

THE BIBLE METHODIST

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FROM THE EDITOR

TRAVIS J. JOHNSON

This edition of *The Bible Methodist* is one of my favorites. It highlights our summer camp meetings, a treasured part of our heritage. Within these pages, you'll find photos and testimonies that capture how God moved among us. You'll read stories of lives touched, hearts encouraged, and spiritual commitments renewed. Camp meeting is more than a tradition—it's a sacred rhythm. For some, camp is a time of *renewal*. For others, it's *reunion*. For me, it has always been a little of both.

I wasn't raised in a Christian home. My parents weren't Christians but God, in His kindness, planted something steady and good in my life—my godly grandparents. Every summer, like clockwork, they packed up their vehicle and drove my twin sister and me to the Midwest Pilgrim Holiness Camp. I was only a year old the first time they took me, but the memories from those early years are still vivid.

Camp became a spiritual home for me long before I fully understood what that meant. I remember the children's services, the flannelgraph stories, and the songs; the simple truths that were shared with sincerity and love. I didn't know it at the time, but those moments were shaping my heart. I watched as adults worship with tears and lifted hands. I listened to sermons that seemed to speak directly to me, even as a child.

And then there were the friendships. Camp is where I met some of the people who are still part of my life today. There's something about the bonds forged under the tabernacle, in the dining hall, and around the snack bar that lasts forever. We laughed together, played ball together, went to the altar together (usually more than once a week), and we grew up together. Looking back now, I realize how much those summers formed me. They gave me a glimpse of what life could look like when it was centered on Christ. They connected me to a larger family of faith. They helped me understand that I was never alone.

So yes, camp is special. It's more than tabernacles and dorms and sermons. It's a place where lives are changed, where callings are confirmed, and where the next generation is quietly, powerfully, shaped for the kingdom of God. I know, because that's exactly what happened to me.

One of the most meaningful stories in this issue comes from Valorie Quesenberry, who takes us on a journey through the rich history of the Heartland Conference. During their June camp meeting, the conference celebrated its 60th anniversary, a milestone that reflects God's faithfulness through the years. Valorie's article beautifully captures the people, places, and moments that have shaped the conference's story, reminding us that camp and conference is more than a yearly event, but a thread that connects the past to the present, and points us toward the future with hope.

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE HEARTLAND CONFERENCE

The LORD has done great things for us; we are glad.

PSALM 126:3 ESV

by Valorie Quesenberry

What God Began

The Heartland Bible Methodist Conference had its beginning in the year 1965 following months of contemplation, prayer, and discussion among pastors who were meeting with Dr. Leslie D. Wilcox. These meetings coupled with concerning trends in the Wesleyan Methodist Church fueled interest in preserving both a congregational form of Methodism and a simplicity of the Gospel in life and practice.

A *Society for the Preservation of Primitive Wesleyan Methodism* was formed with a document drafted by Edsel R. Trouten as the guiding

constitution. Following the annual IHC on the campus of *God's Bible School and College* in April 1964, four major groups of churches agreed to meet in September to discuss options for the future. In March 1965, following more discussion and meetings, the above society was formed as a working group with their first gathering on April 2, 1965. And on June 2, 1965, the formal vote of withdrawal from the Wesleyan Methodist Church (the mother denomination) and its impending merger occurred.

A few days later, on June 9, a meeting was held to organize and select a name. The first conference and camp meeting of the new

group took place July 5-10, 1965, in Marion, Ohio, at Camp Gilead.

Throughout the life of the conference as its own entity, different names were used:

- » *Wesleyan Connection of Churches*
- » *Society for the Preservation of Primitive Wesleyan Methodism*
- » *Ohio Conference of the Bible Methodist Connection of Churches*
- » *Heartland Conference of the Bible Methodist Connection of Churches*

After discussion and prayer, in 1970, the Ohio group joined with another group of churches in Alabama to form the Bible Methodist Connection of



Dedication Sunday, June 24, 1990



Beulah Grove Campground, June 2025

Churches, becoming two distinct regional conferences. Since then, in addition to the Heartland and Southern Conferences, two other regional conferences have joined the larger connection—the Great Lakes Conference (1994) and the Southwest Conference (2018).

The Heartland Conference has been marked throughout the years by a spirit of holy scholarship as well as a reverence for Scripture, powerful “pulpitery,” and a genuine love for people and their growth in grace.

Who Has Led Us

The Bible Methodist Connection has maintained a unique identity—not as a formal denomination, but as a structured yet gently governed association. With limited local autonomy and a spirit of trickle-down charity, the organization resembles an equilateral triangle, placing the local church at its apex. This intentional focus on the local congregation highlights the importance of those who fill both the pulpits and the pews.

Overseeing the larger ministries on the Conference level to this date have been seven men. All these men chosen to be Conference President brought their own gifts and perspectives to the task, and God blessed their work.

» Though they did not hold the office of Conference President, we owe much to

Dr. Leslie Wilcox, who helped steer the new conference with his calm wisdom and steady voice, and to **Dr. William Gale**, whose optimism and great faith made a lasting impact on the Connection.



» **Rev. E. R. Trouten** drafted the first guiding document and helped the fledgling group to establish its identity and move forward with vision.



» **Dr. J. D. Young** was a stabilizing force with his pulpit ministry and maturity of spirit; his dynamic personality lingers both in the conference and on the campground where the Children’s tabernacle bears his name.



» **Rev. Sam Miller** held the conference together during a crucial time of transition between two long-term leaders; he was God’s man for a specific time.



» **Rev. Gary Brugger** stepped into the role in a critical time and led the way through many obstacles in acquiring the Beulah Grove Campground; his decision and passion to pursue that purchase has impacted countless lives and families in the Heartland Conference.



» **Rev. Mark Cravens** gave new energy and fresh vision to the conference and especially helped to revitalize the Conference Extension Department as well as leading the charge to building a permanent Camp Office.



» **Rev. Clair Sams** piloted the conference through a season of growth, both numerically and physically with his dreams and his labor for expanding the campground and adding of new churches.



» **Rev. Chris Cravens** has come to the Conference President’s role with a passion for the mentoring and ordination of new elders and for the revitalizing of the annual ministerial. He has also led the way in timely improvements to the grounds of Beulah Grove.

Under their leadership, the Heartland Conference has developed and expanded and grown over the past 60 years. We thank God for each of them.



First Delegate Assembly, July 1966



60th Anniversary Delegate Assembly, June 2025

Where God Has Brought Us

The Heartland Conference is guided by four pillars defining what they believe God wants to accomplish through by His power and with His strength:

- » *To equip and ordain licensed clergy to influence the church Scripturally*
- » *To encourage and connect local churches to impact their culture redemptively*
- » *To engage and support the larger connection to increase missions globally*
- » *To invest and provide the local region and conference a united gathering annually - Beulah Grove Camp.*

In matters of church government and policy, the Heartland Regional Conference is ably led by the Conference Executive Committee which meets quarterly to assist the Conference President in the duties of administration, finance, and conference life.

Events

Currently, the pastors and people of Heartland come together in events throughout the church year which mark them as a conference family and give them opportunities to celebrate God's goodness and work in their lives.

- » During Annual Conference and Family Camp in June, the conference gathers for a week

of services, sessions, and social nourishment at Beulah Grove in Mendon, Ohio.

- » On the third Monday of July, teens from several states, as well as team leaders, pastors, and conference leaders, converge on the campground for Heartland Youth Camp.
- » In November, the conference ministerial takes place—three days of enrichment for pastors and their wives.
- » Operating as an extension of the conference's heart to mentor godly men, the Men of Integrity retreat happens each September at Beulah Grove, bringing together men from many places and churches for a time of worship, introspection, fun, and personal growth.

Missions

The Heartland Regional Conference is actively involved in missions with local and conference wide missions projects every year, and with a focus on giving to support both missionaries and new works in the field - Mexico, the Philippines, Asia Highlands, Papua, New Guinea, and the Africa85 Initiative. A camp Missions Service is held during Family Camp, and during the annual conference, the local missions' leaders are encouraged to keep a mission mindset before the local church. A children's missions' program, Kid's Missionary Klub (KMK) is operated within the local churches to introduce our

children to the high calling of missions and to inspire them to share Jesus with the world.

In our annual conference events, in our missions outreach, in our youth gatherings, in our local churches, in the homes of our people, the Heartland Conference marches forward. We are a people with a calling and a mandate.

What the Future Holds

As we look ahead to new challenges for the church of Jesus Christ and for our conference in particular, we acknowledge that there are goals we want to accomplish and souls we want to reach. And we know that our God will be faithful to the generations to come, as He has been to those before and to us today.

With joy, we celebrate His grace that has led us this far. Through trials and triumphs, praises and prayers, the testimony of God's people in the Heartland Regional Conference has been that He has led all the way for 60 years. And we know He will continue to lead us into the future.



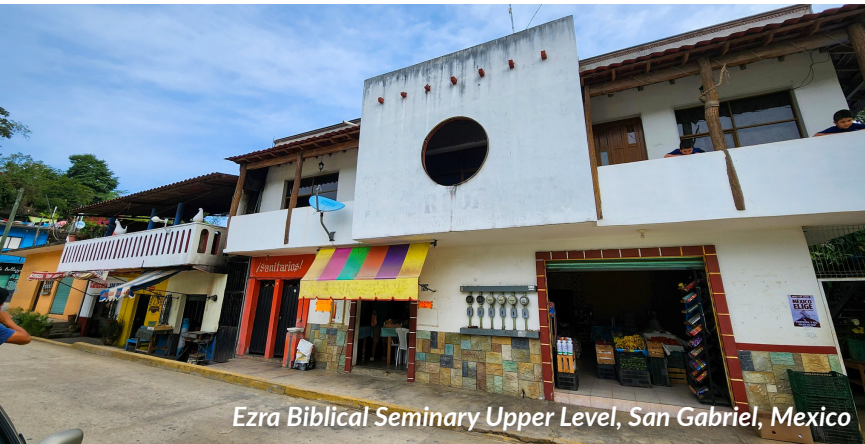
Valorie Quesenberry is an author, editor, and speaker with a passion for biblical truth and spiritual growth. She writes and edits from her home in Ohio, where she and her husband, Duane, serve in ministry.



WORLD MISSIONS

R. G. HUTCHISON, MISSIONS DIRECTOR

NEWS UPDATE



Ezra Biblical Seminary Upper Level, San Gabriel, Mexico

Ezra Biblical Seminary Graduation

Ezra Biblical Seminary celebrated the successful completion of another school year, awarding certificates for students who completed specific courses. They also issued diplomas to two more students who graduated from the full program of twenty courses. Dr. Hutchison and Tim Slavens joined the Muir and Martinez families in Mexico for this special occasion. We are thankful for the growing influence of Ezra Biblical Seminary in Latin America. Brennan Muir and David Martinez have worked very hard over the past 6 years to establish and develop this affordable and accessible avenue of training for Latino Christians. Last semester, more than 50 people enrolled in classes either in person or online.



Ezra Celebration Dinner, Ezra Biblical Seminary



Seminary Graduates



New Missionaries Commissioned

During missions day at the Great Lakes Regional Camp Meeting, we had the privilege of commissioning Timothy and Rebekah Slavens as Bible Methodist missionaries, sent out from among us to serve in Mexico and the Latin America region. They are now settling into their new home on the campus of the Rio Grande Bible Institute in Edinburg, Texas for the start of their language and culture acquisition training.



Missionary Team in San Gabriel



View from Slavens' Home at RGBI



Gospel Light Campmeeting, Philippines

Philippines

Praise the Lord that construction of a new church in the barangay of Kinakin has begun! This is a daughter church of the Pinnugo congregation. There are several new churches that are being pioneered this year in the Philippines.

The Gospel Light conference also held a camp meeting in May. And several other conferences of the Philippine Bible Methodist Church held summer youth camps, as well as their annual conferences.



Kinakin Church Construction, Philippines



Missionaries Singing at Great Lakes Campmeeting

Summer Missions Rallies

We were blessed to have the Muir, Slavens, and Troyer families joining us for missions rallies at our regional camp meetings this summer! The Troyers are heading back to Nepal mid-August after a brief furlough. The Muirs are on Share Support tour through all four conferences throughout the rest of this year before moving back to Oaxaca, Mexico in January.



Summer Missions Rally, Alabama



Summer Missions Rally, Alabama



Muir Family in Alabama



Summer Missions Rally, Heartland



GREAT LAKES

DAVID WARD, PRESIDENT

CONFERENCE NEWS

This has been a quarter marked by progress and God's blessings as we worked together as a Conference Family.

The Men of our Conference took on the project of reroofing three of our buildings. These included the pavilion, the Maple Leaf Dorm and Keaton Hall. The pavilion and Maple Leaf roofs were completed earlier and Keaton Hall's roof during Family Camp.



Youth Camp 2025 was led by Doug Derscheid and Eli Albring, with Rev. Titus Byer returning to serve as evangelist. Doug Derscheid is stepping aside as Conference Youth Director after 24 years of exemplary leadership. Eli Albring will be stepping into this role.



We had a great group of campers this year.



Conference and Family Camp in the Great Lakes runs over ten days and two weekends. The first Friday and Saturday are set aside for Conference Business.



Rev. Joe Krohn, from the Dawn Valley Church, gave the Conference Sermon on Friday evening.



Rev. Seth and Heidi Wetherald led a time of worship around the bonfire on Saturday evening after Conference business was concluded.



The first Sunday of Campmeeting always features Connectional Missions. This year, we had the pleasure of seeing our second Great Lakes family commissioned as missionaries, Rev. Tim and Rebekah Slavens.



Sunday evening, Rev. James Durr was recognized for more than sixteen years of faithfully serving as Chairman of the Conference Board of Trustees. Rev. Michael Schaub will assume this position moving forward.



Rev. Gene and Angie Davis, along with their son, Kent, worked with the children. Rev. Davis remarked that they are now ministering to the second generation of Great Lakes Kids since they started in this role.



Mark Langstaff led the Youth Activities.



Our Camp Evangelists this year were Rev. Deron Fourman and Rev. Jonathan Edwards. The Rev. Daniel Edwards' family served as Song Evangelists. These worker's gracious spirit was a tremendous blessing to our camp attendees.





HEARTLAND

CHRIS CRAVENS, PRESIDENT

CONFERENCE NEWS

Heartland Youth Camp 2025

198 young people and over 100 support staff gathered at Beulah Grove for the Heartland Youth Camp. God certainly blessed the week with beautiful weather and a wonderful sense of His Presence. The newly elected Youth President, Rev. Titus Byer, provided leadership for the camp activities and services. Rev. John Manley challenged the youth with timely and anointed messages. Several young people sought God's grace at an altar of prayer. The days were filled with fun and fellowship from early morning to late at night. Friday provided a fitting conclusion to the week, featuring Bible Bowl All-Stars, the volleyball and softball finals, and an awards assembly. Youth Camp certainly made an impact on our youth. Please mark your calendar for Youth Camp 2025, July 20-25.





Conference Delegates

Heartland Family Camp

Praise God for Campmeeting 2025! This year, the Heartland Conference celebrated 60 years as part of the kingdom of God. The conference business session went smoothly on Monday. That evening, Elder Terry Going challenged us with the Conference Sermon, and the service concluded with Communion.

The camp services were clearly anointed of God. Hungry souls regularly sought the Lord in response to powerful preaching, Spirit-filled teaching, heartfelt worship, and Spirit-anointed singing—testifying to the presence of the Holy Spirit among us!

God certainly used our workers:

- » Evangelist: Dr. Mark Smith
- » Bible Teacher: Rev. Blake Jones
- » Singers: The Glick Family
- » Children's Worker: Michelle Hopkins
- » Youth Evangelist: Dr. R. G. Hutchison

Saturday was a special day of celebration, including a pig roast, golf cart parade, and an evening service dedicated to thanking God for His faithfulness. The offering received was one of the largest outpourings of giving in our 60-year history. Thank you, Lord! Thank you, Heartland Conference! To God be all the glory!



60th Anniversary Service



Dr. Mark Smith



Rev. Blake Jones



Bible Methodist Missionaries



Children's Service in the new J.D Young Building



Pig Roast



Large Crowd under the Tent



Beulah Grove



Golf Cart Parade



SOUTHERN

DOUG EADS, PRESIDENT

CONFERENCE NEWS

Campmeeting is the highlight of the year in the Southern Conference. Families are seeing the value of taking a week off a year to focus on spiritual renewal. Lifelong friendships are formed. Kids and youth are all over the grounds riding bicycles and scooters. Churches come together and work in the kitchen. People see their faith grow and grow. In the midst of a dark and crazy world, Campmeeting provides a place of rest! By the way, Campmeeting is so, so worth it!!

Campmeeting is always over the 4th of July.



Sis. Faye Harris has been to every Campmeeting since 1938. That is 87 straight years of attendance!

Walter Hedstrom, John Parker, and Doug Eads. Conference Presidents since 1990.



Linda Hedstrom, Judy Eads, and Cathy Parker.



Three generations of Crawfords attending Camp



We so appreciate our kids here at Camp.



Our excellent Camp cooks, Nathan and Amy Bryant



A great group from Greensboro Bible Methodist attending Camp



There were kids everywhere at Camp learning about the Case of the Vanishing Fear.



Whenever you saw one teenager, friends were not too far away. Making memories.



Youth services are a big part of Camp! We have some of the best youth in the world!



At the Wiffle Ball Stars vs. Stiffs game, Jonathan Shirah was the Homerun Derby Champion!

There is tired and then there is Camp tired!



During Annual Conference, Wayne Fleming “retired” after 33 years of being the Conference Treasurer. We have been blessed by his diligence and encouraged by his wisdom. He has informed us many times that “planning is most effective when done in advance.” Thank you, Wayne, for your many years of service to the Conference and Campmeeting.





SOUTHWEST

AARON JOHNSON, PRESIDENT

CONFERENCE NEWS

The Southwest Conference gathered at Arrowhead Camp on the Brazos River in Cleburne, TX July 22-27 for Conference and Campmeeting.



The Evangelists and workers at Southwest Camp- (left to right) Marc and Melodie Sankey, Dan Stetler, Conference President Aaron Johnson, Eric Hughes (Youth), Cheryl and Matt Brewer (Children)



The Brewers did a great job with the children. The sessions were centered around a medical theme. The key question...Is there a doctor in the house? The answer: King Jesus, the Great Physician.



Cheryl Brewer even took the time to teach the Conference President and Vice- President one of the memory verses.



Evangelist Dan Stetler provided spiritually challenging messages throughout the week.



Executive Committee (left to right) Mike Covington, Mark Russell, Andrew Blankenship, Aaron Johnson, Don Steele, Darrell Stetler II (Kin Hurst and Darrell Underwood not pictured)



Evangelist Marc Sankey.



Marc and Melodie Sankey sang beautifully. It was a privilege to have their son Jordan and his family join them at times.



Dr. R. G. Hutchison joined by Shirley Fogleman and the Muir and Slavens families, missionaries to Mexico.



Dr. R. G. Hutchison with the Southwest Conference Missions Committee (left to right) Mike Covington, R. G. Hutchison, Todd Gardner, Liz Stetler, Shirley Fogleman and Southwest Missions President David Fogleman.



Youth President Eric Hughes preparing the young people for the Youth Group presentation.



The Southwest Youth Group singing on the platform.



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Christmas Cards for Missionaries

The Christmas season is a perfect time to remind our missionaries that they are loved, supported, and prayed for. Each year, we invite you to join us in sending a Christmas card and a small love gift to every missionary family serving through the Bible Methodist Connection. Your notes of encouragement and generosity go a long way in lifting their spirits during the holiday season. Let's join together once again to make this Christmas special for those serving around the world!

Please send your cards and support to: PO Box E, Port Clinton, OH 43452

Shirley Fogleman
Papua New Guinea

Maricka Herrer
South Africa

David & Diana Martinez
Mexico

Brennan & Ivon Muir
Mexico

Tim & Rebekah Slavens
Mexico

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Asia

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