

An aerial photograph of a coastline. The top half of the image shows deep turquoise water with fine ripples. A diagonal line separates the water from a light-colored sandy beach that occupies the bottom half of the frame. The text is overlaid on the top portion of the image.

THE BIBLE METHODIST

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BIBLE METHODIST CONNECTION OF CHURCHES VOLUME 57 | ISSUE 1

YOU SHALL BE HOLY,
FOR I THE LORD YOUR GOD
AM HOLY.

—LEVITICUS 19:2



FROM THE EDITOR

TRAVIS J. JOHNSON

From November 12–14, nearly 100 Bible Methodist pastors, elders, preachers, and distinguished guests gathered at the Bible Methodist Church in Franklin, OH, for the quadrennial General Ministerial. We were blessed by messages from various Bible Methodist leaders, as well as our special guest, Dr. John Oswalt. Dr. Oswalt spoke on “Holiness: The Key to Christian Ministry” (Phil. 3:7–11) and “The Cost of Love” (1 John 3:11–18). Mike Pennellatore, member of the Franklin Bible Methodist Church and treasurer of the Heartland Conference,

provided the meals, and he and his family served the crowds exceptionally well. To begin the day, many met in prayer groups to share needs and pray together. Our speakers challenged us with the proclamation of God’s Word, and we concluded the ministerial not around the lunch table, but around the Lord’s Table, celebrating the Eucharist together.

Pastors often carry a unique weight in their ministry. They are called to lead, preach, teach, and counsel, all while bearing the spiritual burdens of their congregation. In this context, fellowship among pastors

is essential. Ministry can be isolating, but General Ministerial offers a rare opportunity for connection and encouragement. The fellowship reminds us that we are not just individuals but part of a larger body of believers, united in our calling to serve Christ and His Church. Through mutual support, encouragement, and a shared mission, we can strengthen one another and continue the work of the gospel with renewed energy and commitment. Even the Lone Ranger had Tonto! We need one another! ■

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countrypinesprinting.com

The Bible Methodist is published four times a year and is the official publication of the Bible Methodist Connection of Churches. Read online at biblemethodist.org/magazine

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AN INTERVIEW WITH

Dr. John Oswalt

Rev. Travis Johnson, Editor: Dr. Oswalt, thank you for agreeing to this interview and sharing with the Bible Methodist family. Share a bit about your background with us—where you grew up, how long you’ve been married, and any details about your children or grandchildren.

Dr. John Oswalt: I grew up on a farm near Mansfield, OH, purchased by my great-great-grandfather in 1826. I met Karen while working at Maranatha Bible Conference in Muskegon, MI. We married in 1962 during seminary. We have three children in Christian service and five grandchildren.

T.J. Tell our readers about how you came to faith in Christ.

J.O. I first asked Jesus into my heart at age five during a children’s hour at Camp Sychar in Mt. Vernon, OH. Miss Eva Clausen taught on the rich man and Lazarus, and I didn’t want to share the rich man’s fate. However, I lacked assurance of my salvation all through my childhood years and asked him to come in and prayed rather frequently. Real assurance came after fully surrendering my life during sophomore year in college.

T.J. Tell our readers about your call into ministry.

J.O. At ten, I heard a dynamic young preacher and thought I might like to preach. At thirteen, while walking our country road, I felt a definite call. I shared this with my mother, and she teared up. Curious, I asked why. She explained that after having my two sisters, she prayed for a son and promised to dedicate him to God’s service. Nine years later, I was born. I was surprised and rather put out—what I thought was my decision had been part of God’s plan before I was even born!

T.J. You’ve studied the Old Testament extensively. In an era where Scripture’s authority is questioned and the Old Testament overlooked, what does it teach about Scripture and the Spirit shaping God’s people?

J.O. To only know the New Testament is like trying to build a two-story house by beginning with the second story. The boards keep falling to the ground before you can get nails in them. The New Testament writers are assuming that their readers have a correct knowledge of God’s nature and of humanity and of the divine-human problem of sin and the key to the solution

to the problem from the Old Testament, so they don't spend much time rehearsing those matters. Instead they move to talk about the solution and its implications. The shallow, need-based, heaven-oriented "salvation" that is taught in far too many churches today is the result of not knowing the Old Testament.

T.J. Wesleyan theology often talks about living a holy life. How does the Old Testament give us examples of holiness that we should follow?

J.O. When Hebrews 11 depicts the heroes of the faith it is speaking entirely of Old Testament figures. To have faith in God is to entrust him with your whole life. Ultimately, that is what holiness is about—to be so sold out to him that your highest joy is to have his character reduplicated in your life. The Old Testament saints show us that this is neither simple nor easy. But we see it happening, sometimes in spite of flawed people. If we would study these lives more thoroughly, some of our holiness teaching would be more realistic and more fruitful.

T.J. Many regard your book *Called to Be Holy* as one of the finest recent works on the doctrine of holiness. Was there a moment in your academic or personal life that significantly deepened your understanding of this doctrine?

J.O. My understanding of Christian holiness as seen in *Called to Be Holy*, was the culmination of a process that had its starting point when surrendered my life to Jesus' lordship as a sophomore in college. I understood almost nothing of the implications of that decision (much like getting married!). I only knew I was dead serious about the decision, and that I intended to follow it out, come what may. When I came to Asbury Theological Seminary as a student, I gained the language and Biblical categories to explain my experiences. Then, in my third year of teaching, I was invited to preach at the annual Holiness services, here I had to give systematic

structure to my somewhat scattered thinking up to that point. I now had a clear framework in which to place emerging understandings and ideas. Finally, in 1995 I was invited to give five lectures in the Chamberlain Holiness Lecture-ship at Wesley Biblical Seminary. This was the moment when I was able to give mature expression to what I had come to experience and believe in the previous 30 years. *Called to Be Holy* was the fruit of those lectures.

T.J. Entire sanctification is the key truth of Wesleyan theology. Yet there is diversity within our tradition regarding its exact meaning. What do you see as the Wesleyan consensus on entire sanctification, particularly in terms of the change it brings in a person? In other words, how entire is entire sanctification?

J.O. You are certainly correct that there is much diversity in both conceptions and expressions of Entire Sanctification. I guess you are asking for a "Mere Entire Sanctification" (ala C. S. Lewis). That is a tall order! But here is what I *think* many of us agree upon.

1. There is a disposition of self-will that remains in the believer after conversion. It remains because we are unaware of its existence and are thus unable to exercise the faith that is necessary to convert it.
2. An attempt to live a fully Christian life while that disposition remains will result in defeat and frustration.
3. There must come a crisis moment when faith is exercised for the Holy Spirit to make Jesus absolute Lord of one's life. This will result in the replacement of the selfish disposition with a disposition to please Jesus in everything.
4. John Wesley defines this moment as the moment of "entire sanctification." He says that he chose this language to distinguish what takes place here both from the process leading up to this moment and the process

that extends from it. That is, in this moment a person is entirely given over to God as his possession, to do with as he chooses.

5. With a new disposition of obedience in place and with the spirit of selfishness replaced with the Holy Spirit, the believer will now have both the desire and the ability to live above any willful transgression of the known law of God. He or she is delivered from sinning.
6. But in most cases, there remain in entirely sanctified persons unconscious ingrained patterns of behavior and thought which are contrary to God's pattern of Christian living (referred to as ignorant or unintentional sins in the OT). This is where growth in holiness comes in, a growth that is only truly possible for the entirely sanctified. The Holy Spirit is now free to point out such patterns and the entirely sanctified will gladly permit the

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Holy Spirit to correct them, whether immediately, or more gradually.

T.J. In what ways do you think those in the Bible Methodist tradition can more fully embrace and live out the holiness to which God calls His people?

J.O. We need to take the focus off ourselves and our performance. Sanctification is a love-affair with Jesus. It is not an “it”—a thing to be acquired—but a person to be loved, worshipped and obeyed. We also need to stop our introspection: “I wonder if I really am sanctified? Would a sanctified person do that?” etc. No, we need to ask, “What do you want, Jesus?” And when he convicts us, we need to respond immediately, and not say, “Well, that couldn't have been sinful because I am sanctified.”

T.J. One last question, Dr. Oswalt. You've had a notable impact within both evangelical and Wesleyan circles. In your view, what is Bible Methodism's unique contribution to the broader Christian tradition?

J.O. I think it is in the name: *Bible Methodist*. The genius of Methodism across the years has been the good news that we can have a vital experience of the power of God to transform lives. But the problem has been that John Wesley's baby had a genetic flaw. That was its emphasis on experience. Although it was certainly never Wesley's intent that this should be so, the fact is that among Wesley's followers experience typically becomes the prime authority by which to judge the authenticity of ideas and behavior. That is what split the United Methodist Church, and will, in one more lifetime, be the death of that denomination. What we have got to say, as your denomination has the possibility of saying, is this: “as necessary as vital Christian experience is, it is **THE BIBLE** that is the ultimate authority by which the authenticity of anything is judged.” The danger there is that we worship the Bible and not the Bible's author, but that can be guarded against. ■



WORLD MISSIONS NEWS UPDATE

R.G. HUTCHISON, MISSIONS DIRECTOR

AFRICA 85 INITIATIVE [1]

BMM missionary Maricka Herrer recently joined the Gaults (HIM) along with Dr. Randall McElwain and Dr. Steve Oliver (Global Trainers for SGC) in conducting trainer training in the country of Uganda. God is continuing to open new doors for launching training programs across Africa, and the Africa 85 team is now partnering with training programs in Lesotho, Eswatini, Zambia, Mozambique, Cameroon, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Ghana, Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya, DRC, Ivory Coast, and Benin.

THE PHILIPPINES [2-8]

Pastor Brian Wardlaw (Franklin Bible Methodist Church) and Austin Barker (lay leader at Easley Bible Methodist Church) accompanied Dr. Hutchison to the Philippines, January 23 to February 3. They began the trip in the southern region of Mindanao near Ozamis City. Joy Stacy, a Filipina who attends Franklin BMC, is from this place. Joy and her husband Mitch introduced the team to her family and friends, and together, the team distributed Bibles, Bible story books, and school supplies to 527 children in three public schools in the area where Joy grew up as a little girl. This project was sponsored by the Franklin Bible Methodist church.

Next, they traveled to Northern Luzon where they ministered to our Bible Methodist pastors in two Shepherd Seminars—the first in Cabarroguis, Quirino, and the second in Alibago, Ilagan City, Isabela. The theme of this year's seminar was "Presenting and Maintaining the Message of the Gospel." Topics focused on faithfulness to the message of the gospel,

proclaiming the gospel in the home, proclaiming the gospel through children's ministry, the power of the gospel to change lives, the power of the gospel to sustain pastors through the challenges of ministry, and proclaiming the gospel through baptism and communion.

It was also a joy to see how God is anointing Pastor David Yucaddi, Jr. as he assumes his new role as the Overseer of the Bible Methodist Gospel Light conference.

NEPAL

The T. Family has been busy settling into their new assignment in Nepal. They have obtained visas, found long-term apartment housing, and Paul has begun language studies at a school in the area. They are already developing friendships with various Christians in the area. Please pray that God will also guide them as they work to build relationships that will lead to gospel-sharing opportunities.

MEXICO

While Brennan Muir and David Martinez continue to lead the ministry of Ezra Biblical Seminary, which is training leaders in Mexico and several other Latin American countries, we are also excited to be moving toward the Muirs return to Mexico in 2026 where they will be joined by the Martinez family to take the next steps in developing the seminary and planting churches. This summer, the Muirs will be traveling through each of our regional conferences to present their vision and to raise support for their next term on the field.





GREAT LAKES CONFERENCE NEWS

DAVID WARD, PRESIDENT

The Great Lakes family welcomes opportunities to get together throughout the year. In January, at the start of each new year, we schedule our Northern Lights Youth Retreat and our Pastor's Holiday Dinner.

NORTHERN LIGHTS YOUTH RETREAT

We always hope we have enough snow for outdoor activities and not so much as to make travel difficult. This year, weather slowed the start but the fresh snow provided a welcoming winter venue.

We had a good attendance for this year's event, (1) which was led by Doug Derscheid and the Youth Committee.

Rev. Mark Potter was the featured speaker. (2)

Whether indoors or outdoors, our youth had a blast reconnecting with youth from several states and even a couple foreign countries. (3)

We wish to thank Pine View Homes and the Evert Bible Methodist Church for hosting this annual event. (4) In addition, we appreciate each Bible College who sent a team to be a part.

Doug Derscheid, Eli Albring, and their team kept the participants occupied with a good variety of creative activities. (5)

Mary Derscheid and her team made sure they were well fed. Altogether, the event was a rewarding time together of fellowship and spiritual growth.

PASTOR'S HOLIDAY DINNER

Each year we honor our Pastors and the Conference Executive Committee with a Holiday Dinner. We choose to hold this event in January after the busy Christmas and New Year's season is behind us.

We had a good group in attendance for this year's event. (6)

The Pilgrim Bible Church folks, in Cedar Springs, enthusiastically serve as hosts and their efforts are greatly appreciated. (7)

The food was excellent, the venue beautifully decorated, and the fellowship sweet. (8-9)



1





HEARTLAND CONFERENCE NEWS

CHRIS CRAVENS, PRESIDENT

HEARTLAND UPDATE

- 1 Here is an inside look at our storefront church called “The Bible Methodist Chapel” in Connersville, IN. We have several ministers who fill this pulpit regularly.
- 2 It’s always good to visit the Bible Methodist Church of Peoria, IL! Here is Bro. Dave Lewis teaching Sunday School prior to the morning service. There are some wonderful people in Peoria!
- 3-4 Our church in New Lexington, OH is in a beautiful location. Pastor Teeter has served this congregation and community for many years.

- 5 Christmas time is a busy time in the life of a Church. Here is the Christmas ensemble singing at the church in Findlay, OH!
- 6 Our church in Danville, OH, was blessed by a group of their children’s playing and singing a Christmas song!
- 7 The Salem, OH church continues to experience the blessings of the Lord. The congregation continues to grow, the building expansion projects are moving forward. Here is a picture of the “red wagon” placed out each Christmas where prayer requests are collected. Ask Pastor Crosley about the red wagon!



HEARTLAND UPDATE (CONT.)

8-9 November is “Work Days” at Beulah Grove. Praise the Lord for gifted help and continued upgrades! Our caretakers home received a new HVAC unit at cost only! New pews donated by the Beach City church! Clean up and winterization took place. More news to come!

10 New KMK Award! Heartland has presented the inaugural “Little Lunch Award” to Gracelyn Wardlaw in recognition of her outstanding involvement in missions. \$700 for backpacks in the Philippines!

11-12 Beach City, OH renovated its foyer and sanctuary with new flooring, trim and pews! They also built a nice storage facility! God is blessing Beach City!

13-14 Port Clinton Bible Methodist Church baptizes new believers and buys a new church van! God continues to open doors for PCBMC!

15-16 Many of our churches support Operation Christmas Child through Samaritans Purse at Christmas. WBMC’s ensemble sings at Christmas.



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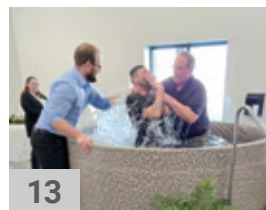
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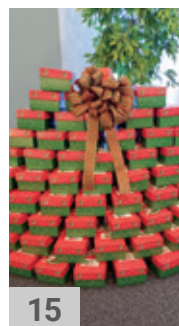
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SOUTHERN CONFERENCE NEWS

DOUG EADS, PRESIDENT

CONFERENCE NEWS

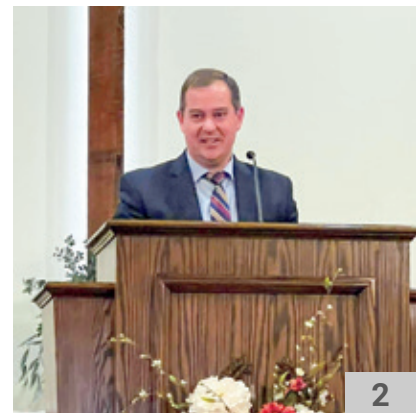
This quarter, many of us attended the General Connectional Ministerial and our own Conference Ministerial events, which provided encouragement and strength to countless ministers. It's inspiring to see so many ministers serving their local congregations with excellence. Ministerials are a valuable investment for the broader Bible Methodist community. It's always a blessing to witness how God is using men and women from the Southern Conference to impact others through these events.

CAPTIONS

- 1 Dr. Christina Black speaking to the minister wives in Franklin, OH at the General Connectional Ministerial.
- 2 Dr. R.G. Hutchison at the General Connectional Ministerial challenged us on how the gospel works all over the world.
- 3 Rev. Doug Eads at the General Connectional Ministerial.
- 4 Rev. Cale Manley is always eager to assist in leading worship. In

- the photo, he's seen with Jonathan Glick, who, alongside his wife, provided music at the General Connectional Ministerial.
- 5 The wives of Ministers enjoyed the General Connectional Ministerial as well: Michelle Earls, Judy Eads, Karen Blankenship, and Sarah Hutchison.
- 6 Rev. Richard Miles masterfully taught about having joy in the parsonage at the General Connectional Ministerial.
- 7 Rev. Rob Cravens speaking at the Conference Ministerial about the art of listening.
- 8 Prayer group at Conference Ministerial: Pam Shirah, Karen Blankenship, Ronda Bickell, Linda Shields, Kirsten Manley.
- 9 Rev. Tim Keep, along with Rev. Walter Hedstrom. Tim did a fantastic job challenging the ministers at our Conference Ministerial. It is always good to have Bro. Hedstrom at the campground!
- 10 A good crowd gathered for Conference Ministerial.
- 11 Everyone's favorite song leader, Rev. Steve Vernon.

12-13 Even our little ones enjoy Conference Ministerial: Sully Sankey and Isabella Crosley.







SOUTHWEST CONFERENCE NEWS

AARON JOHNSON, PRESIDENT

SOUTHWEST CONFERENCE UPDATE

The Durant, OK Bible Methodist Church celebrated Layman Appreciation in November. On the second Sunday, Pastor Sams presented each family with a bunt cake as a token of appreciation. Additionally, officers and Sunday school teachers were honored with a special gift as a way to thank them for their dedication and service to the church.

CAPTIONS

- 1 Some of the recipients of the cakes.
- 2 Thanks to officers and Sunday school teachers.
- 3 The ministerial department at GBS allowed us to spend a few minutes speaking to the students.
- 4 The Conference President were able to visit the church at Millersburg, Kentucky. It was good to see this group of people that came out for that service on Sunday morning!
- 5 The Johnsons and the Jollys. The Jollys are faithful ministers in their community in Millersburg.
- 6 Pastor and Mrs. Jamin Hughes installation service at Moberly, MO.
- 7 Rev. Robert and Naomi Durr with the Johnsons at Duncan, OK.



CAMP SCHEDULE

S U M M E R 2 0 2 5

**GREAT LAKES
CONFERENCE**

Youth Camp
June 23-27

Conference &
Family Camp
July 11-20

**HEARTLAND
CONFERENCE**

Conference &
Family Camp
June 16-22

Youth Camp
July 21-25

**SOUTHERN
CONFERENCE**

Youth Camp
June 2-6

Family Camp
June 30-July 6

**SOUTHWEST
CONFERENCE**

Youth Challenge
West
March 20-22

Conference &
Family Camp
July 22-27

