

The West Virginia Baptist Newsletter



April–May 2025

Registration for Camp Cowen is Officially Open!



Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.
- Psalm 150:6

In a world full of objectification, branding and personal promotion, skepticism abounds about God, who requires our praise, worship, devotion and adoration. Many people end up praise the wrong things. As Romans 1:25 says, “They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever!” Let us not be swayed by the world’s values, but instead focus on the eternal worthiness of God.

Students desire deep faith—not shallow or empty, but faith that is built on the Solid Rock. “Praise the Lord” will focus on the deep truths of who God is and why He alone is worthy of praise. Through studying the characteristics of God, the names of God and the “I AM” statements, students will see God’s Word reveal His glory. They will learn what it means to praise and how we can faithfully praise God through good times, hardships, unknown circumstances, moments of immense blessing, doubts and everyday living.

Attitude check? PRAISE THE LORD!

Whether as a camper or as a volunteer counselor, we hope you will join us this summer at Camp Cowen for one of our camps. See you there!

Schedule

APRIL 4-6	Women’s Camp
MAY 16-17	Summer Kickoff (grades 6-12)
MAY 17	Sunny Day Dedication
JUNE 6-8	Younger Midler (grades 2-4)
JUNE 8-14	Junior High 1 (grades 7-9)
JUNE 15-21	Junior 1 (grades 5-6)
JUNE 21	Senior Day (2025 graduates)
JUNE 22-28	High School 1 (grades 9-'25 grads)
JUNE 29-JULY 5	Junior 2 (grades 5-6)
JULY 6-12	Junior High 2 (grades 7-9)
JULY 12	Senior Day (2025 graduates)
JULY 13-19	High School 2 (grades 9-'25 grads)
JULY 20-24	Southeast Association Camp
JULY 25-28	Family Camp
JULY 29- AUG 1	Older Midler (grades 3-5)
AUG 1-3	AB Men & Boys’ Camp
AUG 8-9	Camp Global

REGISTER NOW

Online or mail-in available at
campcowen.org/register

The West Virginia Baptist Convention is a family of churches committed to reaching all generations for Jesus Christ both here and abroad by equipping one another to be healthy, growing and unified in Christ and for Christ.

Doing Christ’s Work Together

by Mike Sisson, Executive Minister

WVBC: A Family of Churches

Perhaps you are familiar with the song “Family of God” by Bill and Gloria Gaither. The lyrics go, “I’m so glad I’m a part of the Family of God. I’ve been washed in the fountain, cleansed by His Blood! Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod, For I’m part of the family, the Family of God.”

These words capture the foundation for who we are as a West Virginia Baptist Convention church family. We are all part of God’s family. Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “So, then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19). Because of this we can strive toward our joint mission of “Doing Christ’s Work Together!”

Doing Christ’s work together brings with it two important principles. First, Baptists have long understood that we can accomplish much more for the cause of Christ by pulling together than we ever could by ourselves. When we consider this factor along with the great need in our world for the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the situation is without a doubt an urgent one. As Jesus said, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest” (Matthew 9:37-38). Or in other words, there is more harvest ready to be gathered than any one of us can do alone so we need to join together the necessary workers for the Kingdom harvest that Jesus described.

A second principle is that, as Baptists, our churches have different spiritual gifts and various resources. Paul reminded the Corinthians, “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone... For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:4-6, 12). He continues by explaining that only when all parts of the body work together as one can the body be fully healthy and effective. As the West Virginia Baptist Convention family, we need the local church body of believers to come together with Christ as the head to expand our reach as feet to go, arms to hold, hands to help, ears to listen and mouths to speak the Good News to the people in the mission field He has entrusted to us.

I recall an article in a magazine some years ago that consisted of four pictures. The first picture was of a vast wheat field in western Kansas. The second showed a distressed mother standing on the porch of a farmhouse positioned in the center of the vast field of wheat. The story explained that her four-year-old son had wandered away from the house and into the field when she was not looking. The mother and father looked and looked diligently all day, but their son was too short to be seen due to the tall wheat. The third picture showed dozens of friends and neighbors who had heard of the boy’s plight and who had joined hands the next morning to make a long human chain as they walked through the field searching. Sadly, the final picture was of the heartbroken father holding his lifeless son who had been found too late and had died of exposure. The final sentence read, “O God, if only we had joined hands sooner.”

The ability to join hands is one of the most important things about being part of the West Virginia Baptist family. Thank you for the important part you play in our family of churches. May we always be willing to answer the call from Jesus for more workers to help gather in the harvest.

Blessings,
Mike



Vol. LXXXII, Issue 03 April-May 2025

Table of Contents

Mike Sisson: Commentary	2
Mountain State Mission Offering	3
Camp Cowen Staff Opportunities / Sunny Day Dedication Service	4
BCM Begins at WV State University / The Legacy of Frank “Buzz” Harrison	5
The Legacy of JD Reed / Missionary Internship Program	6
Spring Children’s Rally / 10th Annual Bible Conference	7
Top 50 Giving Churches	8-9
Snow Camp at Parchment Valley / Brothers’ Keeper 2025	10
Junior High Convention / 91st Annual Women’s Conference / Spring Golden’eers Retreat	11
Area Minister News	12-13
Obituaries / Leadership Changes / Ministry Employment Opportunities	14
Prayer Calendars	15
Upcoming Events / Mountain State Mission Offering	16

Place to Place and Heart to Heart

We are inviting our WVBC family to pray together through 2025. The desire is that every church have the opportunity to pray with and for one another.

Be on the lookout for a delegation from a sister church as they bring the prayer book to your church for a time of prayer. Our prayer is that we be led by the Holy Spirit to find a way to reach those in our communities who desperately need to be reached for Christ.

Mountain State Mission Offering

Would you make it a priority this year to collect the Mountain State Mission Offering?

100% of donations to this offering stay within West Virginia to support the ministries of the WVBC, including Baptist Campus Ministry, Camp Cowen, Parchment Valley, our internship programs, the Bobby Wood School of Christian Studies, our auxiliary ministries and more. By supporting this offering, you are “holding the rope” for all the ministries we do together as a WVBC family.

Promotional resources are being mailed out to every church at the beginning of April. They can also be downloaded from our website by scanning the QR code below.



What will be included in the promotional packet?

- 2025 MSMO poster
- Bulletin inserts
- Sample offering envelope
- Our revised WVBC Ministry Overview Booklet
- Information on how to download our 2025 MSMO video



MountainStateMissionOffering.org

CAMP COWEN



2025 STAFF OPPORTUNITIES

Are you or someone you know a driven, engaged Christ-follower looking for opportunities to serve the Lord this summer?

Camp Cowen is hiring!

APPLY NOW and learn more at campcowen.org/staff

SUMMER STAFF



- Must be 18 or older
- Full-summer schedule (with optional vacation week)
- \$325 per week
- \$100 bonus at end of contract
- Free room & board
- All positions available

INTERNS



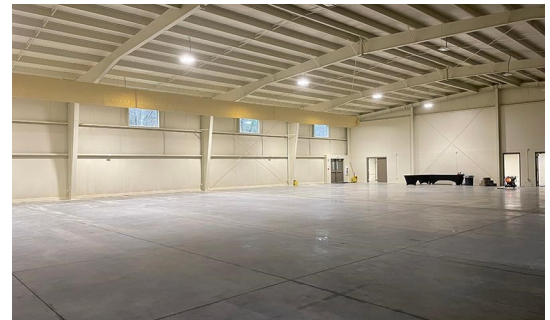
- Must be 16 or older
- Flexible 2- to 6-week schedules
- \$275 per week
- Free room & board
- Positions available:
 - Kitchen & dishroom
 - Maintenance
 - Lifeguards**

**certification required

JOIN US FOR OUR SUNNY DAY DEDICATION SERVICE

Saturday, May 17, 2025
11 AM - 2 PM

Join us for a special day as we dedicate the our newest facility at Camp Cowen:
the **Sunny Day Activity Center**.



RSVP for free at CampCowen.org
or by scanning the QR code:

Questions? Contact Jill Narraway
at: jill@wvbc.org



BCM Begins at West Virginia State University

Baptist Campus Ministry's mission statement is *"changing lives that change the world."* We are excited to announce that we have added another campus this year, furthering multiplying our opportunity to reach and disciple students for the kingdom. With the BCM' Board's approval, DaVontaé Edwards, pastor of Dunbar First Baptist Church, has started a new BCM at West Virginia State University.

DaVontaé shared this about the new opportunity: "I am incredibly excited to start BCM at WVSU and to see how God moves on this campus! Our first steps will be connecting with students who have a heart for Christ, establishing a solid foundation for fellowship and creating opportunities for worship, Bible study and service. With the right support and student involvement, BCM at WVSU will be a place where faith is strengthened, friendships are built and the Gospel is boldly shared. I cannot wait to see what God has in store!"

Please add WVSU BCM to your prayer list. Please also join us by praying for the following Spring Break mission trips:

- Fairmont State BCM is taking a group to Mexico to serve alongside Keith and Deborah Myers. They also have several students staying local to work at the Clarksburg City Mission.
- Marshall BCM is planning to take teams to assist with flood relief in the southern part of our state.



Last year's Fairmont State BCM mission team also served in Mexico.

- Potomac State BCM is hosting a spring retreat at Petersburg First Baptist Church, providing students with opportunities to serve in and explore the Petersburg area.
- WVU BCM will be partnering with Comunidad Luz Y Vida, one of our Hispanic churches in Moorefield, to help serve their community.

Thank you for your ongoing prayers and continued support of BCM, as we *"change lives that change the world"* in and through college students across our state and around the world.

The Legacy of Frank "Buzz" Harrison: Changing Lives that Change the World

For decades, **Baptist Campus Ministry (BCM)** has been *"changing lives that change the world"* on college campuses throughout West Virginia. Tens of thousands of students have heard the gospel. Thousands have been discipled. Students from more than a hundred different countries have experienced the love of Christ first-hand. But none of that would have been possible without the help of the first Executive Director of BCM, Frank "Buzz" Harrison.

When Buzz accepted the call to lead BCM in its infancy in 1974, he did not know how many lives he would impact. Fresh off a tour in Vietnam where he served as an Army doctor, Buzz began his work at Fairmont State College and ministered on nine different campuses across the state. His goal was to "encourage students to grow in their faith, apply it in real life and ensure that every decision included Jesus."

In 1979, he moved to Marshall University, but continued as the director. One student whose life was changed under Buzz's leadership at Marshall was Mary-Lynn Hodges. She shared, "Buzz's impact goes much further than just the individuals he invested in. The ripple effect continues today across the United States and around the world." Mary-Lynn is now on staff at her church in Michigan, where more than 200 college students attend every week. Reflecting back on her time at Marshall, she added, "I just teach them the way Buzz taught us and invested in us. I have shared so many things that I learned from him in the 40+ years since I graduated college."

Buzz placed a high priority on relationships. He understood that investing in relationships took time. Many pastors, teachers and current BCM leaders sat under Buzz's teaching during his ten years as director, and they saw him as a mentor and friend.



Roger Adams, pastor of Clearview Fellowship, was hired by Buzz as a BCM associate and later followed him at Marshall. He said, "Buzz was a true friend. He was the embodiment of integrity, and his impact on me has been and continues to be a person of high ethics. He was the foundation that BCM in our state was built on!"

Today, if you were to visit any of our 350+ WVBC churches, there is a high probability that you would meet someone whose life has been impacted through BCM and Buzz's work in ministry. Today, 51 years after it was formed, BCM continues its mission of *"changing lives that change the world."*

The Legacy of JD Reed: A Pioneer for Global Missions

Growing up in Webster Springs, it would have been hard to imagine a young boy becoming such an important pioneer for global missions. But that is exactly what God did through JD Reed.

JD grew up in our WVBC family and served in several of our WVBC churches. He spent multiple summers at Camp Cowen, both as a counselor and on summer staff. It was here, in the summer of 1995, that he met his future wife, Rhonda. They were married a year later.

Rhonda already had a deep interest in global missions. JD was currently involved in pastoral ministry and had no plans of leaving West Virginia. However, an invitation to join a friend on a short-term mission trip to India dramatically changed the trajectory of his calling. Eventually, JD and Rhonda applied to become long-term missionaries with International Ministries (IM).

Around the time of their appointment, IM was shifting away from its traditional centralized missionary support to its current personalized support model. Under the new model, missionaries are required to raise their own support. While this is a daunting task for many, JD and Rhonda welcomed the opportunity and spent many months on the road, traveling church to church across our state (and other states) to raise the necessary funds. In many ways, they are the pioneers of this current model.

JD was also a pioneer in theological education. Initially commissioned in 2011 to serve alongside the Bolivian Baptist Union (UBB), JD quickly noticed a deficiency in theological resources for Bolivian pastors. While working with the UBB, JD added several innovations, including an experiment that made theological education resources available to those without internet access through the use of tablet computers. As his area director at the time, José Norat put it, “JD was a pioneer in finding successful ways to join innovations in technology and theological education in Bolivia.”

As JD worked with UBB pastors and colleagues to find creative solutions to the challenges they faced, he was excited by two separate but parallel developments: growing internet access in Bolivia and a new partnership between IM and Palmer Theological Seminary to deliver theological education. In 2016, the partnership launched an innovative online Spanish-language Master of Theological Studies (MTS) program, available throughout the hemisphere at a greatly reduced cost. The combination of educational innovation and low cost has been crucial to the MTS program’s success. Since its inception, over 220 students in 26 cohorts from 18 countries have graduated with degrees they simply could not have undertaken in the traditional way.



JD and Rhonda Reed, global servants with International Ministries

This new program excited JD, who played a larger and larger role in its success from 2016 onward. JD continued to be used by God in Bolivia, but found himself increasingly called to this broader, hemispheric ministry. Eventually, he became the coordinator of the program and took on much of the fundraising responsibilities. During their last home assignment, he spent most of his time inviting churches and individuals to “Adopt a Student.” This became a creative way to fund the program, while also inviting others to regularly pray for the students in the program.

On February 16, 2025, JD went home to be with the Lord just nine months after he was diagnosed with ALS. However, his legacy continues. It continues through the dozens of other IM missionaries who are continuing to use the new support model, it continues through the ongoing work of the UBB and MTS program, it continues through the hundreds of pastors and leaders he helped train around the world, it continues through Camp Cowen and the WVBC churches where he served and it continues through Rhonda and their kids. Rhonda is continuing to serve with IM as a global coordinator for health and wellness.

We are grateful for the legacy of JD. His pioneering work has opened doors of opportunities for hundreds, if not thousands, of individuals during his lifetime. The impact of that will be felt for many decades to come.

Five Students in This Year’s Missionary Internship Program

We are excited to welcome five individuals to this year’s **WVBC Missionary Internship Program**. This program was designed for young adults who are exploring a long-term call to missions. This year’s interns include:

- Faith Lambert, Marshall BCM student and intern to India
- Hunter Mitchell, Marshall BCM student and intern to India
- Isabell Roop, Marshall BCM student and intern to India
- Katie Gillespie, Fairmont State BCM student and intern to Mexico
- Thane Howlett, high school student and intern to Mexico

Please join us in prayer for each of these interns as they complete their pre-trip training this spring and spend multiple weeks this summer working alongside some of our global partners.



Two of our previous interns—Katelyn Shannon and Cortney Hall—with IM Global Servant, Deborah Myers

Kids at the Spring Children's Rally Learned About the Lord's Prayer

What do paper airplanes, bracelet-making, human knots, snowball fights, eating manna and acting out a Bible story all have in common? Answer: they were all activities used at this year's **Spring Children's Rally** to help kids learn the Lord's Prayer. In total, nearly 200 attendees gathered at Parchment Valley Conference Center for the rally, held annually on the first Saturday of March.

Throughout the day, the children rotated through various stations. In the first station, Sandy Foster Currey and Jamie Click (both members of Oakwood Baptist Church) taught the children about the story of Elijah and the widow (1 Kings 17). The children had the opportunity to act out the story as it was being read, and they were even given small bags of "manna" (actually, it was Cinnamon Toast Crunch cereal).

In the second station, Debbie Shadowen (member of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Charleston) helped the children make bracelets. Each bead they added to their bracelet corresponded to a part of the Lord's Prayer that helped the children memorize it.

Krista Durden (also a member at Oakwood Baptist Church) led a third station, leading the children through the human knot game. This game taught them about how they will be tempted to sin, but God will always show them a way out of that temptation.

Lou Ann Nicholas (member of Shinnston First Baptist Church) led a fourth station, teaching the children how to make paper airplanes and challenging them to try to fly them into a mailbox. Though it was challenging, they learned that prayer should never be hard. It is always easy to talk to God.

In the final station, Kelly Hensley (member of Saint Albans First Baptist Church) had the kids trace their hands on a piece of paper and cut it out. On one side they wrote, "Help me to do God's will."



The children doing the hand motions during worship.

On the other side, they wrote their prayer requests. Through this craft, children learned to put God's will before their own.

In addition to the stations and crafts, Caleb Villers, Sam Gassaway, and Parker and Levi Wood led the children in active worship. The children loved doing the hand motions and moves while they worshiped.

The children were also encouraged to bring in donations of baby supplies which were then given to help with flood relief in southern West Virginia. Over 170 items were collected!

If you have an elementary-aged child, we hope you will join us November 1st, back at Parchment Valley, for our Fall Children's Rally!

10th Annual Bible Conference: A Study on the Book of Acts

The **10th Annual Bible Conference** was once again held on the first Saturday of March at our Parchment Valley Conference Center. Dr. Trent Eastman, lead pastor of New Baptist Church and adjunct professor Palmer Theological Seminary's extension program in West Virginia, led the study on the Book of Acts. Around 60 people came out for the study, including Toby Wagoner, senior pastor of Ravenswood First Baptist Church.



Dr. Trent Eastman leading a study on the Book of Acts.

Toby shared the following:

The Annual Bible Conference offers a chance to explore the Scriptures beyond conventional narratives, while encouraging attendees to engage with biblical texts in a meaningful, authentic and transformative manner. After participating, one cannot help but feel inspired to read the Bible with greater intentionality, particularly after hearing the Scriptures take on new life at the event.

We are fortunate and blessed to have Dr. Trent Eastman offering high quality Bible instruction that both challenges participants and empowers them to engage more profoundly with the Scriptures by examining the cultural context of each passage. One often forgotten attribute is this event provides a setting where like-minded Christians from across the state can gather for fellowship and an opportunity to build connections and friendships.

Many thanks to the Bowen Educational Trust, which provided a grant to reduce the cost of the conference for pastors and their spouses, and also to Palmer Theological Seminary, which provided free scholarships to both current Palmer students and alumni.

A study is planned for the same weekend next year, which is always the first Saturday of March. We hope you will make plans

Snow Camp: Inspiring the Next Generation to Love Jesus and to Live for Him



This year, God provided plenty of snow for Snow Camp!

Four years ago, Eric Tucker, Adam Farnsworth and Adam Myers sat down to plan a winter event for their youth groups at Parchment Valley. After developing a plan, they invited other youth groups to join them. In January of 2022, they hosted that first event with around 160 people in attendance. What a great success! The team met again to make a few modifications and unanimously decided to make this an annual event. This is how **Snow Camp** was formed.

The next year, youth leaders started inviting other leaders and Snow Camp nearly doubled in attendance. Each of the youth groups began partnering more frequently, and they are now working together to multiply their reach across the entire Mid-Ohio Valley. Another event they partner on is their “Great Friday” service, held the Friday before Easter at South Parkersburg Baptist Church. Last year, more than 400 middle school and high school students from 15 area churches came together for a night of worship, games and ministry, as they packed more than 10,000 meal kits for Rise Against Hunger and assembled 15 Little Tikes playhouses for Habitat for Humanity.

In January of this year, the fourth annual Snow Camp happened at Parchment Valley, welcoming more than 330 students from 17 different churches. One specific prayer that was answered this year was that it actually snowed ... a lot! We actually thought the students might have to stay an extra night!

Throughout the weekend, the youth worshiped together, played together, ate together and grew in the Lord together. It was evident that God was moving within their hearts, as more than 150 students indicated a desire to more closely follow Christ. **One student even gave their life to Christ over the weekend!**

Parchment Valley’s mission is to be a place “*where lives are changed.*” What an honor it is to be a part of the work the Lord is doing in our churches and across our state!

JOIN US FOR BK ‘25

JUNE 15-20, 2025

PARCHMENT VALLEY CONFERENCE CENTER

A regional work camp for youth in grades 6-12

2024 Stats:

120 youth from 5 states
55 completed work projects
23 salvations!

COST:

\$245 / person before May 1
\$270 / person after May 1



Learn more at parchmentvalley.org



Junior High Convention: A Weekend Full of Excitement and the Presence of God



Josh Sowards speaking at Junior High Convention

Junior High Convention was a wonderful weekend filled with excitement and the undeniable presence of God. From youth groups coming together in worship to students playing games, the energy was contagious. Keynote speaker Josh Sowards delivered powerful messages, helping students understand what it means to walk through life with God following His paths. Josh's words captivated the audience, leaving everyone with something to reflect on. Worship, led by Render the Hearts, created a beautiful atmosphere, filling the room with students wholeheartedly praising the Lord.

Before worship, junior high students enjoyed game show time, featuring the Plunger 500, Blender Battle and Holiday Mashup. These fun activities energized them and prepared their hearts for worship.

Interest Groups provided students with the opportunity to explore hobbies, play games and connect with others who share similar interests. They could choose from eight different groups, including crafts, jewelry making, trivia, karaoke and four-square. Led by different leaders, these small-group activities gave students a chance to socialize and engage in something they enjoy. It was a great way to add fun and personal connection to the weekend.

Morning activities combined excitement with Bible learning. Students rotated through 12 stations, participating in challenges like tug of war, Bible trivia, Jenga and memorizing Scripture. This friendly competition strengthened both their knowledge and bonds with peers.

The boys' and girls' panels were a highlight of Junior High Convention, as students laughed, engaged in object lessons and found encouragement through meaningful discussions. Almost every student had a smile on their face, enjoying the uplifting atmosphere created by the panelists. These sessions provided a space for students to connect, share and grow together.

Junior High Convention was a Spirit-filled weekend of worship, friendship and growth. We are grateful for the youth leaders, Josh Sowards's teaching, the worship led by Render the Hearts, the hospitality of Summersville Baptist Church and the dedication of the Youth Ministry Planning Team (YMPT). God moved in powerful ways, and we look forward to what's to come!

91st Annual Women's Conference

Saturday, June 7, 2025

Parchment Valley Conference Center



Theme: What Kind of Vessel Are You?

Cost: \$35 (includes lunch and snack)

Registration Deadline: May 21, 2025

Learn more at abwmwv.org

SPRING GOLDEN'EERS CONFERENCE

MAY 5-7, 2025
AT PARCHMENT VALLEY
CONFERENCE CENTER

SPEAKER: JON VILLERS
SOUTHEAST AREA MINISTER

**A conference for adults 55
years of age and older**

Bible study, evening group activities,
indoor/outdoor games, bookstore,
puzzles, crafts and more.

The conference will begin on
Monday with registration and
lunch at Noon and will end on
Wednesday at 11 AM.

**For more information,
visit: wvbc.org**



Northwest Area News

by **Mark McCloy**, Northwest Area Minister

God Provides



Jarod Fitzwater's ordination at Glenville First Baptist Church

The story of Jonah is a fascinating one. It is about crime and punishment. It is about disobedience and grace. But it is also about God's provision. God provides. For the Ninevites, He provides a preacher and a chance to repent. For Jonah, He provides a great many things – most famously, He provides the fish. That is the word it uses, depending on your translation. God “provides” or “appoints” a fish to swallow Jonah, to both rescue him from the depths and imprison him while he contemplates some repentance of his own. Later, God provides a plant to shade Jonah, followed by a worm to destroy the plant and a scorching east wind. All of these things were provided in order to further Jonah's spiritual journey.

God provides for us, as well. One of the things He has provided is a spiritual family. Thankfully, we have again been able to experience gatherings of our extended spiritual family, because they have been missed. Two of my area associations – Harrisville and Good Hope – have recently hosted multi-night, multi-location “roving” revivals. It has been good to visit with one another again – to worship together, sing together, eat together and fellowship

Northeast Area News

by **Kevin Sions**, Northeast Area Minister

Prayer Book in the Fairmont Association



Mt. Zion Baptist and Hebron Baptist praying together.

The Place to Place and Heart to Heart Prayer Book in my region started in the Fairmont Association. Churches have been meeting together and praying for and with one another as the book moves from church to church. Recently, Mt. Zion Baptist prayed with Hebron Baptist as the people shared with their hearts with one another.

Hepzibah Baptist is Studying Multiply

At the beginning of 2025, Hepzibah Baptist Church (Union) started a 26-week course on discipleship based on Francis Chan's book, *Multiply*. On Sunday evening, the parents of youth are meeting together as they participate in the study, while another opportunity for the church is on Wednesdays evenings during Bible study.

Weston FBC Ordains a Deacon

On Sunday, February 9th, Weston First Baptist Church (Broad Run) had a deacon ordination service for Andy Darby. The church has also been engaging their community for Christ through the Carson Center. In this building, the church provides a free meal once a month, provides free coats/hats, collects disaster relief supplies and meets numerous other community needs.



Deacon ordination of Andy Darby at Weston First Baptist Church

Southwest Area News

by *Evan Arkell, Southwest Area Minister*

Prayer Book Travels Through the KVA



A delegation from Emmanuel Baptist traveled to Clendenin First Baptist to join them in prayer.

At last year's WVBC Annual Meeting, we kicked off a prayer initiative, inviting our churches to pray with one another and for one another. To help facilitate this initiative, four prayer books were designed that are currently traveling church to church around the state. In my area, the prayer book started in the Kanawha Valley Association.

Emmanuel Baptist Church was asked to start the book in our region. The reason this is significant is because Emmanuel Baptist will also be hosting our WVBC Annual Meeting later in October. Our hope is that all four prayer books make their way through each church in time to be prayed over once more by our entire WVBC family in October. We are grateful for Pastor Don Biram and the other leaders at Emmanuel Baptist who helped get this started.

Once it finishes its way through the Kanawha Valley Association, it will then travel to the Coal River Association. Be on the lookout or feel free to reach out to make sure your church is included!

Southeast Area News

by *Jon Villers, Southeast Area Minister*

A Volunteer Appreciation Gala

Written by *Corey Books*
Senior Pastor, Breckenridge Missionary Baptist Church

Pastors, if you're looking for a way to honor your volunteers while strengthening the heart of your ministry, here is an idea that's worked for us: hosting a Volunteer Appreciation Gala.

For the past three years, we have gathered our volunteers to celebrate their hard work. But this year, we took it up a notch with a gala theme. We encouraged a semi-formal dress code (though it wasn't required) and pulled out all the stops—a red carpet, great food and even a 360 video booth. It was a night to remember and one that made a real impact on our team.



Breckenridge Missionary Baptist rolled out the red carpet to celebrate their volunteers.

More than just a fun evening, this event has become a key moment in our church's calendar. It's an opportunity to pour into the people who pour so much into the ministry. Volunteers are the backbone of the church, serving in roles like greeters, worship team members, children's ministry teachers, sound techs and more. They're the ones who help create an atmosphere where lives can be changed for God's glory. This night is our way of reminding them that everything they do matters for the Kingdom.

But the purpose of the night goes deeper than appreciation. It's also a time to worship together, share the vision for the coming year and rally everyone around the same goals. We use this event for vision casting — sharing where we believe God is leading us as a church and how each volunteer plays a vital role in that mission. It's a chance to align our hearts and remind everyone that their service is about more than tasks; it's about impacting lives for eternity.

You don't have to go all out with a gala theme—this idea can work with any style that fits your church's culture. The key is to create an intentional moment to honor your team, worship together and build unity. Whether it's a casual dinner, a family-friendly BBQ or a fun game night, the effort you put into celebrating your volunteers will go a long way in strengthening your ministry.

So, let me encourage you: consider hosting an event like this for your volunteers. It's not just about appreciation—it's about casting vision, building relationships and reminding your team that everything they do matters. These nights have been a game-changer for our church, and I believe they can do the same for yours.

To all the volunteers who serve faithfully in their churches, thank you. You're making a difference for the Kingdom, and your work matters more than you know. Let's keep pushing forward together for the glory of God!

January — February 2025

VEDA MAY MCNEMAR COTTRILL, 91, of Copen, died on January 5, 2025. She was a member of Providence Baptist Church.

HELEN JOYCE “COOKIE” HALL, 83, of Ripley, died on January 27, 2025. She was a member of Grass Lick Baptist Church, where she served in the women’s missions, Awana and several other ministries. She also retired from the WVBC, where she served at Parchment Valley Conference Center for over 20 years as the administrative assistant.

EDRA LOUISE GRIMM, 90, of West Union, died on February 28, 2025. She was a member of South Fork Baptist Church, where she served as treasurer, superintendent and church clerk.

LOIS EVELYN GRAVES HOLBERT, 97, of Bridgeport, died on January 29, 2025. She was a member of Simpson Creek Baptist Church, where she was a member of the Lora D. Kirby Circle, sang in the choir, played piano for the children’s Sunday School and participated in the handbell choir.

RAYMOND LEWIS LUSK, 92, of Parkersburg, died on January 13, 2025. He was a member of Emmanuel Baptist Church, where he served as president of the Harvester Class, deacon, board member, baptismal caretaker and director of Baptist Youth Fellowship. He also assisted with Wednesday night family meals.

GLORIA LEE HARRISON MCCALLISTER, 94, of Southside, died on March 1, 2025. She was a member of Harmony Baptist Church, where she served frequently played special music, helped with Vacation Bible School and promoted missions. She and her husband Fred went on a mission trip to Nicaragua in 1978 and helped build a church, bringing the gospel to the small village. She also frequently promoted and collected items for the Weirton Christian Center.

STEPHEN JOE MILLER, 81, of Normantown, died on February 4, 2025. He was a member of Rush Run Baptist Church, where he served as a teacher and deacon.

LADENE CAROLYN LIVELY NORRIS, 94, of Crab Orchard, died on January 20, 2025. She was a member of Crab Orchard Baptist Church, where she was a member of the choir and the Friendship Sunday School class.

WINSTON R. O’NEAL, 86, of Fayetteville, died on January 17, 2025. He served as pastor of Lansing Baptist Church (Hopewell Association), Cunard Baptist Church, Gatewood Baptist Church (Fayette Association) and retired from Bethel Baptist Church.

MARY KATHRYN “KATHY” RAMSEY ROBERTSON, 67, died on August 28, 2024. She was a member of Peterstown Missionary Baptist Church, where she served as church clerk and a trustee.

ALICE FAYE SNYDER, 88, of Kingwood, died on January 27, 2025. She was a member of Albright Baptist Church, where she served as treasurer, taught Sunday School and helped with Vacation Bible School.

JUDY SPENCER, 81, of Sistersville, died on February 10, 2025. She was a member of Sistersville First Baptist Church, where she served as the choir director.

Leadership Updates

NATASHA EVANS to Elkins First Baptist Church as director of children’s / youth ministry 12/1/2024

RAYMOND BUTCHER to Gauley Bridge Baptist Church as pastor 1/27/2025

MINISTRY EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Lead Pastor (Part-Time)

Location: Princeton area

Associate Pastor for Families (Full-Time)

Location: Charleston area

Director of Music (Part-Time)

Location: Beckley area

Pastor of Student Ministries (Full-Time)

Location: Hurricane area

Youth Director (Part-Time)

Location: Marion County

Pastor to Youth (Part-Time)

Location: Jackson County

Pastor (Full-Time)

Location: Barbour County

Student Ministries Pastor (Full-Time)

Location: Parkersburg area

Senior Pastor (Part-Time)

Location: Huntington area

Church Pianist (Part-Time)

Location: Charleston area

Music Director (Part-Time)

Location: Charleston area

Are you interested in learning more about any of these positions? Or is there a position at your church that you want to advertise? If so, contact Todd McClure at todd@wvbc.org.

To see a list of available positions, visit: www.wvbc.org

Prayer Calendars

April 2025

APRIL 1 – The ministry of Pleasant Grove Baptist Church (Good Hope Association)
APRIL 2 – Theresa Truax, member of the WVBC Outreach Commission
APRIL 3 – The ministry of Everson Baptist Church; Robert Tennant, pastor (Fairmont Association)
APRIL 4 – Women’s Camp happening this weekend at Camp Cowen
APRIL 5 – Maria Angelica Mainecul, International Ministries Global Servant to Spain
APRIL 6 – Rebecca Stanton, International Ministries Global Servant to Hungary
APRIL 7 – The ministry of Hopewell Baptist Church; Joseph Michael Anderson, pastor (Hopewell Association)
APRIL 8 – Susan Hegarty, International Ministries Global Servant to Costa Rica
APRIL 9 – Matt Man, International Ministries Global Servant to Southeast Asia
APRIL 10 – The ministry of Romney First Baptist Church; Scott Whetzel, pastor (Eastern Association)
APRIL 11 – The ministry of Deep Water Baptist Church; Thomas Skaggs, pastor (Fayette Association)
APRIL 12 – AB Men Work Party happening at Parchment Valley
APRIL 13 – Greg O’Neal, trustee and member of the WVBC Stewardship Commission
APRIL 14 – Shigemi Tomita, International Ministries Global Servant to Japan
APRIL 15 – Ginny Prunty, Administrative Assistant to the Executive Minister, WVBC
APRIL 16 – The ministry of Weston First Baptist Church; Mark Evans, pastor (Broad Run Association)
APRIL 17 – Kelley Epling, member of the WVBC Leadership Commission
APRIL 18 – The ministry of Milton Baptist Church; Jim Butcher, pastor (Guyandotte Association)
APRIL 19 – Brian Smith, International Ministries Global Servant to the Dominican Republic
APRIL 20 – CELEBRATE THE RISEN CHRIST!
APRIL 21 – The ministry of Gassaway Baptist Church; Mark Stump, pastor (Elk Valley Association)
APRIL 22 – The ministry of Handley Baptist Church; James R. “Cook” Baldwin, pastor (Kanawha Valley Association)
APRIL 23 – The ministry of Hepzibah Baptist Church; Fred Hawkins, pastor (Judson Association)
APRIL 24 – Corenne Smith, International Ministries Global Servant to Brazil
APRIL 25 – Greg Boso, member of the WVBC Discipleship Commission
APRIL 26 – AB Men Work Party happening at Camp Cowen
APRIL 27 – The ministry of Shuck Memorial Baptist Church; Jonathan Turner, pastor (Greenbrier-Raleigh Association)
APRIL 28 – Thelma Nambu, International Ministries Global Servant to the Philippines
APRIL 29 – Joyce Reed, International Ministries Global Consultant
APRIL 30 – The ministry of Forks of Coal Missionary Baptist Church (Coal River Association)

May 2025

MAY 1 – The ministry of Freeman’s Creek Baptist Church; Kenneth Miller, pastor (Broad Run Association)
MAY 2 – Sarah Matos, International Ministries Global Servant to Mexico
MAY 3 – The WVBC Executive Board / Commission Meetings happening today at Parchment Valley
MAY 4 – The ministry of Beckley First Baptist Church; Bryan Knight, pastor (Greenbrier-Raleigh Association)
MAY 5 – The ministry of Grafton First Baptist Church; Kenneth Heiney, pastor (Union Association)
MAY 6 – The Spring Golden’ers Retreat happening at Parchment Valley
MAY 7 – Nora Kalkman, International Ministries Global Servant to Europe, Middle East and Liberia
MAY 8 – The ministry of Mount Zion Baptist Church (Fairmont Association)
MAY 9 – The ministry of Zion Baptist Church (Teays Valley Association)
MAY 10 – The ministry of Beulah Ann Missionary Baptist Church; Greg Lunsford, pastor (Guyandotte Association)
MAY 11 – Karen Hall-Dundas, member of the WVBC Leadership Commission
MAY 12 – Nzunga Mabudiga, International Ministries Global Servant to the Dominican Republic
MAY 13 – BCM Beach Week happening this week at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina
MAY 14 – The ministry of Sand Fork Baptist Church; Tony Conrad, pastor (Little Kanawha Association)
MAY 15 – The ministry of Cyclone Missionary Baptist Church; Stephen Walls, pastor (Rockcastle Association)
MAY 16 – Lou Ann Nicholas, member of the WVBC Discipleship Commission
MAY 17 – Summer Kickoff / Youth Work Party / Sunny Day Activity Center Dedication happening this weekend at Camp Cowen
MAY 18 – Laura Freeman, International Ministries Global Servant to Turkey
MAY 19 – The ministry of Hopewell Baptist Church; Andrew Robinson, pastor (Good Hope Association)
MAY 20 – Hermelinda Damasceno, International Ministries Global Servant to United Kingdom
MAY 21 – Lee Ann Hwang, International Ministries Global Servant to Japan
MAY 22 – Karen Harper, member of the WVBC Stewardship Commission
MAY 23 – The ministry of Swiss Missionary Baptist Church; Gene Truman, pastor (Hopewell Association)
MAY 24 – The ministry of Cyrus Baptist Church; Manfred Langer, pastor (Twelve Pole Association)
MAY 25 – Monty Foster, chair of the Baptist Campus Ministry Board and member of the WVBC Outreach Commission
MAY 26 – Wayne Niles, International Ministries Global Servant to the Democratic Republic of the Congo
MAY 27 – The ministry of Cedar Grove Baptist Church; Tom Hudson, pastor (Kanawha Valley Association)
MAY 28 – Lynette Smith, International Ministries Global Servant to the Dominican Republic
MAY 29 – The ministry of Shinnston First Baptist Church; Kevin Nuzum, pastor (Judson Association)
MAY 30 – The ministry of Orlando Baptist Church; Scott Posey, pastor (Elk Valley Association)
MAY 31 – The ministry of North Parkersburg Baptist Church; Michael Towner, pastor (Parkersburg Association)

West Virginia Baptist Convention staff and missionaries listed are on the occasion of their birthday.

Upcoming Events

APRIL

April 4

Pastors4Pastors Book Study
Calvary Baptist Church, Oak Hill

April 4-6

Women's Camp
Camp Cowen

April 11-12

AB Men Work Party
Parchment Valley Conference Center

April 25-26

AB Men Work Party
Camp Cowen

April 26

Bobby Wood School of Christian Studies: Worship and Music (E-03)
Parchment Valley Conference Center

April 27

Camp Cowen Sunday
Various locations

May 12-18

BCM Beach Week
Myrtle Beach, SC

May 15

Bobby Wood School of Christian Studies: Leading People (M-05)
Online

May 15

Bobby Wood School of Christian Studies: Community Ministry (Mod-05)
Online

May 16-17

Summer Kick-Off
Camp Cowen

May 17

Sunny Day Activity Center Dedication
Camp Cowen

JUNE

June 6-8

Younger Midler Camp (Grades 2-4)
Camp Cowen

June 8

ABWM Annual Conference
Parchment Valley Conference Center

June 8-14

Junior High 1 Camp (Grades 7-9)
Camp Cowen

June 13

Pastors4Pastors Book Study
Parkersburg First Baptist Church

June 15-20

Brothers' Keeper
Parchment Valley Conference Center

June 15-21

Junior 1 Camp (Grades 5-6)
Camp Cowen

MAY

May 2

WVBC Executive Committee Meeting
Parchment Valley Conference Center

May 3

WVBC Executive Board and Commission Meetings
Parchment Valley Conference Center

May 5-7

Spring Golden'eers Retreat
Parchment Valley Conference Center

May 6

Bobby Wood School of Christian Studies: Church History (H-01)
Various locations

Newsletter Submissions

Send submissions for *The West Virginia Baptist* to: thewvbaptist@wvbc.org or mail submissions to the West Virginia Baptist Convention, Attention: Todd McClure, P.O. Box 1019, Parkersburg, West Virginia, 26102. If you are submitting text, send typed copy only. We also accept hard copy and digital photos of 300 dpi (dots per inch). Please include a caption for your photo and your name and address if you want your photo returned.

Deadline for submission is the 3rd of odd numbered months.

The **West Virginia Baptist** is a newsletter of the West Virginia Baptist Convention..

PO Box 1019, Parkersburg, WV 26102;
304-422-6449, US Postage Paid at
Parkersburg, West Virginia

Executive Minister: Dr. Michael Sisson

Editor/Layout: Mr. Todd McClure

Assistant Editor: Mrs. Ginny Prunty

West Virginia Baptist Convention
P.O. Box 1019
Parkersburg, WV 26102-1019



mountain state MISSION OFFERING

Will your church make it a priority this year to collect the **Mountain State Mission Offering**? With this offering 100% stays within West Virginia to support our various ministries.

Resources are available on our website and will be mailed to churches in early April.

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permitting No. 36
Parkersburg, WV