



THE BIBLE METHODIST

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BIBLE METHODIST CONNECTION OF CHURCHES

VOLUME 57 | ISSUE 2

Not Forsaken:

The Cry That Confirms God's Love



FROM THE EDITOR

TRAVIS J. JOHNSON

Have you ever expressed raw, unfiltered emotion, the kind that spills out in a cry of anguish or a whisper of desperate hope? Psalm 22 captures this visceral human experience, as David's words—"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"—echo the pain of feeling utterly alone. This psalm doesn't polish or restrain its emotions; it lays bare the soul's turmoil, giving voice to the raw, unvarnished feelings we all face in moments of despair. These words, uttered by King David and later by Jesus Christ on the cross (Matthew 27:46), pierce the soul with their anguish. Yet, this psalm is not a lament of abandonment but a profound testament to God's enduring presence, a truth central to Trinitarian theology.

At first glance, the psalm's opening seems to suggest divine absence. Jesus, in his human agony, echoes David's plea, embodying the depths of suffering. But

Psalm 22 does not end in despair. Amidst the cries, there's a thread of trust, a turning to God even in the darkness. It transitions to trust and praise, declaring, "He has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help" (Psalm 22:24). This pivot reveals a critical truth: God *did not* turn his face away from his Son (in spite of what a recent popular song may say). Even in the crucible of the cross, the Father remained intimately present.

This is crucial for Trinitarian theology. The Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—exists in an eternal communion of love, unbroken even by the cross. Jesus' cry does not signal a fracture in the Godhead but rather the Son's full embrace of humanity's pain, while remaining one with the Father. The Father's unwavering gaze upon the Son underscores the

unity and relational depth of the Trinity, showing that God's love persists through suffering, never abandoning the afflicted. For believers, this should encourage us in our faith. If God did not turn from Jesus in his darkest hour, then God will not turn away from us! Psalm 22, fulfilled in Christ, assures us that the Triune God meets us in our pain, offering us hope.

This quarter, Dr. Matt Ayars helps us understand this as he writes about the theological richness of Psalm 22 and its fulfillment in Christ—not as a cry into a void, but as the Son's expression of solidarity with human suffering. In this way, Psalm 22 becomes not just a psalm of lament, but a doorway into deeper communion with the God who suffers with us. This truth invites us to trust in the God who sees, hears, and remains with us, forever one in love.

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COUNTRY PINES, INC.

Printing
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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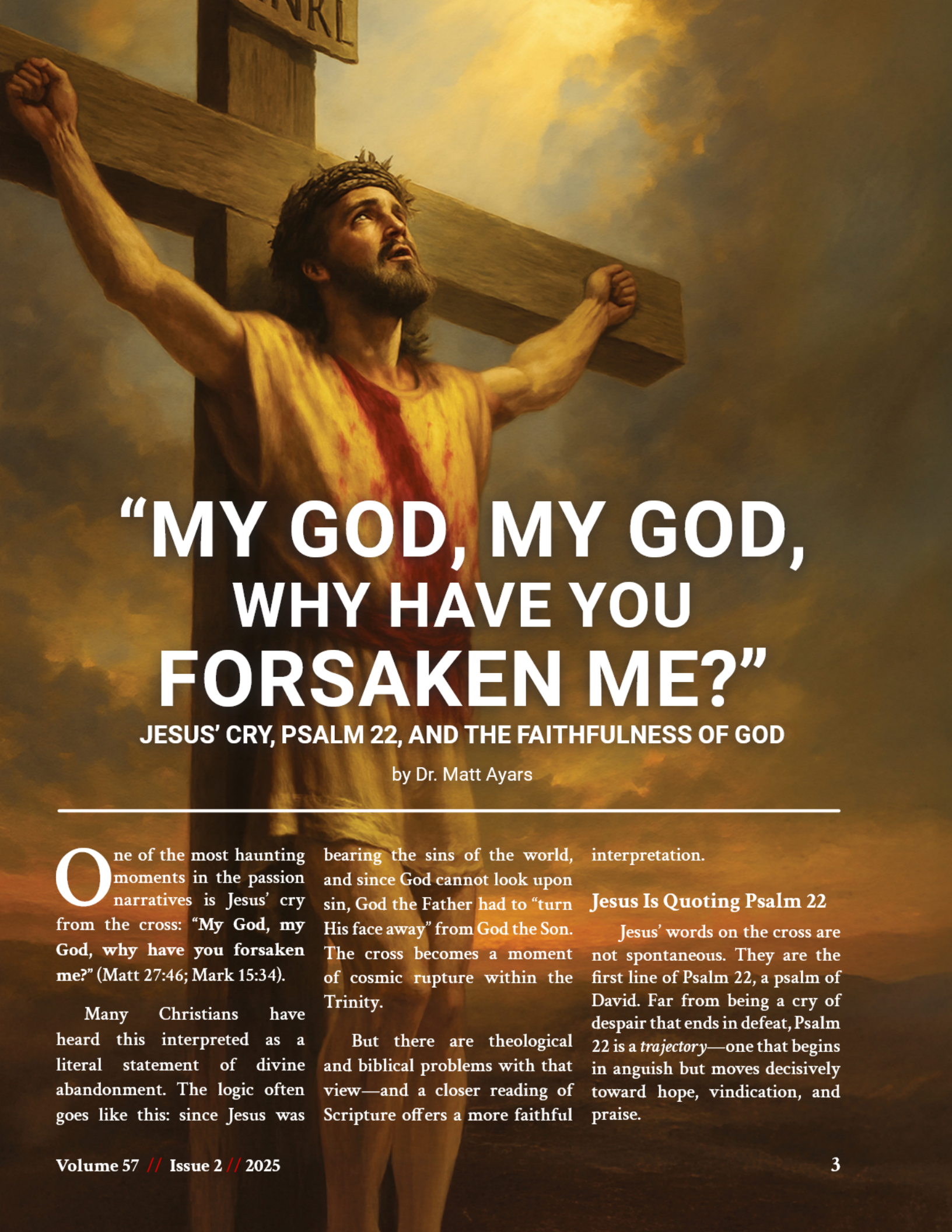
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“MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?”

JESUS' CRY, PSALM 22, AND THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

by Dr. Matt Ayars

One of the most haunting moments in the passion narratives is Jesus' cry from the cross: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt 27:46; Mark 15:34).

Many Christians have heard this interpreted as a literal statement of divine abandonment. The logic often goes like this: since Jesus was

bearing the sins of the world, and since God cannot look upon sin, God the Father had to “turn His face away” from God the Son. The cross becomes a moment of cosmic rupture within the Trinity.

But there are theological and biblical problems with that view—and a closer reading of Scripture offers a more faithful

interpretation.

Jesus Is Quoting Psalm 22

Jesus' words on the cross are not spontaneous. They are the first line of Psalm 22, a psalm of David. Far from being a cry of despair that ends in defeat, Psalm 22 is a *trajectory*—one that begins in anguish but moves decisively toward hope, vindication, and praise.

In the ancient Jewish world, quoting the first line of a psalm was a common way of referencing the entire psalm. So when Jesus quotes, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”, he is drawing the attention of all who hear him—especially those familiar with the Psalms—to the full scope of the psalm’s meaning. He is not crying out in hopelessness. He is locating his suffering within the story of Davidic affliction and divine deliverance. In short, Jesus is identifying himself as the *Messiah*—the Ideal David—who suffers not apart from God, but with unwavering trust in God’s faithfulness.

Psalm 22 Is Messianic

Psalm 22 is a deeply personal lament of David, but it also transcends his life. It describes a righteous sufferer who is mocked, surrounded by enemies, whose hands and feet are pierced, whose garments are divided and gambled over. The Gospel writers clearly saw these as anticipations of Jesus’ crucifixion (see Matt 27:35, 43; John 19:24).

But more than that, the psalm ends in a dramatic reversal:

“You who fear the Lord, praise him! ... For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, and he has not hidden his face from him, but has heard, when he cried to him” (Ps. 22:23–24).

This is crucial. Contrary to the idea that God “turned his face away,” Psalm 22 declares that God does not hide his face from the afflicted one. The God of Israel hears, sees, and ultimately vindicates.

By invoking Psalm 22, Jesus is not only expressing the depth of his suffering; he is also *proclaiming his confidence in God’s deliverance and affirming his identity as the righteous, suffering Messiah who fulfills the Scriptures*.

Some people believe that God can’t even look at sin, often based on a verse like Habakkuk 1:13, which says, “Your eyes are too pure to look on evil.” But that verse doesn’t mean God literally can’t see sin—it means

He is deeply troubled by it. In fact, throughout the Bible, we see God constantly interacting with sinners. He confronts sin, calls people to repentance, and works to bring healing and redemption in a broken world.

So when Jesus was on the cross, the Father didn’t “turn away” from Him. That idea can actually lead to serious misunderstandings about who God is and how the Trinity works. Jesus was fully obedient, even to death, and the Father was with Him the whole time. The resurrection proves this: the cross wasn’t a moment of rejection—it was the ultimate display of God’s love and faithfulness.¹

Saying that God the Father “abandoned” Jesus on the cross might sound emotionally powerful, but it creates big problems when we think about who God is. It suggests that, for a moment, the perfect relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit was broken. But that goes against everything the Bible and historic Christian teaching say about God.

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit aren’t just three separate divine beings working together. They are united in the deepest possible way. God doesn’t *have* relationships, God *Is* relationship. As I write in my book *The Holy Spirit: An Introduction*:

“The Father’s personhood is wrapped up in his relationship with the Son and the Holy Spirit. There is no Father without the



Son and the Holy Spirit. The same is true of the Son, whose personhood is constituted through his relationship with the Father and with the Holy Spirit.”

Furthermore, Christian theology uses the word *perichoresis* to describe this—meaning that each Person of the Trinity lives fully in and with the others. The Father isn’t the Son, and the Son isn’t the Spirit, but none of them exists apart from the others. Their relationship isn’t something extra—it’s essential to who God is.

Once again, as I state in my book *The Holy Spirit*:

“The very nature of a Father-Son relationship is that there is not one without the other...a father is only a father if there is a child, and a child is only a child if there is a parent. There is a dynamic of reciprocal determination at work within the parent-child relationship... Mutual indwelling means the loss of one always results in the collapse of the Trinity as a whole.”

This means that if the Father had truly turned away from the Son on the cross, it would mean that the Trinity had somehow been torn apart. But that can’t happen. God’s nature is one and unchanging. To suggest otherwise would be to divide God and end up with something more like multiple gods—which the Bible clearly rejects.² As Deuteronomy

6:4 says, “The Lord our God, the Lord is one.”

So what really happened at the cross? The Father didn’t reject the Son. That just cannot be. In light of Psalm 22, we understand that instead of the Father rejecting the son, the crucifixion shows us the depth of God’s united love. The Father sends the Son to redeem the world, the Son willingly obeys, and the Spirit empowers the whole redemptive mission. The cross doesn’t divide the Trinity—it reveals how deeply united God is in saving the world. As Paul puts it, “God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself” (2 Corinthians 5:19).

So when Jesus cried out from the cross and quotes the first verse of Psalm 22, it wasn’t a sign that God had left Him. It was the voice of the Suffering Servant, trusting the Father even in death. He took on our pain and separation so that we could be brought back into relationship with God—not so that the eternal relationship within God would be broken.

Jesus’ use of Psalm 22 invites us to reinterpret suffering—not as evidence of God’s absence, but as the context in which trust is most powerfully displayed. His cry is not a breakdown of faith; it is the expression of it.

In quoting Psalm 22, Jesus teaches us how to pray through pain. Like David, he speaks honestly of anguish, yet clings to the character of God. And like David, he bears witness that

even when circumstances scream abandonment, *God has not turned away.*

In the end, the cry “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” is not the sound of divine disunity. It is the voice of the faithful Son, lifting up the suffering song of the righteous king—and declaring, even in death, that *God is faithful.*



Dr. Matt Ayars is the Lead Pastor of Wellspring Church in Madison, MS. Matt also served as the eighth President of Wesley Biblical Seminary and Assistant Professor of Old Testament. Before serving at WBS, Matt served as the President of Emmaus University of Haiti as a career missionary with the One Mission Society.

This article was originally published at www.mattayars.com. Used by permission.

¹ It’s quite shocking (and disturbing)—to me, at least—how many interpreters opt for the reading that the Father abandons Jesus on the cross. For an evaluation of those views, see Tom McCall’s *Forsaken* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012).

² For more on the risks of a divided Trinity, see Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit*; Gregory of Nyssa, *On Not Three Gods*; Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* (Books 2 and 4); Chapter 7 of Thomas Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996) and *The Mediation of Christ* (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard, 1992).



WORLD MISSIONS

R.G. HUTCHISON, MISSIONS DIRECTOR

NEWS UPDATE

Muir Family's Upcoming Share Support Tour



We are very excited to announce that Brennan and Ivon Muir (and their children, Brennan, Jared, and Alessandra) will be traveling through all four regional conferences this Summer and Fall to share about their vision and the next steps for Bible Methodist Missions in Mexico. You will be blessed as they tell stories, communicate their passion for making disciples, and update you on what is coming up next when they move back to Mexico.

After completing their Share Support tour, the Muirs are preparing to move back to Oaxaca, Mexico in January, where they will continue developing and expanding the training ministry of Ezra Biblical Seminary (EBS) while also working to plant a new church. Part of the vision for EBS is to spawn a church-planting network in Mexico and throughout Latin America as God leads and opens the doors. Be sure to come meet the Muir family when they come to your area!

Welcome the Slavens Family to Bible Methodist Missions!



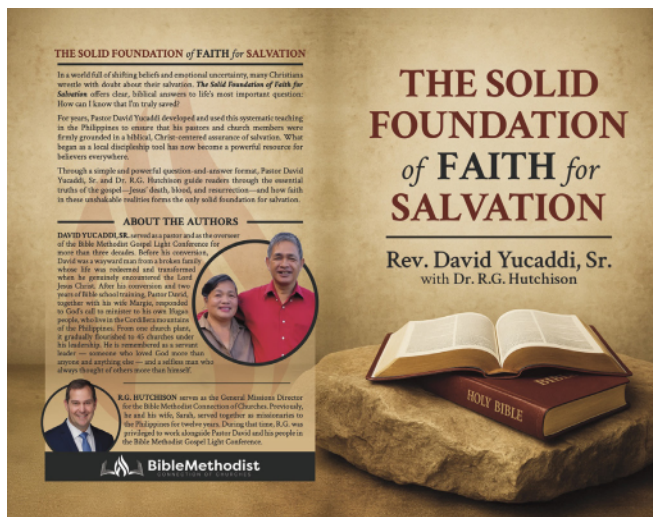
We are pleased to announce that a new family is joining our team of Bible Methodist missionaries! Timothy and Rebekah Slavens have received unanimous approval from the general missions committee and connectional committee, and are now our newest missionaries under appointment.

Tim and Rebekah are alumni of Hobe Sound Bible College and have faithfully served for several years in the Great Lakes Conference, where Tim is an ordained elder. They have long sensed a call to cross-cultural missions and are excited that God has now opened the door for them to step into that calling. They have five children: Timothy (7), Kora (5), Elwyn (3), Kaisley (1), and Khloe (4 months).

They will be commissioned this summer, during the Great Lakes Regional Camp Meeting, and, soon after, will be moving to Rio Grande Bible Institute in Edinburg, Texas to begin language school. After completing language school, they will be assigned to work alongside the Muir and Martinez families in Mexico. Please join us in welcoming them to our Bible Methodist Missions family, and stay tuned for more updates soon!



David Yucaddi's Book Available!



Proceeds will cover the printing costs and will also make it possible for us to bring copies to share in the Philippines and other locations. If you would like to place a larger order for your church, please contact R.G. Hutchison at rghutchison867@gmail.com to pre-order and ensure we have enough on hand.

Bible Methodist Mission's Committee



We are grateful for the opportunity to recently meet with the Bible Methodist Missions Committee in Franklin, OH. We deeply appreciated their encouragement, support, and shared vision for advancing the Gospel through missions. (L to R): David Fogleman, Jr., Aaron Johnson, Chris Cravens, Doug Eads, Deron Fourman, R.G. Hutchison, David Ward, Blake Jones, Chelle Durr, (not pictured, Rob Cravens and Viola Durr).



GREAT LAKES

DAVID WARD, PRESIDENT

CONFERENCE NEWS

Early in February, we traveled to the campus of Hobe Sound Bible College, in FL, to interact with their students and to make them aware of ministry opportunities in the Great Lakes Conference.



On the evening of March 30th, Rev. Steve Bills was ordained at Greenville Bible Methodist, where he serves as pastor. Pictured are some of the Great Lakes leadership team surrounding him as part of the ordination ceremony.



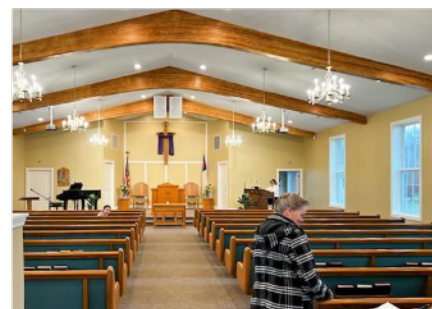
Mid-March featured our annual Great Lakes Inter-church Convention. The Keynote Speaker was Rev. Kim Hough. Rev. Hough pastors our Garfield Country Church in Fife Lake, MI. The Convention was held in Cedar Springs which is also Rev. Hough's hometown.



Two of our Conference churches completed extensive remodeling projects.



Hilltop Chapel, in Concord, MI replaced their carpet and pews.



Vandercook Lake, Jackson, MI, completely redid the interior of their sanctuary and made additional improvements to the exterior and property.

Each of the Conference Presidents and General Connectional Chairman, Rev. Jones traveled to Hobe Sound to participate in the annual Ministry Forum.



Pictured from left to right in the back row are: Southern Conference President, Rev. Doug Eads, Southwest Conference President, Rev. Aaron Johnson and Great Lakes Conference President, Rev. David Ward. In the front row are Connectional Chairman Rev. Blake Jones.

After the Wednesday evening service of Seabreeze Camp, the Connectional Team hosted a reception to members of our Bible Methodist Family who were in attendance.



In April, General Chairman, Rev. Blake Jones and each of the Conference Presidents represented Bible Methodism very well at the IH Convention in Gatlinburg.



The Connectional Team also hosted a breakfast for the Ministerial students and their Chair. Dr. Aaron Hamilton.



The General Missions Committee and Connectional Committee held their annual meetings in February at the Franklin Bible Methodist Church in Franklin, OH. Pastor Brian Wardlaw and his people are wonderful hosts.





HEARTLAND

CHRIS CRAVENS, PRESIDENT

CONFERENCE NEWS

There is a lot of activity on the campgrounds anticipating family and youth camps this summer.



Insulation, HVAC and interior metal was installed in the new J.D. Young Memorial Building



Thanks to the generous donations received at camp, we were recently able to purchase a golf cart.



Construction on enlarging the Snack Shack has begun.

During Sea Breeze Camp, Heartland Conference made its annual visit to the campus of FEA Ministries. We hosted a Heartland Reception with over 80 in attendance, took part in HSBC's Ministry Forum where we connected with ministerial and missions students, and enjoyed fellowship with fellow church leaders.



Auburn Bible Methodist Church is close to completing their new Fellowship Building





The Bible Methodist Connection and the Heartland Conference was well represented at the Interchurch Holiness Convention in Gatlinburg, Tennessee.



Conference Presidents and Chairman Blake Jones

Heartland Youth hosted its annual youth rally in Franklin, Ohio. Music was provided by a group from Penn View Bible Institute, and Dr. Matthew Hallam served as the special speaker. After the service, everyone enjoyed food, fellowship, and activities—thanks to God’s Bible School and College for providing the pizza!



President Cravens and Jack Hooker enjoying the motorized transportation.



Pastor Patrick Dewhurst and family (Pastor at West Mecca) stop by the display.



Jeffrey Paulus family.



Linkos from McDonald BMC and Crosleys from Salem BMC.



SOUTHERN

DOUG EADS, PRESIDENT

CONFERENCE NEWS

It is quite a blessing to work with some amazing people in the Southern Conference. It is so much fun to watch what God is doing! He is moving in places and ways that are just astounding. I am one excited Conference President!



Baptism at Golden Grove is always exciting. Praise God for folks coming to Jesus at this country church. Pictured is Pastor Leonard Collins, David Bearden, and Conference Elder Terry Bickel.



Our leadership of SMS and MMK take their job seriously and professionally. The work they do is life changing. Pictured is Tamara Crawford, Judy Eads, Karen Blankenship, and Laurie O'Dell.



Conference Vice-President and pastor of Faith Bible Church is Bob Blankenship. He is an inspiration and a dear friend. He has labored faithfully in the Conference for 30 years!



Rev. Dan and Charlotte Parker have been fixtures in the Southern Conference for years and years. Bro. Parker is our oldest Conference Elder at 90 years of age.



Easley Bible Methodist Sunday evening after music session. It is a great time for the kids to be a part of something so unifying.



Baby dedications are so special. Pastor Logan Sankey was privileged to perform this service for a wonderful family from Stanton.



Welcome to the Conference Blakely Elise Brandon! Her proud parent are Rev. Daniel and Kendra Brandon from Talladega Bible Methodist.



Sunrise services happened throughout the Conference this Easter season. Here is one happening at Ada Chapel on a beautiful Easter Sunday morning.



Ryan and Katrina Paulus do so much for the Campground in Pell City. Ryan is the Camp treasurer, while Katrina is the Camp manager. The amount of work they do is amazing and appreciated!



Revival at Waycross with the Young Witnesses. Pictured is Paul Beck, Pastor Randall Crotts, and Steve Parker.



God is blessing Greensboro Bible Methodist with a multitude of kids! Priscilla Vernon is doing a phenomenal job leading this ministry.



Dr. Allan Brown preached revival at Talladega and was happy to see former students, that he helped train for the ministry, come to hear him preach. Pictured are Daniel Brandon, Dwight Crosley, Dr. Brown, Cale Manley, and Logan Sankey.



SOUTHWEST

AARON JOHNSON, PRESIDENT

CONFERENCE NEWS



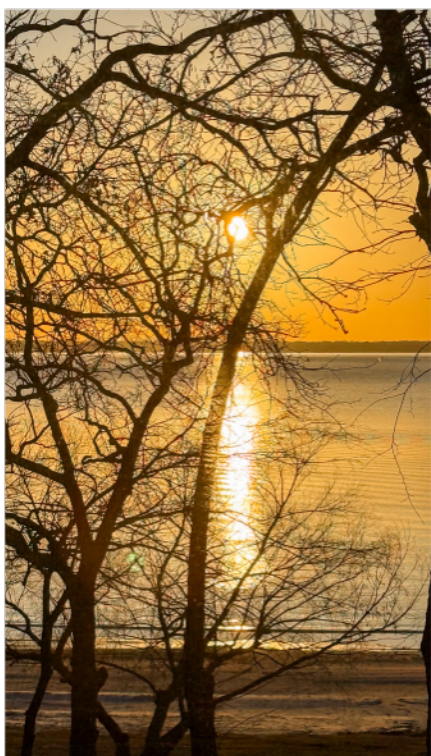
Rev. and Mrs. David Mahin, Johnsons and Rev and Mrs. Todd Hurst.



We gathered around the fire after the evening session.



The ladies provided snacks for everyone at the end of the day.



Ministerial was held at the Prothro Center on the shores of Lake Texoma.



We honored the Sams at ministerial for their years of service in the Bible Methodist Connection of Churches.



Times of good fellowship at ministerial.



The Sams with the Johnsons at Durant, OK.



The Conference Presidents and Connectional Chairman at IHC Gatlinburg.



Pastor Eric Hughes entertaining the young folks (and some old ones) at Youth Challenge West!



Rev. Darrell Stetler II leading worship at Youth Challenge West.



Guests of the Southwest Conference at the Bible Methodist reception given Wednesday evening at Sea Breeze Camp Meeting.



Young People at Youth Challenge West.

THE BIBLE METHODIST
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SUMMER CAMP MEETING SCHEDULE

Great Lakes Conference

Heartland Conference

Southern Conference

Southwest Conference

July 11-20

ROCK LAKE
Vestaburg, MI

Rev. Deron Fourman
Rev. Jonathan Edwards
Evangelists

Daniel & Angie Edwards
Singers

June 16-22

BEULAH GROVE
Mendon, OH

Dr. Mark Smith, *Evangelist*
Rev. Blake Jones, *Bible Teacher*
Dr. R.G. Hutchison
Youth Speaker

Johnathan Glick Family
Singers

June 30-July 6

EDEN
Pell City, AL

Dr. Rodney Loper
Rev. John Manley
Evangelists

Johnathan Glick Family
Singers

July 22-27

ARROWHEAD
Cleburne, TX

Rev. Dan Stetler &
Rev. Marc Sankey
Evangelists

Marc & Melodie Sankey
Singers

Youth Camp
June 23-27

Rev. Titus Byer
Youth Evangelist

Youth Camp
July 21-25

Rev. John Manley
Youth Evangelist

Youth Camp
June 2-6

Rev. Dan Durkee
Youth Evangelist



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