are participating in competitions designed to develop ministry skills.

Our Dawn Valley Church in Ontario is capably led by Joe and Clarissa Krohn. Out of their thriving children's and youth ministry, they have developed VBS and Junior Church curriculum which can be reviewed and ordered from

teachhisway.wordpress.com.

BUILDING IMPROVEMENTS [6-8]

Pilgrim Bible Church, in Cedar Springs, MI is praising God for their newly completed addition with new handicap restrooms and coat room facilities on the main level. With God's blessing and the generosity of their people, they completed this project without incurring any debt.

Improvements are happening at our Great Lakes Family Camp at Rock Lake. A generous donation has enabled sound system upgrades. Another donor graciously provided a significant amount of materials to help with our Cobblestone Mission's House project.

















HEARTLAND

REGIONAL CONFERENCE NEWS



Chris Cravens
Conference President

HEARTLAND REPRESENTED AT SEA BREEZE CAMP [1-3]

President Cravens represented our conference at the 2023 Sea Breeze Camp. He hosted an

Sea Breeze Camp. He hosted an annual reception for Heartland members following an evening service. He treated the college ministerial students to breakfast. During the Ministry Fair, President Cravens joined the other Conference Presidents in presenting ministry opportunities connection-wide.

BUS AND OUTREACH CONVENTION [4-5]

Union Bible College hosted this year's annual convention. President Cravens and Secretary Hooker were session presenters. All Heartland ministers and their wives attending the convention were invited to lunch hosted by President Cravens. There were several who could not attend the lunch. A special feature of the convention

was dedicating a newly donated bus to our church in Danville, OH.

INTERCHURCH HOLINESS CONVENTION [6-8]

A number of Heartland

families attended the annual IHC in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. A number of our Heartland elders spoke, including our Conference Vice-President, Rev. Deron Fourman. He concluded the convention with a passionate challenge. A number of people stopped by the Bible Methodist booth to fellowship.

HEARTLAND YOUTH RALLY [9-10]

Spring youth rally resulted in

a packed-out event! Dr. Rodney Loper spoke, and GBSC provided the music. Other Bible colleges had representation present as well. The service was followed by an evening of games, food, and fellowship. It was a great night hosted by the Heartland Youth Committee!

BEULAH GROVE CAMP [11-12]

Progress is being made on the

"J.D. Young Memorial Building" on our campgrounds. A large section of the woods and the old building have been demolished. Now that the large, raised, compacted stone pad has been completed, the building process can begin. We are able to accomplish this through your generosity!

























SOUTHERN

REGIONAL CONFERENCE NEWS



John Parker Conference President

CONNECTION VISIT TO HOBE SOUND BIBLE COLLEGE [1-2]

Bible Methodist Conference

Presidents took students in the Ministerial Department of Hobe Sound Bible College to breakfast to talk with them about pastoring our churches during camp. We also participated in the Ministry Forum on Thursday evening.

SPANISH CHURCH PLANT IN ALABAMA

[3]

Our Partnership with F.E.A.

Spanish Ministries to plant a Spanish Church in Hazel Green, AL was announced to the Spanish Camp Meeting crowd at Hobe Sound on Feb 10. This is exciting!

EDITH SMITH [4]

Edith Smith, widow of the late

Rev. J.D. Smith, went to heaven March 22, 2023 after many years of declining health.

Edith was born on August 9, 1924 in Liberty, South Carolina. She enjoyed sewing and cooking for her family.

She was a wonderful pastor's wife and loved being called Aunt Edith by the church kids. She was a charter member of the Easley Bible Methodist Church.

"Rev. J. D. and Edith Smith were long-standing members of our Conference and served as pastors, evangelists and dear personal friends to so many of us across many years. Anyone who knew Sis. Edith remembers her cheerful disposition, ready smile and loving personality! She was a dear saint!"

- **John D. Parker**Former pastor to the Smiths

GWENDOLYN LECATES [5]

Gwendolyn L. Lecates passed

into eternal rest from her home in Archdale, NC, on March 8, 2023, with her family at her side. She was the wife of Conference Elder, Rev. Dr. Edward Lecates for 63 years. Together they served in Pastoral Ministry for 52 consecutive years!

She was a vital asset to her husband as he served in

a variety of leadership roles throughout their ministry. Sister Lecates also served well in many different roles as a pastor's wife and ministry teammate across the years. She is survived by her husband; a son, Samuel (Rachel) Lecates of Trinity; a daughter, Dawn (Lester) Packer of Thomasville; six grandchildren, Andrea, Jonathan and Nathan Packer, Madalyn, William and Jacob Lecates; a brother, Houston (Sandra) Hill; and two special cousins, Marietta Hall and Barbara Savage of Trinity, NC.

DEEPER LIFE CONFERENCE [6]

Dr. Michael Avery held a Deeper Life Conference on February 16-18.

JOIN US THIS SUMMER!

Spring and summer are camp

season here in the Conference. We had a great Indoor-Camp Meeting in March and are very excited about Youth Camp and Family Camp coming up soon!

We welcome you to join us!













SOUTHWEST

REGIONAL CONFERENCE NEWS



G. Clair Sams
Conference President

SPANISH CONGREGATION, DALLAS, TEXAS [1]

Pastor Pedro Anaya leads a

Spanish language congregation that is blessed by the Lord. The growing congregation is facing the challenge of accommodating the increasing number of attendees. Dallas, TX is a great place with an anointed pastor and a vibrant congregation.

SOUTHWEST MINISTERIAL [2-3]

On February 23-25, the pastors

and elders of the Southwest Regional Conference gathered at the Oklahoma City, OK church, pastored by Darrell Stetler II.

It was a joy to welcome
New York Pilgrim Conference
President John Peabody as the
featured speaker. Pastor Eric
Going led the prayer and devotional time on Friday morning.
During Friday afternoon, we
gathered for information about
the conference and then participated in a panel discussion. The
evening service was a special
time of worship.

Pastor Caleb Crouch led the prayer and devotional time on Saturday morning. We were challenged by Rev. Peabody in the following service.

We had a wonderful time

together at the Ministerial. The singing was excellent, the ministry was informative and inspiring, and the fellowship was rich. We are grateful to Pastor and Mrs. Darrell Stetler II and their church for graciously hosting us.

MEN'S RETREAT [4-5]

Approximately 39 men gathered

at Soaring Eagles on March 17th for the first annual Southwest Men's Retreat. Pastor Snodgrass and the men of the Sherman, Texas church hosted the event. Dr. David Boardman was the featured speaker. As part of the event, the men participated in axe throwing, fishing, skeet shooting, and grilling their own steak.

SERVANT'S HEART CHAPEL, CLOVIS, NEW MEXICO

[6]

Robert Wigmore reads

Scripture for the Service of the Shadows. The service was held during Holy Week. The focus is on lighting lights in the darkness. It represents the light the Lord Jesus brought, even during the darkness of his suffering.

Pastor Underwood also reports a new convert and some new people attending services.

TREASURE VALLEY, CALDWELL, IDAHO

[7-9]

"We had a special service with

a theme of Christ's finished work. The children assisted us by reenacting moments from the life of Jesus and his death. (The background of the display was painted by Kammy Bork). At the end of the service, we celebrated the tearing of the temple veil and our direct access to God the Father. Our service was well attended and after our fellowship meal, many of us gathered for an afternoon egg hunt on the creek. It was a good Sunday and we are grateful that 'It is Finished!' and Jesus Lives!"

– Pastor Rick Bork

INTERCHURCH HOLINESS CONVENTION

The InterChurch Holiness

Convention at Gatlinburg, TN was a great event. It was a joy to hear the Bible Methodist Missions Director speak during a Bible Study and to have Pastor Deron Fourman bring the closing challenge.

A booth was organized by each Conference and the Missions Department to represent the Connection.



















Family Camp Schedule

SUMMER 2023

HEARTLAND CONFERENCE

DATE

June 20-25

EVANGELISTS

Dr. Rodney Loper & Dr. Stephen Smith

SINGERS

Jonathan & Jaleena Glick Family

SOUTHERN CONFERENCE

DATE

July 3-9

EVANGELISTS

Dr. Adam Buckler & Rev. Paul Stetler

SINGERS

Matt and Joy Barnett

GREAT LAKES CONFERENCE

DATE

July 14-23

EVANGELISTS

Rev. Mark Mowery & Rev. John Manley

SINGERS

Jonathan & Jaleena Glick Family

SOUTHWEST CONFERENCE

DATE

July 25-30

EVANGELISTS

Dr. Paul Kaufman Rev. Duane Quesenberry

SINGERS

Jonathan & Jaleena Glick Family