

The West Virginia Baptist Newsletter



December 2020 - January 2021

2021 Here We Come!

It is with great anticipation that we begin to look toward the possibilities for ministry in 2021! One thing we know for sure is God is very much in control! Therefore, we are striving to align ourselves, both as individual Christians and as a convention family of churches, with His will and mission as our hearts desire. “Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust Him, and He will help you” (Psalm 37:5).

We cannot know what surprises 2021 may hold, and in many ways, it doesn't really matter. The God we serve is not only not limited by life's challenges, on the contrary, His grace is often more evident and powerful because of them. As Tod Bolsinger reminds us, “This is a divine moment. This is an opportunity to express even more clearly what it means to follow and serve the God who is King of the entire world.”

First and foremost, the vision we believe God has called us to as West Virginia Baptists always finds its foundation in the gospel of Jesus Christ. By many estimates, West Virginia continues to be 89% unreached, so our work to communicate the gospel must always be before us. Focusing on evangelism and discipleship is a thread that runs through all the ministries we participate in. This is a key part of our shared mission of **doing Christ's work together**.

This year, in addition to remarkable ministries such as Camp Cowen, Parchment Valley Conference Center, Baptist Campus Ministry, Brothers' Keeper and the Bobby Wood School of Christian Studies, we will continue to focus on the young leaders God is raising up for Christian service both here and abroad. Ministry and missionary internships continue to assist people in identifying and responding to God's call on their lives. Mentoring relationships will continue to assist leaders as they strive to serve with excellence in their places of ministry.

Recent months have revealed new opportunities for evangelism and discipleship through digital media. Currently, we have launched learning groups from West Virginia who are participating with others from all over the country to discover how best to engage in meaningful ways with the people viewing their live

streams and Facebook pages each Sunday. The goal is to learn ways to build the necessary relationships that lead to opportunities for evangelism and discipleship. We even have a new term to describe it, “phygital,” which is simply the words physical and digital combined. As former West Virginian Tyler Sansom, lead pastor of Church Anywhere, explains, “Relationships trump digital 100% of the time.”

Other focal points of ministry this year will be an emphasis by the Discipleship Commission on “Family Discipleship” and “Discipling your Grandchildren.” The emphasis of the Outreach Commission will be on “Church Planting, Partnering and Revitalization,” along with the “phygital” initiative. The Leadership Commission will continue to focus on leader development, including a digital version of the Annual Training Event in February. And the Stewardship Commission continues to work to strengthen our partnership in mission support and participation. This includes always seeking new ways to identify and equip people who feel called to the mission field.

These are just a few highlights of the work we do together as a family of churches. They are ministries we cannot do alone. In 2021 we need individuals and churches to continue to “Hold the Rope” for our work together with your financial support. The “Hold the Rope” emphasis was off to a great start, and your generous support was greatly appreciated, however, the pandemic interrupted the progress as it did in many areas of ministry and life. So, we are asking for you to prayerfully consider “Holding the Rope” again in 2021 to raise the necessary support to ensure the ministries we do together as a convention family continue strong in 2021 and beyond. Finances alone are not enough. We need your continuous prayers and faithful participation as well. There is a mission field right outside your door and we can reach it for Christ by working together!

*Richest of Blessings,
Mike Sisson*

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



West Virginia Baptist Convention

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Rope Holder Initiative

by **Todd McClure**, Minister of Missions and Finance

Thank You for Holding the Rope

When the Rope Holder initiative was launched, no one could have imagined how critical this program would become. Impacted heavily by the pandemic, God used rope holders to sustain - and in some cases save - the ministries of the West Virginia Baptist Convention (WVBC). The initial vision was to use these funds to rebuild reserves to a healthy enough level to assist in planting new churches and starting new ministries. Instead, God, in His foresight, chose to use the pandemic to start new ministries, and He used rope holders to help us endure a global financial crisis. With camps closed and support from offerings down (due to churches not meeting in-person to collect those offerings), God has used rope holders in powerful ways this year.

To date, 183 individuals and 20 churches/associations have given to the Rope Holder initiative. Many have given well beyond the \$20/month goal, giving a combined total of more than \$60,000 in 2020. This is in addition to the nearly \$18,000 that was given in 2019 following our Annual Meeting.

To put the impact of rope holders into perspective:

Last year at this time, the WVBC was nearly \$150,000 in the red (meaning we were set to pull from reserves for the 12th straight year).

This year, the WVBC is just over \$2,000 in the black, on pace to finish in the positive despite a global financial crisis.

A big reason for that is our rope holders!

As we near the end of 2020, a big thank you goes out to everyone who has financially held the rope this year. God has used you in powerful ways to help us reach people with the gospel. A thank you also goes out to every church that has continued to support the WVBC this year through any of the following means:

- **Mountain State Mission Offering** (We receive 100% of your support from this offering.)
- **Designated WVBC support** (We also receive 100%.)
- **United Missions** (We receive 64%.)
- **ABW Ministries' Love Gift Offering** (We receive 54%.)
- **America for Christ Offering** (We receive 29%.)

As we move into the next year of ministry together, I want to ask again: **Will you hold the rope in 2021?** Rope holders are critical to our mission of **doing Christ's work together**.

Become a Rope Holder!

You can become a rope holder using any of the following options:

- Scan the QR code with your phone and sign up now,
- Visit www.wvbc.org and click "Give Online,"
- Fill out and mail in the Rope Holder card included in this newsletter.





West Virginia Baptist Convention
"Cross-"Training for the Kingdom!
Annual Training Event

Saturday, February 6, 2021
Online Event

We will be presenting the following workshops:

- *The Benefits and How to's of Online Giving*
- *Biblical Grandparenting*
- *Clerks*
- *Deacons*
- *Discipleship at Home*
- *Global Missions in 2021 and Beyond*
- *New Life and Second Chances*
- *Phygital (Physical + Digital): Reach and Engage*
- *Treasurers*
- *Trustees*

Look for registration information in the December Pastors' Mailing.

Church Planting Update

by David Hulme, Director

Physical + Digital = Phygital

"Then He said to His disciples, '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 (ESV)

I believe the biggest harvest field today is online. Actually, it has been for a long time, it's just that COVID-19 has made me keenly aware of it. Today, the internet reaches 4.57 billion people. That's 59% of the world's population. Some of them watch your church service on Facebook or YouTube every week ... many of whom are unchurched.

That's a staggering number and you might think reaching them is beyond your church's capabilities. You might say, "We don't have the technology, personnel, equipment or knowhow to get involved in something that big." However, you're not necessarily responsible for all 4.57 billion.

Think about it this way. Did you know there are 915 million acres of farmland in the world? If you're a farmer in West Virginia, are you responsible for all 915 million acres? Of course not. However, you are responsible for your farm and each acre it covers.

So, church, what's the acreage of the harvest field for which you are responsible? Is it the size of your community, your

county or a larger area? Regardless of size, do some of those 4.57 billion people online live on one of your acres?

Whether by design or out of necessity, a majority of our churches have some type of online presence. It might be your worship service, Bible study or another ministry. What if you could leverage that digital online presence to reach and engage the unchurched, thereby growing your physical church? Well, actually you can. The process is called "Phygital."

Over the past several months, some West Virginia Baptist Convention pastors and staff have been investing a great deal of time in learning about Phygital and how its concepts can be adapted to help our churches (large and small) reach and make disciples of those living in their own harvest field. Not only are we learning, but we are finding and implementing strategies in the areas of evangelism, discipleship, church planting and partnering, student ministry and much more.

Just as innovation and technology has improved farming since Jesus' day, so has it vastly increased our ability to go into the church's harvest field. Want to find out how it can help you make disciples? Please contact me at hulme@wvbc.org.

Interns - Looking to the Future

*Written by Don Biram, senior pastor,
Emmanuel Baptist Church (Kanawha Valley)*

We were honored to have had the opportunity to host two summer interns through the West Virginia Baptist Convention (WVBC). We were blessed with Chloe Cook and Kayla Starcher. Initially in January, we were planning to have the two interns help us review our online presence, update and enhance our web presence, assist us with steps toward beginning livestreaming our worship services and assist us with issues in branding. That was the plan we began to develop at the start of the year. With the arrival of COVID-19, we reallocated and accelerated their responsibilities and the interns were assisting us with livestreaming and web presence by their third week of the summer. The Lord had arranged prior to COVID-19 two interns with the skill sets we needed to help our church move from an outdated website to daily web devotions, online Bible study and livestreamed worship services. These two worked with our staff and volunteers to not only establish new areas of ministry, but to provide us with tools, education and guides to see their work have sustainability into the future after they completed their ten-week internship. They also stepped in to help with our weeklong CEF (Child Evangelism Fellowship) Bible Club during the summer. They integrated into our staff seamlessly and became a contributing part of our church family. We were richly blessed through their presence and they were appreciated and loved by our church family.

We encourage our sister churches of the WVBC family to assess their current/future needs and consider hosting a summer intern through the convention next year. It is a wonderful opportunity to see renewal and energy invested into your church life as well as to offer a young, upcoming leader a chance to exercise their God-given abilities and gifts while exploring ways God may

be calling them for ministry. You not only provide the interns a place to grow spiritually and vocationally, but you allow your church the opportunity to see God nurture growth within your fellowship. We are deeply appreciative of Kayla and Chloe for investing their summer in our church family and ministry on the west side of Charleston.



Don Biram, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church, and Chloe Cook, intern, present a quilt made by ladies of Emmanuel Baptist Church.

Interested in Interning in One of our WVBC Churches?

The **Ministry Internship Program** provides individuals with the opportunity to explore their long-term calling to ministry by giving them a chance to serve within our family of churches and placing them under the guidance of a mentor for a summer-long internship. Internship opportunities are customizable to the interests of the applicant, but include pastoral ministry, youth ministry, worship ministry, technology or intercultural ministry. Several of our previous interns now serve on staff at churches around our state.

For individuals who are interested in interning next summer, or for churches that are interested in hosting an intern, contact Mark McCloy at mccloy@wvbc.org.

Application Deadline: December 31, 2020



Zach Carder (r), intern at Philippi Baptist Church (Union), assists Joe Bowen (l), pastor at Valley Bend Baptist Church (Union), in baptizing Robert.

Serving Children in Challenging Times

In this season of gratitude, all of us at the Weirton Christian Center are so thankful for our West Virginia Baptist family! In spite of this challenging year, you have continued to support our ministry and meet our needs!

We are most concerned about our children. When schools closed last spring, we continued to feed them - delivering up to 150 meals a day. Now that they are back in the center, we are serving around 70 meals a day to the preschool students and still delivering meals to others. If our schools close again, we want to continue to be there to help our children with their schoolwork. Please pray this can safely happen.

Our mission is not only to help them learn, but also make sure they have what they need - school supplies, clothing, shoes, food and most importantly, Jesus. All of our kids are learning scripture verses to hide in their hearts, they are talking through things like fear and anxiety and they are learning about what God expects of them and how treat others. For some, we are their safe place. We need your prayers for the Lord's will in all we do!

Recently, we have started a new program called, "Never Alone Kids," which serves as a grief support group for children who have lost a person close to them. With the opioid epidemic and the large amount of drug overdoses, many of our kids have lost parents. With many grandparents now responsible for raising

their grandchildren, these children need to learn to cope and know that others are experiencing similar feelings. For this ministry, we have trained 15 volunteers who are working with these children.

We are also going back to our roots to offer Hispanic services to those who may not speak English. This year, with the help of one of our staff members, Jessenya Brown, we were able to register three Hispanic children

whose parents do not speak English. We hope to extend this service and help these parents receive all the services they need. When the center began in 1917, the ministry helped immigrants like these learn English and receive citizenship and support. The Weirton Christian Center has now been doing this for 103 years!



Billie, an employee with the center, prays with some younger children.

Valma Adams, WVBC Office Manager, Retires



Valma Adams

On November 2, 2020, following a West Virginia Baptist Convention (WVBC) staff meeting, several former staff members and friends joined the meeting to celebrate the retirement of Valma Adams, who served as office manager for the WVBC for 17 years. In addition to the current WVBC staff, others that were present included Valma's husband, Mark; her daughter and son-in-law, Rhonda and J.D. Reed; David and Janey Carrico; Lloyd and Barbara Hamblin; Mike Stephens; Karen Radcliff and Joan Hall (who also retired from her WVBC administrative role in 2020). It was a great opportunity to thank Valma for her faithful service to our WVBC family.

As part of Valma's retirement, Teresa Miller has transitioned into a hybrid role, where she will continue to serve as associate director of Parchment Valley Conference Center, but she will also now serve as WVBC Office Manager. Some of Valma's other responsibilities have been divided up among other administrative staff.

Mike Sisson, executive minister, said of Valma, "While she has many gifts and talents, I really appreciated the spirit of kindness and caring that Valma brought to her leadership role with the administrative staff. Her gentle spirit was priceless in creating a genuine Christian workplace atmosphere in which I believe everyone enjoyed working. I thank the Lord for her."

We are grateful for Valma's faithful service, as she has been a critical part of our mission of *doing Christ's work together*.

Fall Events Recap

Written by Sue Hamrick, Communication's Coordinator,
American Baptist Women's Ministries

2020 Spiritual Growth Retreat - "Trash to Treasure"

Even though this annual, in-person event was cancelled because of COVID-19, we were still able to experience and absorb the theme-based, thought-provoking and inspirational messages by keynote speaker Dr. Mary Beth McCloy, who voluntarily recorded three sessions. While we grieve the absence of our time together at the beautiful Parchment Valley Conference Center, we are so very thankful for our American Baptist Women's Ministries' (ABWM) coordinator and her choice of both theme and speaker.

2020 Annual Women's Day Meeting

Also, because of the pandemic, we were denied the privilege of traveling to one of the most beautiful parts of our state and enjoying the fall foliage and the hospitality of the good folks at Summersville Baptist Church (Hopewell). We, nevertheless, held our Annual Women's Day meeting, albeit via Zoom.

We heard updates from the coordinators on the progress of finances of our annual ministry projects as well as thoughts and ideas to bring those goals to fruition in 2021, we also watched informative videos by each of the four upcoming 2021 WV Hope programs and we heard from two of our West Virginia global servants.



Women's Day 2020 was held via Zoom.

We celebrated the 100th birthday of the ABWM Scholarship/Loan Program as well as the 20th year of service by its coordinator, who has established the logistics of the program from the ground up and has updated and modernized them. Additionally, we eagerly learned from the president of the Panhandle Association about the life, person and ABWM involvement of Doris Newhart, who recently bequeathed a generous endowment to the scholarship program.

To wrap up the entire meeting, even this entire year, around an idea, Global Servant Debbie Myers introduced us to the "Palm Tree Theology." Did you know palm trees can withstand hurricane force winds because of the depth and complexity of their root system? They may bend, but after the winds subside, they once again stand upright. Such an analogy for us - after the storm, it is possible that we, too, can remain upright if we are rooted in God's word. "Flexibility is the key to weathering the storms in your life."

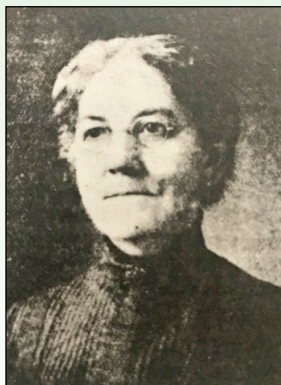
Leaving a Legacy: Elizabeth Johnson Carter

Written by Koreen Villers,
director of Discipleship Ministries

The American Baptist Women's Ministries of West Virginia has been reaching women around our state with the gospel since 1883. Here is the story of how this ministry began:

Elizabeth Johnson Carter began hearing about women's mission work and its progress in other parts of our country around 1871. The corresponding secretary of the Chicago Society eventually wrote to Elizabeth, asking her to become the leader for the women in West Virginia. She initially declined, supposing the responsibility was too great to enlist other women to serve.

In June of 1879, Elizabeth attended the General Association (akin to the West Virginia Baptist Convention Annual Meeting) that was located in Morgantown. All the business was centered on state missions, and there were numerous stirring appeals to carry on this work. Moved by the force of those appeals, she thought, "Surely, the Baptist women of the state can be reached by appeals like these. Surely they will feel under some obligation to those of their own household - those of their own state - if not to their sisters across the sea." Pledges for the work were being taken during the meeting, and she said that



Elizabeth Johnson Carter

an inward voice seemed to tell her, "Pledge \$15.00 for the women of your church, Parkersburg First Baptist Church (Parkersburg). Perhaps they will organize for state missions and give it; if not, tell them you will pay it in their name. The task of beginning this work is yours. Leave results with God."

God blessed Elizabeth's willingness to serve Him, and the first local women's mission society was organized at Parkersburg First Baptist Church in November 1879. That same month, another women's circle organized at Willow Island Church. By 1881, a total of 54 local women's circles had been organized and were contributing to state and foreign missions.

When the West Virginia Women's Mission Society was formed and accepted at the general assembly in Clarksburg in 1883, Elizabeth was rightly elected the first state women's president. She served in that role until 1889.

We are grateful for the courage and the obedience of Elizabeth Johnson Carter to start what is now known as the American Baptist Women's Ministries of West Virginia. This ministry continues to be an important part of our mission of **doing Christ's work together.**

Children's Fall Rally at Church or at Home

"Say Whaaat?" was the theme for the 2020 Children's Fall Rally at Church or at Home. Unfortunately, we could not do our traditional rally at Parchment Valley, so the leadership team created four sessions that could be used in a variety of ways. It could be used as a day-long event with four different sessions at church or watched at home. Each session included a recorded teaching by one of our incredible teachers, a skit or video to further explain the lesson point, a game, Bible verse memorization and music. The teachers included Jennifer Curkendall, Zach Stevens and Levi and Hannah Casto. A special thank you to Caleb Villers for creating the user friendly lesson links.

A few of the churches chose to purchase a registration to give to each family in their church so the families could have the rally at home. Other churches opted to use a session a week for four weeks at their church instead of their regular lessons. Several of the churches planned a day-long rally at their church using all four sessions in one day. However the churches decided to use the sessions provided, the children of the West Virginia Baptist Convention had a wonderful time learning how to store up treasures in Heaven and how to live without worry. Children learned how to get rid of the "old" way of thinking and embrace the "Jesus" way of thinking.

Beulah Ann Baptist Church (Guyandotte) opted to use a session a week for four weeks. Brenda Meadows said "Kids loved "Say Whaaat?" The lesson with Jennifer was awesome, our kids

always look forward to her teaching. The banana object lesson, the game and the Bible verse memorization added extra fun."

Hepzibah Baptist Church (Union) opted to do a day-long event on November 7, 2020. Haley Grogg had this to say about the event: "The kids loved it! It was nice to do something like this today! It made my heart happy as a Children's Ministry Leader to have a little "normalcy." Thank you so much for making this happen!"

Use www.wvbc.org to register for the Children's Fall Rally at Church or at Home (\$10) and we will send you the user friendly links to use in your Children's Ministry.



Ministers' Wives' Encouragement Zoom

Written by Nikalee Turner

The Ministers' Wives' Fellowship met via Zoom on October 17, 2020 for an encouraging hour together! After being welcomed by Nikalee Turner, Carmen Boso led the group in a powerful devotion. Looking at various women in the Bible that Jesus chose to interact with, affirming their value, she reminded us we are no different than those women and we are wonderful without all of our various titles. Carmen's mother, Jeanne Lowe, also shared with the group about her journey in ministry with several stories that touched all our hearts. She reminded us we are all gifted differently and there is no set way to be a pastor's wife. We were encouraged to let people see our real selves because it can help them relate to us, to keep our eyes on Jesus and always be in awe of the privilege of serving the Lord and His people. We then split into several smaller groups to talk and get to know each other and discuss the devotion. It was wonderful to hear several different generations of women sharing their hearts and experiences in ministry together.

One attendee said of our time, "What a beautiful hour, it left me wanting more." Another person said, "This was a much needed time, I look forward to the next one!"

If you missed our first Encouragement Zoom, you can find a recording on our "West Virginia Baptist Convention Ministers' Wives' Fellowship" Facebook page. This is also a great place to stay in touch with one another!

If you are interested in joining us for our second Encouragement Zoom, we invite you to join us on Saturday, January 23, 2021 from 2-3 p.m. Please RSVP to Nikalee Turner by texting 304.646.7285 or by e-mailing Amy Bush at amybethbush@outlook.com. If you have already responded for the first zoom, we will send you the link again for the second one.

WVBC Family Virtual Celebration Recap



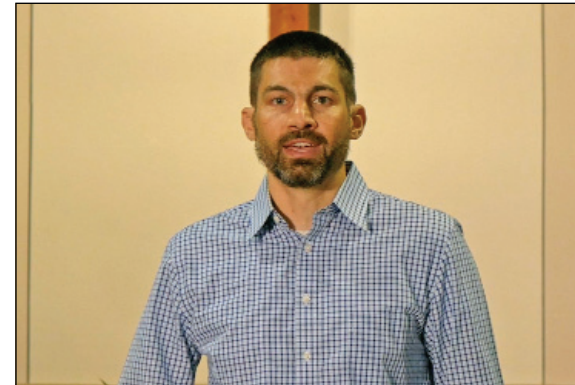
Dan Harbaugh shares the mission and vision of the American Baptist Men of West Virginia.



In Session Four, Todd McClure gave a devotion on the topic of missions, challenging churches and individuals to consider how God might want to use them in 2021 and beyond.



In his Executive Minister Address, Mike Sisson shared some of the exciting ways churches have been continuing to do Christ's work together.



West Virginia Baptist Convention (WVBC) President, Lee Boso, opened up Session One of our WVBC Family Virtual Celebration.



Koreen Villers shared some creative ways churches were continuing to minister to children.



Kathy Hudson shares about what it means to be an American Baptist Woman.



J.D. and Rhonda Reed gave a brief missions update and invited churches to take part in the World Mission Offering.



In Session Two, Matt Ash shared how pastors can get involved in Pastors4Pastors.



David Hulme cast vision for what church planting and revitalization may look like in 2021.



Beth Perry shared how God used Youth Leader Core and Youth Ministry Planning Team to change her life.



God used Camp-in-a-Box this summer to help people meet Jesus.



Kim Weaver
Weirton Christian Center

Kim Weaver gave an update on the Weirton Christian Center, thanking churches for their ongoing support during the pandemic.



Representing the WV Baptist Historical Society, Todd Godby shared a legacy story of Frank Bowen.



Mark McCloy narrated the Bobby Wood School of Christian Studies Graduation for 2020. This year's graduation class consisted of ten individuals.



During the Third Session, several students shared how God has used Baptist Campus Ministry to change their lives.



Rowena Sizemore shared about the mission outreach of Out of This World Salsa.



During Session Two, Frank and Teresa Miller gave a Parchment Valley update.



Lee Boso shared information on the WV Baptist Education Society.



The Marshall Baptist Campus Ministry alumni band opened each session with worship.



Jerry Losh gave an update on the Golden'eers' Conferences and shared their vision for 2021: "Intentional Grandparenting."

Mission Moments

COVID-19 might have prevented us from gathering for Men's Camp at Cowen this year, but it didn't quench the spirit of giving and volunteering in a time of urgency. Isaiah 6:8 is a clear reminder to serve one another: "I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' Then said I, 'Here am I; send me.'" Please continue to pray for the American Baptist Men (AB Men) of West Virginia as we continue to give and equip others to serve our Lord.

Here are a few recent highlights:



Cowen Work Party

On Saturday, October 31, 2020, 14 men gathered at Camp Cowen to fellowship and repair several cabins (see picture above). During this work day, ceilings, walls and bunks received a fresh coat of paint and David Withers also added several new LED light fixtures. This work party was done in cooperation with Camp Cowen's Adopt-a-Cabin program.



Food Drive

Another wonderful initiative that took place this fall was the AB Men's food drive (see picture above). With many church food pantries in desperate need for food and hygiene items, the men collected and delivered supplies all over the state. One of the great blessings was delivering a trailer of food and supplies to one of our Hispanic churches, made up of members from a community that has been impacted heavily by the pandemic. Their grateful response was overwhelming as the children thanked us several times for the donations.

Louisiana Disaster Relief

Lastly, a team of eight volunteers assembled on October 14, 2020 to travel to Louisiana for a week to help with the Hurricane Laura/Delta recovery mission (see picture below left). The qualified chainsaw teams cut and removed dozens of storm-blown trees from 11 disaster sites. They also completed several roof repairs, fixed numerous hot water tanks and assisted with other repair needs. This was done through the AB Men's Disaster Relief ministry that many churches and individuals contribute toward.

The mission of the American Baptist Men of West Virginia is "to bring men into a saving relationship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." Each of these service opportunities are aimed as part of that mission.

If you would like to learn more about the ministry of the AB Men or if you would like to make a donation to their ministry, contact Frank Miller at miller@wvbc.org.

With more than 100 years of committed service, the American Baptist Men of West Virginia are an important part of our overall mission of *doing Christ's work together*.

by Jillene Narraway, Associate Director of Camping and Youth

Volunteers at Cowen Ready Cabins for 2021 Camping Season



Since 1943, the West Virginia Baptist Camp at Cowen summers have been filled with campers. As 2020 brought a halt to what we knew as a “typical” summer, it did not stop the Cowen community! As the summer months ended

and the Camp-in-a-Box program drew to a close, another initiative began onsite. It started with a few families, then added in some church groups, associations got on board and then the American Baptist Men of West Virginia joined the efforts as well. What were they up to ... adopting cabins! To date, 14 cabins have been adopted and the work has begun to deep clean, make minor repairs, paint walls, ceilings and beds, update light fixtures and replace window curtains.

This labor of love brings to life Hebrews 10:24, “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds,” as groups volunteering looked to do the hard work of bettering camp for future campers. As bunk beds were moved and curtains taken down, we reflected on the last 77 years of volunteers who gave of their time to build camp and step by step

upgrade and make it better. The Adopt-a-Cabin program joins in with a long legacy of people sacrificially giving their time, talents and financial gifts to make Camp Cowen into the blessed facility we enjoy today and invest in its future!

It isn't too late to help support this program. When the weather breaks in the spring of 2021, crews of volunteers will be needed to help paint bunk beds and get the cabins back in order. Contact Jill Narraway at jill@wvbc.org or 304.210.7030 to help in the spring with this special project and look for the American Baptist Men's Work Party in April and the Youth Work Party in May.



Pea Ridge Baptist College and Career small group worked on the KVA cabin, a special place to some of their adults who counsel there.

Leaving a Legacy: Jim Crouch

“The West Virginia Baptist Convention (WVBC) may have had guys that were good over the years, but nobody better than Jim Crouch.” -Roger Adams

If you knew Jim Crouch, you know this first-hand. If you



Leaving a legacy: Jim Crouch

never met him, it's likely you've been impacted by his legacy because he embodied who we are as West Virginia Baptists. Jim loved Jesus, loved people and showed others how to do the same. Jim lived a life of integrity, doing the right things for the right reasons, he spoke up for truth, had a notable sense of humor and a commitment to his Lord, his wife and family and to the West Virginia Baptist Camp at Cowen.

Whether it was in church, at camp, on the golf course or sitting in a restaurant, you didn't have to guess what Jim thought as he plainly spoke truth and loved deeply. You can learn a lot watching people and Jim was a keen observer. While he likely

never set out to officially mentor, he lived mentorship in a genuine, spontaneous and never contrived way. Jim would make you feel like you were doing the best job in the world. If you weren't, he'd tell you that plainly too and you'd be a better person because of it! Jim never gave up on people.

As a steward, he is known for his investment of time and his generous fiscal support of people and the camping ministry. After serving on staff, he continued for more than 20 years to mow the grounds at camp. Upon his retirement from his volunteer position as “head grass cutter,” he was presented with a golden mower blade, fondly remembered for his faithful dedication to supporting the ministry, and with a chuckle, also known for his ability to hit rocks every time he mowed, without fail.

Jim Crouch isn't primarily remembered for his titles, though he filled significant roles within the WVBC: director of World Mission Support and director of the West Virginia Baptist Camp at Cowen to name a few. But it's more likely you knew him as pastor, Uncle Jim or Spike. To be remembered not for your titles, but to be remembered for your character, well, that is a legacy. His legacy lives on as the West Virginia Baptist Camp continues to be a place where people learn of the love of Jesus, transformational friendships are formed and community is key to ministry. Jim was and still is an important part of our mission of **doing Christ's work together.**

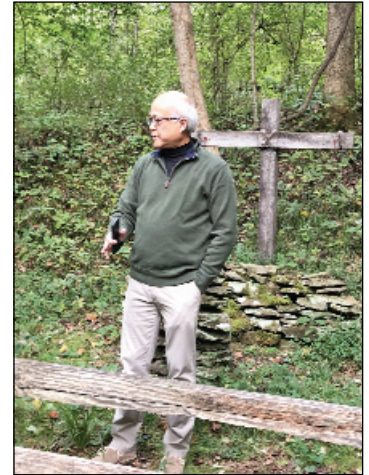
God Moves Through the Challenges

Can someone please explain to me how it got to be the Christmas season already? With all of the hustle and bustle that normally comes along with this time of year, I hope our current COVID season can allow us to slow down and enjoy the celebration of God coming to earth more this year than ever.

I have been blessed to continue to see God move through the challenges we have faced in 2020. In the last couple of months, I have had the pleasure of participating in three pastoral ordination services: Anthony Lucas, youth pastor, Genesis Fellowship (Kanawha Valley); Mark Fordyce, Gauley Bridge Baptist Church (Kanawha Valley); and Jim Adkins, pastor, Connolly Memorial Baptist Church (Logan-Mingo). It has been a true joy to witness God move in the lives of these gentlemen through the ordination process!

I want to share a special moment that my Doctor of Ministry cohort and I experienced this fall. Are you familiar with the Grapevine Chapel at Parchment Valley Conference Center? The Grapevine Chapel is a replica of the Hopevale Chapel that American Baptist missionaries established while hiding from the Japanese military during World War II. During our class time at Parchment Valley, our professor, Dr. Elmo Familiaran, took us to the Grapevine Chapel and shared a story with us about our roots of supporting and sending American Baptist missionaries throughout the world, and how his faith journey came about because of these missionaries and their faith as they became martyrs for Christ. As the missionaries were fleeing to the mountains of the

central Philippines, they reached out to and received help from a local pastor who had been influenced and theologically educated through the work of these missionaries, and had planted a church following his training. As this pastor helped find a place for the missionaries to hide and continue their work deep in the forest, he and the people of his church also took risks by helping them and doing their best to protect them. I cannot do this story justice, but there was a jaw-dropping moment when Dr. Familiaran said, "And that pastor was my grandfather." Dr. Familiaran's request was that we tell this story because it is his testimony to the power of how God's people reach so many, even in death. I urge you to look deeper into this event to help you understand the importance we share in **"doing Christ's work together!"**



Dr. Elmo Familiaran, interim executive minister and senior regional pastor at American Baptist Churches of New Jersey (retired January 2019)

To read about the 75th anniversary of the Hopevale missionaries, please visit <https://www.internationalministries.org/the-75th-anniversary-of-the-hopevale-missionaries/>.

Southeast Area News

Jim Anderson, Southeast Area Minister

Ministering to the Two Virginias



Gary Moore (l), pastor of Scott Street Baptist Church, presents Jim Anderson (r), Southeast Area Minister, with a \$2,000 check for the House of Hope in Bolivia.

On Sunday morning, September 27, 2020 at Scott Street Baptist Church (Greenbrier-Raleigh), after I shared the word of the Lord in sermon, Dr. Garry D. Moore, Sr., pastor, Scott Street Baptist Church, as a part of their yearly mission Sunday, presented a check for \$2,000 to support the House of Hope ministries in Bolivia, South America.

In presenting the check, Garry noted that ever since the church met former Bolivian missionary Mario Morales several years ago, they have made the House of Hope ministries a central part of their

goal to share the good news of Jesus Christ, not only in Bluefield, West Virginia and Virginia, but to the whole world. In those years since, the church has contributed over \$10,000 towards the House of Hope in partnership with the Greenbrier-Raleigh Association, the West Virginia Baptist Convention, and ABC/USA, which they are honored and thankful to be a part of.

I thankfully accepted their gift and reminded the church that this generous gift in Bolivian currency is worth almost \$14,000. And, due to the serious political and COVID-19 issues in Bolivia, it will literally save lives both physically and spiritually.

Finally, I praised the congregation on their faithfulness to our mission together, but also encouraged them not only as they continue to raise funds to build a new physical church structure in downtown Bluefield, but as they seek new methods and ways during this pandemic to minister to the two Virginias.

Mark McCloy, Northwest Area Minister

Water Station



*O God, you are my God;
earnestly I seek you;
my soul thirsts for you;
my flesh faints for you,
as in a dry and weary land where there is
no water.*
Psalm 63:1

Has anyone noticed all the water fountains are shut down? In stores and schools and rest areas, pretty much all public places, the water fountains are closed by order of the health department. It makes it tough to get a drink sometimes. More troubling to me are the number of self-serve drink stations in the restaurants and gas stations that are likewise shut down, as a cold soda or ice tea are often my drink of choice. In the midst of our dry and weary land, there is one drink location that still functions - the water station. Ever wonder what a kid is supposed to do if they are thirsty while at school? The solution is the water station. These are often built into the old water fountains, and are basically a place where you can fill up your own water bottle. You provide the water bottle, they provide the water.

Northeast Area News

David Hulme, Northeast Area Minister

Union Baptist Church Distributes Food in Taylor County

Members of all ages from Union Baptist Church (Union) teamed up with World Vision to distribute food to families in Taylor County. Totals from the distribution, which took place on three separate weekends this fall, show that approximately 750 families received boxes of food.

The distribution was part of the “Farms to Family” fresh foods initiative and took place at Flemington Elementary and Simpson Park. In addition to providing families with needed food, the initiative also helps farmers during this difficult period. When asked about the church’s efforts, Pastor Jerome Lewis said, “The Lord just opened the door and we stepped through it.”

Phyigital Learning Community

Pastor Phil Wayman, Clarksburg Baptist Church (Union), Pastors Rich Blain, Adam Paff and Anne Silvis, all of South Parkersburg (Parkersburg); and David Hulme, Northeast Area Minister, participated in Stadia Church Planting’s “Phyigital Church Learning Community.” This 12-week journey involved pastors and church staff from around the country who explored combining the physical and the digital (phyigital) to reach others, engage them in conversations about life and faith and provide for them a pathway to discipleship. Since that time, other groups of local pastors and staff, in conjunction with West Virginia Baptist Convention (WVBC)

Even more disturbing than the drying up of our water fountains is the spiritual and emotional dryness so many of our people and leaders are experiencing. The effects of the pandemic are more than physical. This has been a difficult time and many of the events and activities we do to bring us joy and hope have been suspended. I find myself craving an old-time fellowship dinner - and not because I’m physically hungry. There is something about sitting down with fellow Christians and breaking bread that brings me spiritual and emotional comfort. So, what are we to do? Sounds like we need a water station.

Let us remember that our God provides internal refreshment even when the physical is not possible. Jesus said, “Whoever believes in me ... ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” Find some places and ways to connect - it is possible to social distance and still be sociable - just on a smaller scale. Have a social distancing lunch with an old friend, or if that is not possible, visit on the porch. Missing the outdoors? Go for a walk or a drive in the country. But most importantly, don’t neglect your inner self. Spend time in prayer and devotion. Make some God time and some friend time, to bring refreshment to your soul.



Members of Union Baptist Church help distribute boxes of food.

staff, have formed learning communities of their own to explore how to use phyigital concepts in their individual contexts.

Additionally, David Hulme had an opportunity to attend Stadia Church Planting’s week-long “Church Planting Assessment Center” as an assessor to experience the church planter assessment process first-hand. This experience is a big step forward for our WVBC church planting initiative.

KENNETH LEE ADKINS, 68, died September 24, 2020. He was a member and currently serving as pastor of Big Union Baptist Church (Elk Valley). He served 33 years in ministry as a pastor and evangelist.

JAMES F. BECK, 80, of Vienna, died September 21, 2020. He was a member of Emmanuel Baptist Church (Parkersburg), where he sang in the choir and assisted his wife in teaching Sunday School.

ROY E. BUCK JR., 85, of Belleville, died September 15, 2020. He was a member of Belleville Baptist Church (Parkersburg), where he served as a trustee. He was an active member of the American Baptist Men, where he went on mission trips, including Nicaragua.

ALVIN RAY COX, 74, of Delaware, Ohio, died September 18, 2020. He served eight churches as pastor in the states of West Virginia, Kansas, Ohio and Indiana.

CHRISTINA MARIE CREASY, died October 17, 2020. She was a member of Mount Vernon Baptist Church (Teays Valley). She was the wife of Keith Creasy.

BERYL HARRIET (NEWTON) CURRY, 103, of Des Moines, Washington, died August 31, 2020. She was an International Ministries' (IM) alumna, who served in North East India and the Philippines.

WILMA JEAN FREEMAN DAVIS, 88, of Clarksburg, died September 5, 2020. She attended Clarksburg Baptist Church (Union), where she taught Sunday School for many years.

SARA ELIZABETH "BECKY" GODBY, 50, of Lewisburg, died November 9, 2020. She was a lifelong member of Old Greenbrier Baptist Church (Greenbrier-Raleigh). She served on many church committees including hospitality and finance, also serving at times as the church clerk and teller.

SAMUEL EDWARD HARDWICK, 77, of Ceredo, died November 2, 2020. He was a member of Seventh Avenue Baptist Church (Guyandotte), where he was a deacon and trustee.

DOLORES (DEE) QUENG HING (KOP) NELSON, 89, of Claremont, California, died August 25, 2020. She was an International Ministries' (IM) alumna, who served in Thailand.

HELEN CARUTHERS GOTHARD, 93, of Poca, died September 15, 2020. She was an active member of Poca Baptist Church (Teays Valley), where she played the piano for 70 years. There, she met the new choir director and her future husband, Harold. Her great grandfather helped found the church.

CHARLES WILLIAM "MAC" MCDONALD, JR., 74, of Bridgeport, died September 18, 2020. He had served as assistant pastor of Victory Baptist Church (Broad Run) and pastor of Brooksville Baptist Church in Calhoun County. He then joined Beulah Baptist Church (Union) and became interim pastor, deacon and adult Sunday School teacher.

JULES L. "JUDE" MCVANEY, 95, of Bridgeport, died September 17, 2020. He was an active, longtime member of Simpson Creek Baptist Church (Union), where he served as a

deacon, moderator, assistant treasurer, Sunday School teacher, trustee and choir member.

ROBERT LEE POSEY, 89, of Weston, died September 12, 2020. He was a member of Murphy's Creek Baptist Church (Broad Run), where he served as a deacon and trustee.

KENNA SCOTT "LUCKY" RAY, 75, of South Charleston, died October 20, 2020. He was a lifelong member of Bethel Baptist Church (Kanawha Valley), where he held many positions of service, was active in the choir as well as a lay minister. He was the former executive director of the American Baptist Men USA. He made numerous mission trips to Nicaragua and within the United States helping where the Lord led him. He was also a longtime member of the American Baptist Men Disaster Relief team and made many trips in and out of the state to assist with flood cleanup, home repairs and builds.

JACKIE LEE STROTHER, 82, of Bolt, died August 31, 2020. He was a faithful member of Breckenridge Missionary Baptist Church (Greenbrier-Raleigh), where he served as a deacon and trustee for many years.

CHARLES EDWARD "ED" TALBOTT, 90, of Glenville, died November 1, 2020. He was a longtime member of Glenville First Baptist Church (Little Kanawha), where he was a deacon.

CLIFFORD EUGENE "CORKY" THOMAS, JR., 69, of Kingwood, died October 7, 2020. He was a member of Kingwood Baptist Church (Goshen).

GUSTAVO EUGENIO WILSON, 106, of Managua, Nicaragua, died June 19, 2020. He was an International Ministries' (IM) and American Baptist Home Mission Society (ABHMS) alumnus, who served in Nicaragua.

Leadership Updates

REV. GROVER MORRIS to Mount Vernon Baptist Church (Teays Valley) as interim associate pastor on October 1, 2020

MRS. VICKI MORRIS to Mount Vernon Baptist Church (Teays Valley) as interim associate pastor on October 1, 2020

REV. JOHN NATHANIEL PENA to Peterstown Missionary Baptist Church (Greenbrier-Raleigh) as pastor on September 6, 2020

MR. ROBERT A. VILLERS to Glenville First Baptist Church (Little Kanawha) as youth pastor on September 1, 2020

REV. CHARLES A. WARGER to Kingwood Baptist Church (Goshen) as pastor on October 1, 2020

Trading Post

FREE PIANO - must provide movers and come to pick up. Located at Gassaway Baptist Church (Elk Valley). Pictures can be provided. For more information, please contact Rick Garavaglia at rick@gassawaybaptist.com or 304.364.8843.

December 2020

DECEMBER 1 - The ministry of Hope Baptist Church; Richard Demastus, pastor (Elk Valley)
DECEMBER 2 - Ray Schellinger, International Ministries' (IM) Global Consultant
DECEMBER 3 - The ministry of Goshen Baptist Church; Dan Meadows, pastor (Goshen)
DECEMBER 4 - The ministry of Racine First Baptist Church; Anthony Pratt, pastor (Coal River)
DECEMBER 5 - Katy Hegarty, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant (youth) to Costa Rica
DECEMBER 6 - The ministry of Two Runs Baptist Church; Jason Stutler, pastor (Good Hope)
DECEMBER 7 - The ministry of Dunbar First Baptist Church; David Keeney, pastor (Kanawha Valley)
DECEMBER 8 - David Hulme, Northeast Area Minister, West Virginia Baptist Convention
DECEMBER 9 - The ministry of Parkersburg First Baptist Church; Richard McClure, pastor (Parkersburg)
DECEMBER 10 - Ivy Wu, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant to South and East Asia
DECEMBER 11 - Paul Gutierrez, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant (youth) to South Africa
DECEMBER 12 - The ministry of Scott Street Baptist Church; Garry Moore, pastor (Greenbrier-Raleigh)
DECEMBER 13 - The ministry of Hurricane First Baptist Church; Jeff Davenport, pastor (Teays Valley)
DECEMBER 14 - The ministry of Newton Memorial Baptist Church; Curtis Harris, pastor (Hopewell)
DECEMBER 15 - Bill Clemmer, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant to the Democratic Republic of the Congo
DECEMBER 16 - Emma Witmer, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant (youth) to Thailand
DECEMBER 17 - Rovaughna Richardson, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant to Ghana
DECEMBER 18 - The ministry of Jordan Run Baptist Church; Charles Stoner, pastor (Eastern)
DECEMBER 19 - Denise Aragon, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant to Mexico
DECEMBER 20 - Mike Lowery, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant to the Democratic Republic of the Congo
DECEMBER 21 - Kevin Sions, Northern Director of Baptist Campus Ministries, West Virginia University
DECEMBER 22 - J.D. Reed, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant to Bolivia
DECEMBER 23 - The ministry of Gatewood Baptist Church; Harry Fuller, pastor (Fayette)
DECEMBER 24 - Our families as we gather together to celebrate the birth of our Savior
DECEMBER 25 - Prayer of thanksgiving for a Savior born to save the world
DECEMBER 26 - The ministry of Rock Grove Baptist Church; Benjamin Hall, pastor (Broad Run)
DECEMBER 27 - Koreen Villers, director of Discipleship Ministries, West Virginia Baptist Convention
DECEMBER 28 - David Sagar, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant to India
DECEMBER 29 - Maggie Stanton, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant (youth) to Hungary
DECEMBER 30 - Lori Mann, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant to Southeast Asia
DECEMBER 31 - The ministry of Quiet Dell Baptist Church; Edward Carpenter, pastor (Fairmont)

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

January 2021

JANUARY 1 - Pray for a blessed New Year
JANUARY 2 - The ministry of Goose Creek Baptist Church; Roger and Connie Johnson, pastors (Harrisville)
JANUARY 3 - The ministry of Shuck Memorial Baptist Fellowship; Jonathan Turner, pastor (Greenbrier-Raleigh)
JANUARY 4 - The ministry of Cyrus Baptist Church; Manfred Langer, pastor (Twelve Pole)
JANUARY 5 - Mark Juanes, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant to Thailand
JANUARY 6 - The ministry of Long Run Baptist Church; Robey Godfrey, pastor (Elk Valley)
JANUARY 7 - The ministry of Wilsonburg Baptist Church (Judson)
JANUARY 8 - Melanie Baggao, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant to Lebanon
JANUARY 9 - The West Virginia Baptist Convention Executive Board meeting today at Parchment Valley Conference Center
JANUARY 10 - Kyle Witmer, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant to Thailand
JANUARY 11 - Ann Borquist, International Ministries' (IM) Global Consultant
JANUARY 12 - The ministry of Seventh Avenue Baptist Church; Robert Withers, pastor (Guyandotte)
JANUARY 13 - The ministry of Dallas Pike Baptist Church; Jonathan Stokes, pastor (Panhandle)
JANUARY 14 - The ministry of New Found Freedom Baptist Church; Lloyd Stewart, pastor (Little Kanawha)
JANUARY 15 - The ministry of Summit Baptist Church; Larry Addair, pastor (Rockcastle)
JANUARY 16 - The ministry of Sunday Road Baptist Church; John Stiles, pastor (Hopewell)
JANUARY 17 - Silas Coats, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant (youth) to Thailand
JANUARY 18 - The ministry of Valley Bend Baptist Church; Joseph Bowen, pastor (Union)
JANUARY 19 - Ian Williams, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant (youth) to Thailand
JANUARY 20 - Andrea Fling, bookkeeper, West Virginia Baptist Convention
JANUARY 21 - The ministry of Milhoan Ridge Baptist Church; Dee Rhodes, pastor (Good Hope)
JANUARY 22 - Joseph Vo, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant to Vietnam
JANUARY 23 - The ministry of Worthington Baptist Church; Everett Palmer, pastor (Fairmont)
JANUARY 24 - The ministry of New Hill Baptist Church; Stephen Dodrill, pastor (Goshen)
JANUARY 25 - The ministry of Newark Baptist Church; William Cottrell, pastor (Parkersburg)
JANUARY 26 - Carmella Jones, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant to Hungary
JANUARY 27 - Evan Arkell, Southwest Area Minister, West Virginia Baptist Convention
JANUARY 28 - The ministry of Kanawha City Baptist Church; Donald Toler, pastor (Kanawha Valley)
JANUARY 29 - The ministry of Nitro First Baptist Church; Bobby Goldsberg, pastor (Teays Valley)
JANUARY 30 - Faye Carol Yarbrough, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant to South Africa
JANUARY 31 - The ministry of Matewan Baptist Church; Carl Butler, pastor (Logan-Mingo)

Coming Events

DECEMBER 2020

December 24-25

Christmas Holiday

West Virginia Baptist Convention Office
CLOSED

JANUARY 2021

January 1

New Year's Day Holiday

West Virginia Baptist Convention Office
CLOSED

January 5

Bobby Wood School of Christian Studies

Old Testament I (B-01) Six-Week Class

Begins

Various Locations

January 8

West Virginia Baptist Convention

Executive Committee

Parchment Valley Conference
Center/Santroek Education Center

January 9

West Virginia Baptist Convention

Executive Board and Commission

Meetings

Parchment Valley Conference
Center/Santroek Education Center

January 15

Bobby Wood School of Christian Studies

Digital Learning Initiative (DLI)

Church History (H-01) 12-Hour Class

Begins

Online

January 15

Bobby Wood School of Christian Studies

Digital Learning Initiative (DLI)

Hospital Ministry (E-04) Four-Hour Class

Begins

Online

January 18

Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday

West Virginia Baptist Convention Office
CLOSED

January 23

Ministers' Wives' Encouragement Zoom

Online

FEBRUARY

February 6

Annual Training Event

Online

February 15

President's Day Holiday

West Virginia Baptist Convention Office
CLOSED

February 23

Bobby Wood School of Christian Studies

Old Testament II (B-02) Six-Week Class

Begins

Various Locations

February 27

American Baptist Men's Prayer

Breakfast

Various Locations

MARCH

March 5

Pastors4Pastors' Event

Parchment Valley Conference Center

March 6

Annual Bible Conference

Online

March 6

Children's Spring Rally

Parchment Valley Conference Center

March 15

Bobby Wood School of Christian Studies

Digital Learning Initiative (DLI)

Caring for People (M-04) 12-Hour Class

Begins

Online

March 15

Bobby Wood School of Christian Studies

Digital Learning Initiative (DLI)

WV Baptist History (E-02) Four-Hour

Class Begins

Online

APRIL

April 2

Good Friday Holiday

West Virginia Baptist Convention Office
CLOSED

West Virginia Baptist Newsletter Submissions

Send submissions for *The West Virginia Baptist* to: thewvbaptist@wvbc.org or mail submissions to the West Virginia Baptist Convention, Attention: Donna, P.O. Box 1019, Parkersburg, West Virginia 26102. If you are submitting text, send typed copy only. We no longer accept handwritten text. 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.

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