

The West Virginia Baptist Newsletter

February - March 2021

2021: The Year of Great, Global Worship

During a “normal” year, our West Virginia Baptist Convention (WVBC) family has the privilege of commissioning more than 300 individuals annually for short-term global missions. Last year was not a normal year, but that doesn’t mean missions didn’t happen. In fact, many missiologists have suggested that God used 2020 to expedite some mission trends that were already emerging. The following are four trends I have seen within our WVBC family:

The Emerging Role of Young Adults

In a world that became increasingly digital in a matter of months, we saw numerous young adults (who already live in a largely digital world) step up to serve the Church. As we move into 2021 and beyond, these young adults will be key to reaching the nations.

Already, we have several young adults who are participating in our **Missionary Internship Program**, designed to provide them with the opportunity to explore their long-term calling to missions through summer internships. Additionally, a **Perspective Missionary Cohort** is beginning this year both to encourage and to equip those who are in the long-term missionary application process. In 2021 and beyond, we must be intentional about helping to mobilize the next generation of missionaries.

New Opportunities through Digital Platforms

It was estimated that prior to COVID, only 10% of churches in America had an online presence. Now, more than 90% are engaged in some form of digital worship. While the effectiveness of this medium is still being debated, one thing that cannot be debated is that the potential reach of the Church has grown exponentially over the past year.

Many churches in our state have already experienced this reality, as they



have had viewers (and even decisions for Christ!) from all around the world. The question for 2021 now becomes: *How can we better leverage this technology to make and multiply disciples around the globe?*

This idea of **phygital (physical + digital) discipleship** is the major emphasis of the Outreach Commission this year. But it is also one of our emphases with missions. Currently, we have a couple of individuals from the Stewardship Commission who are participating in a pilot digital mission trip alongside some of our partners in the Middle East. With nearly two-thirds of the world’s population connected to the internet, this could open a variety of new opportunities.

New Physical Opportunities

However, 2020 not only opened doors to digital opportunities, but it also opened doors to new physical opportunities. All communities were impacted by COVID, and there now becomes an increased need for medical care, education, counseling, economic development, etc. With the entire world in somewhat of a rebuild, what better time for the Church to step up and meet both the physical and spiritual needs of our world?

With vaccinations beginning, International Ministries is estimating that in-person mission trips may resume as early as the middle of spring. We have partners worldwide who are already asking for assistance.

An Increased Longing for Hope

Lastly, whether it was COVID, the political situation or the failing global economy, last year reminded the entire world of its frailty and left many longing for hope. As Christians, we have the words of eternal life! What greater hope is there to offer!?

People of all tribes, tongues and nations were impacted by the COVID pandemic. But let us not forget they have also been impacted by an even greater pandemic - that of sin, which leads to an eternal death. As people worldwide are searching for hope, unsatisfied with what is being offered to them by human institutions, we must take advantage of this season by offering them the hope that only comes through the gospel. That is the purpose of missions!

I am confident Jesus would say in this season, **“Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest!”** (John 4:35). Now is the time to reap the harvest created by this past year!

In 2021, WVBC missions may not return to “normal.” But with more than 41% of the world still unreached with the gospel, that just tells me that “normal” was not good enough. Maybe God has something even greater in mind for us!

Are you up for the journey 2021 may bring? Are you interested in making a global impact? If so, I would love to talk with you and to explore how God could use your talents and interests to redeem people from all around the world to Himself. You can contact me at todd@wvbc.org.

It has famously been stated that “missions exists because worship doesn’t.” May 2021 be a year of great, global worship!

Todd McClure,
Minister of Missions and Finance

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

There's an App for That!



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mountain state
MISSION OFFERING

DOING CHRIST'S WORK *together*

Commentary

by Mike Sisson, Executive Minister

Finding Wisdom for 2021

This year, like all previous years, will be filled with new opportunities and new challenges. The idea is to be able to see the opportunities in the midst of the challenges. The question that often follows this statement is "but how is this accomplished?" As James penned his epistle to the Jews, scattered by persecution because of their newfound decision to follow Jesus Christ, I think he anticipated this would be their question as well. How do we see beyond the challenges we face? James' response answers this question for both the persecuted Jewish Christians and us today. "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you" (James 1:5).

The emphasis must be placed on looking to God for wisdom and guidance. However, this can sound easier than it is, especially as Christian leaders. We are tempted to dig a little deeper in our own know-how, to try a little harder and to work a little longer. Simply put, we tend to believe the answer will come if we strive enough. Author Susan Beaumont suggests, "The problem with striving is that we erroneously place ourselves at the center of the equation. We form false attachments to actions of our own making. We imagine that it is all up to us and that the best of our efforts, skills and imaginings will be enough to overcome the obstacles."

This is why James and many other writers in scripture remind us to focus our attention on God and not rely on ourselves for guidance through life's challenges. The writer of Proverbs sums it up: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding: in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

As Christians, this is often referred to as seeking the mind of Christ. In scripture, this Christ consciousness is found often in the apostle Paul's letters. "And it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). We see things more fully and attend to our circumstances more effectively when we open ourselves to Christ's consciousness.

Where can we find wisdom for 2021? How can we see more clearly the opportunities in the midst of the challenges? The answer is to embrace anew the call to walk closely in communion with our Lord and to humbly rely on Him for the wisdom in all decision-making. We can start by no longer giving the challenges or circumstances permission to demand all our focus, instead redirect our focus to the Lord. Next, seek the Lord's guidance in navigating the right decisions or direction and resist the temptation to default to simply doing what we think best. Then, allow the Lord time to answer. Prayer and communion with God require offering our petitions followed by a willingness to wait on the Lord to respond in His way and in His time. And make this a daily practice. When we walk with the Lord daily, we will grow increasing in our awareness of His presence with us and begin to think His thoughts thus developing the mind of Christ Paul mentions.

*Blessings in this New Year,
Mike*

Executive Board Approves Plans for 2021

On Saturday, January 9, 2021, the West Virginia Baptist Convention (WVBC) Executive Board met via Zoom to discuss and approve the 2021 budget and the presidential appointments. Each of the four commissions (Discipleship, Leadership, Outreach and Stewardship) also met earlier in the day to discuss vision and plans for the upcoming year.

Over the last couple of years, the WVBC has made intentional efforts to improve the budget by reducing expenses while simultaneously expanding ministries. They have also recently completed a GAAP (Generally Accepted Accounting Principles) conversion of their books to improve the transparency of finances by showing true ministry costs. Over the previous two years, the budget had been decreased by more than \$41,000, and for 2021, the Executive Board approved a budget that further reduced the budget by another \$26,000. Last year was the first time in over a decade that the WVBC finished financially in the black, thanks in large part to churches and individuals who followed through on their commitments despite a global pandemic. Newly launched in 2020, the Rope Holder initiative saw individuals give more than \$80,000 through the Mountain State Mission Offering.

This was the first meeting led by newly-elected president, Ryan Stoner. Ryan's installation service took place on

Sunday, November 29, 2020, at his home church of Pea Ridge Baptist Church (Guyandotte). Other elected officers include Cari Pauley (first vice-president), Don Biram (second vice-president), Lois Merritt (secretary) and Todd McClure (treasurer). We are grateful for the leadership of Lee Boso, who served as president during the unusual and historic 2020 ministry year.



Ryan Stoner is officially handed the presidential gavel as part of his installation service.

As we move into 2021, please join us by praying for each of our commissions and these newly elected officers. Their leadership is vital to our mission of **doing Christ's work together**.

Todd McClure Appointed as IM Special Assistant

On January 14, 2021, Todd McClure was appointed by



Todd McClure (right) and Dan Chetti (second from right) participating in a worship service at the Baptist church in Baghdad, Iraq.

International Ministries (IM) as its special assistant for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Special assistants are part of a small group of identified leaders providing ministry accompaniment with others in their respective regions on behalf of IM's area directors. Todd will be

working alongside both Charles Jones (area director for Europe, the Middle East and Liberia) and Karen Smith (area director for Africa). Some of his duties will include working in collaboration with IM staff, global servants and partners to provide assistance in evangelism, discipleship, theological education and short-term mission engagement.

Todd has been active in ministry in the MENA region for more than a decade. He also serves as the associate director of Enduring Love, a ministry founded by Dan Chetti that focuses on church planting and discipleship in this region. Enduring Love supports 26 Arab missionaries in the following countries: Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Sudan, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq. Todd led a vision trip to Lebanon in 2017 to meet several of these missionaries, and he was also part of a team that traveled to Iraq in 2019. He is planning to make another trip to this region later this year.

With a population of nearly 600 million, the MENA region remains one of the least reached regions in the world in terms of gospel outreach. With only three full-time global servants in the MENA region (all located in Lebanon), Todd hopes to work with IM to recruit more individuals to serve full-time among these people. Enduring Love will also continue to play a significant role as it seeks to equip Arabs to reach their own communities. Many of the current Enduring Love missionaries are graduates of Arab Baptist Theological Seminary.

To learn more about Enduring Love or mission opportunities in the MENA region, you can contact Todd at todd@wvbc.org. We are excited to see how Todd's involvement will continue to expand our mission of **doing Christ's work together**.

Parchment Valley Conference Center

by *Frank Miller*, Director of Operations, Parchment Valley Conference Center

A New Year with a Renewed Mission

As the Parchment Valley (PV) Conference Center staff and friends ramp up for another wonderful season of **doing Christ's work together**, we are truly grateful for the way the West Virginia Baptist Convention (WVBC) has helped us adapt during this pandemic. Ministry looks different, but our mission of being a place "**where lives are changed**" remains.

A few weeks ago, I received a call from Mark Houser, pastor of Lubeck Community Baptist Church (Parkersburg), who was concerned about the lack of meat and warm clothing at the homeless shelters in Parkersburg. We made several quick phone calls to different agencies with the urgent request and within a short time, we had an entire beef to deliver. The Lubeck Community Baptist Church team delivered the beef, completely filling the freezers at both shelters. They also dropped off a load of winter clothes. Before we left, we rallied together in prayer thanking God for His provision.

The following week, PV received a call from a government agency who knew about our mission. They were seeking assistance in distributing fresh food to more families in Jackson and Wood counties. Once again, a team was assembled and, in a



Volunteers distribute food to Hope House Ministries, a non-denominational organization reaching out to people in Jackson County to bring hope in the fight against addiction.



Church volunteers prepare to distribute food to 500 individuals in Jackson and Wood Counties.

safe and organized manner, the food was given out to over 500 individuals. With the leftovers, our team went throughout the counties delivering food to foodbanks, the Hispanic community, some addiction recovery ministries and the homeless shelters. Those who received the gifts were joyful to meet people who cared about them and did the work of Jesus.

In Matthew 25:35-36, Jesus says, "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." Your support over this past year enabled us to be part of this incredible ministry!

As we move forward in 2021, may each of us be reminded of those around us who need to be physically and spiritually fed. Will you join us at Parchment Valley as we explore the hills and "hollers" of West Virginia to find those people? Your support is very much appreciated and goes 100% to this ministry of "**changing lives.**" To God be the glory!

Brothers' Keeper **2021**

June 20-25, 2021

Parchment Valley Conference Center

Doing Christ's Work Together



Mentoring for Pastoral Excellence in 2021

The West Virginia Baptist Convention (WVBC) and Renew Transformational Strategies, along with the support of the Bowen Trust, are excited to announce the second year of the Mentoring for Pastoral Excellence program! Even with the difficulties brought about by the pandemic, the program proved to be a wonderful success. In fact, it could be said that it was developed with perfect timing as the pastoral leaders were able to lean on their mentors as they processed how best to lead their churches through the new challenges created by COVID-19.

Ed Rogers, CEO of Renew Transformational Strategies and a mentor in the program, shared his take on the first year. "I have been so excited about the WVBC Mentoring for Pastoral Excellence ministry. Throughout my life, God has blessed me with incredible mentors who cared enough to invest in my calling. I am privileged to participate in a ministry that allows others to receive the same gift that has meant so much to me throughout my life. The other day, I was speaking with one of our pastor-leaders. He joyfully exclaimed, 'I had two young people in my church approach me and ask me if I would mentor them.' Ed continued, 'This brought a big smile to my face.' Mentors, who are mentoring others will change the church, the community and the world."



Ed Rogers, CEO of Renew Transformational Strategies

Currently, we are accepting applications or referrals for pastoral leaders who may be interested in growing in their leadership and the joy of walking alongside a mentor for 2021. If you are or know of a pastoral leader who would like to learn more about the Mentoring for Pastoral Excellence program, please contact Mark McCloy at mccloy@wvbc.org, Mike Sisson at sisson@wvbc.org or the convention office at 304.422.6449.

Youth Ministry Planning Team Update

The Youth Ministry Planning Team (YMPT) faced a BIG question, an all too familiar question in 2020: How can we move forward when everything we are used to doing can't happen? We can't have hundreds gathered in one building, singing, playing games, eating meals and worshipping the Lord together. For all the can'ts, the Lord placed on the hearts of the team the cans that He was calling us to do.

BLAMELESS

1 THESSALONIANS 5:23

YMPT has the unique opportunity to develop a community of teens across West Virginia as peers lead peers. And YMPT is working on connecting, encouraging, supporting and discipling students through social media, texting and messaging. In January 2021, Online Interest Groups were launched with topics including: Anxiety and Mental Health; Apologetics; Bible Journaling; Singleness, Dating and Marriage; Guitar; Faith in the Seasons of Life; Worship and iMessage Games.

1 Thessalonians 5:23, "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

YMPT member Riley Skeens has this to say, "Let's break the word blameless into two words - blame and less. The word "blame" can be defined as an assigned responsibility for a fault or wrongdoing. The suffix "less" means without or in some cases pardoned. It's interesting to see how four letters from blame to blameless can change the game in our eternal battle. In Ephesians 2:1 the Bible states, "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sin."

Emma Walker adds, "When I'm feeling lost, and like the chasm between God and me is growing and getting darker and scarier, I turn to Psalm 34:4-5. It says 'I sought the Lord, and He answered me and delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to Him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed.'" We shall never have that shame, fear or blame. Isn't it amazing that we could live like this, without fear that we have committed so much wrong that we could never be with God, but instead we can live with the joy of knowing He will always and forever love us the same?

Life still looks different in 2021, but the power of the gospel and the need for Christian community is as prevalent as ever! Join us in praying for the teens of West Virginia.

Follow us on Social Media:



WVBCYMPT



wvbc_ympt

by Jill Narraway, Associate Director of Camping and Youth

Everyday Heroes

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" Isaiah 6:8

In times of crisis we look for the brave, the strong and the powerful to lead us through. We're living in a time of crisis and we need heroes.

We are used to movie plot lines where a hero has superpowers or amazing intelligence, but what if real power could be found inside ordinary, everyday folks? Not to leap tall buildings in a single bound and not to wage intergalactic battles with alien races, but instead to face the day-to-day real life struggles of a broken, hurting, dying world with the message of hope that can truly save the world.

Don't feel like you're strong enough, powerful enough, important enough? Yeah, we understand. But we know the God who is and in Him we are called to be **everyday heroes: living for the love and the glory of God!**



Examples of **everyday heroes** fill the Bible, stories of everyday, ordinary people called to live extraordinary lives of faith and obedience to the God who loves them! In them we see that a true hero finds their strength not in who they are, but Whose they are! God loves us, offers us salvation and calls us to live our every day lives of obedience to His call!

The West Virginia Baptist Camp at Cowen's mission is to be a place "**where people meet Jesus and grow as His disciples in a community of faith.**" As we begin 2021 and prepare for summer ministry in whatever capacity God is leading us this year, we know children and teens need the hope of the gospel of a God who loved them so much that Jesus sacrificed His life to save them! We are excited to help campers explore the call God has on their lives to live out the great commission as they respond in faith, "Here am I. Send me!"

A Word from Camp:

The following schedule represents our whole-hearted desire to program for these age groups on these specific dates, however, the details of how any particular week will operate is still to be decided as we continue to consult experts, make prudent decisions regarding health and safety, and seek the Lord's wisdom. Publishing this schedule allows churches and families who are looking to make plans for 2021 to know when Camp Cowen will be offering programming for different ages whether onsite, through creative scheduling, or all virtual.

What might camp look like in 2021? Here is a tiered approach to thinking about this coming summer:

TIER ONE: Week-long camping that looks (for the most part) like what we're used to with overnight camps lasting most of the week.

TIER TWO: Small group camping experiences: a Sunday through Tuesday overnight group, with a Wednesday only session, and then a Thursday through Saturday group.

TIER THREE: Preparing for "wild card" possibilities like day experiences, family camps, church groups, etc. The year 2020 taught us a lot about the value of bringing more of the camp experience to our homes and churches so look for us to build on what we learned as we continue to develop Camp-in-a-Box for the future.

Camp Cowen 2021 Schedule:

Younger Midler (grades 2-4)	June 4-6
Junior 1 (grades 5-6)	June 6-12
Junior High 1 (grades 7-9)	June 13-19
Junior 2 (grades 5-6)	June 20-26
High School 1 (grades 9-12)	June 27-July 3
Junior High 2 (grades 7-9)	July 4-10
Senior Day (high school grads)	July 10
High School 2 (grades 9-12)	July 11-17
Family Camp	July 23-26
Older Midler (grades 3-5)	July 27-30
Camp Global	July 30-August 1
AB Men and Boys' Camp	August 6-8
Women's Camp (18 and up)	October 1-3

Don't forget to mark your calendar for these spring camp events:

Men's Work Party	April 23-24
Youth Work Party	May 14-15

The camping program is sponsored by the West Virginia Baptist Convention and is conducted at: West Virginia Baptist Camp at Cowen, 276 Baptist Camp Road, Cowen, WV 26206

If you have any questions about the camping program, please contact Jill Narraway at 304.210.7030 or jill@wvbc.org.

What is West Virginia (WV) Hope?



Written by Sue Hamrick,
Communications Coordinator,
American Baptist Women's Ministries
of West Virginia

WV Hope is a new ministry of the American Baptist Women's Ministries (ABWM) of West Virginia, created in 2019 by former president, Debbie Higginbotham. It was inspired by her research on the

Chapel Car Ministry that was prevalent in the Mountain State in the 1890 - 1930 era. Our Chapel Car was named Herald of Hope and it traveled throughout the state, ministering to West Virginians.

The WV Hope Ministry is coordinated each year by the first vice-president of ABWM. She selects her committee members, solicits state-wide nominations and selects ministries each year as recipients of the generosity provided by the American Baptists in West Virginia. While ABWM sponsors these ministries, they certainly are not restricted to women only. Participation by anyone is encouraged.

The ministries selected for 2021 are:

Fruits of Labor: an education and training center for youth and young adults as an addiction prevention and/or recovery program. Located at 161 Main Street, Rainelle, WV 25962.

House to Home: a facility that provides shelter, showers, laundry, meals and more for the homeless in Wood and surrounding counties. Located at 413 8th Street, Parkersburg, WV 26101.

Life Choice: a Christ-centered ministry that empowers and equips those making pregnancy decisions through life-affirming options and hope. Located at 130 South 4th Street, Clarksburg, WV 26301.

Weirton Christian Center: serving God and community with a focus on providing a strong foundation for children by meeting their spiritual, physical and emotional needs. Located at 117 Ivy Lane, Weirton 26062 or P.O. Box 2045, Weirton, WV 26062.

Here are ways you can participate: collect items request and drop them off at the address above, volunteer your time or talents or send a giftcard mailed directly to the address above. Flyers with additional information and videos for each ministry can be found at wvbc.org by clicking on Ministries, WVBC Auxiliaries and American Baptist Women's Ministries of WV.

Just as the Herald of Hope Chapel Car provided for the needs of those they ministered to, so are we obligated to do the same. These are ministries run by West Virginians providing valuable and needed services to fellow West Virginians. It is our responsibility to help meet those needs. "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'" Matthew 25:40

Baptist Campus Ministry

by Kevin Sions, Northern Director, Baptist Campus Ministry

Keeping Our Focus

When I was in college, several years ago, I got lost running. I have shared the story several times in different settings to illustrate one or more of the lessons I learned. It is a long story, but one of the key learnings is if I had not lost my focus I would have stayed on the correct trail. The running journey was not supposed to be a long one that particular day (but I made the run longer than planned). I failed to focus on the details and the end goal, was I got lost.

When a journey is long or tiring, it can be challenging to stay focused. Keeping our focus requires perseverance. Our focus may need renewed by remembering our purpose. During our journeys in life, we can rediscover our purpose by directing our focus on Christ. As we enter the Lenten season, followers of Christ will focus again on Jesus' journey to the cross. As we read scripture, we can see the focus Jesus had to be obedient. Jesus centered His heart and mind on God and the cross.

During their semesters and years of study, college students will attest to being on a journey. Our Baptist Campus Ministry (BCM) leaders will have several conversations with students about changing majors, applying for jobs, seeking a career, dating relationships and other relevant life topics. Students are

on a journey and within that journey BCM helps encourage and challenge them to focus on Jesus. Through asking the right questions and listening to students share their stories, BCM leaders are helping students find or regain their focus on Jesus. As students focus on allowing God to change their lives, they are changing the world for Christ.

Please continue to pray for our BCM leaders and students as they minister together on nine different campuses. Thank you for your continued partnership with BCM as together, we are **doing Christ's work: "Changing lives that change the world."**

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before Him He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." Hebrews 12:1-3

2020 Impact Report

Doing Christ's Work Together



CAMP COWEN

25+ volunteers helped pack over 1,000 boxes to minister to more than 1,500 people in 11 states and 2 countries!
13 cabins were adopted and updated by 8 churches and 7 families.



BAPTIST CAMPUS MINISTRY

9 university campuses
225+ students involved in weekly discipleship
2 salvations at Concord University
18 students served as interns in our WVBC family of churches.

OUR VISION

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.



PARCHMENT VALLEY

250+ Brothers' Keeper participants served 1,000+ people through work projects in 4 states and 2 countries!
25+ salvations that led to conversations and 40+ more decisions for Christ.



CHURCHES

10 new pastors
3 pastor ordinations
6 pastors served as mentors and 11 participated as leaders in our new Mentoring for Pastoral Excellence Program.

Holding the Rope at \$20 per Month:



Number of Rope Holders:
Equivalent of 291 Individuals

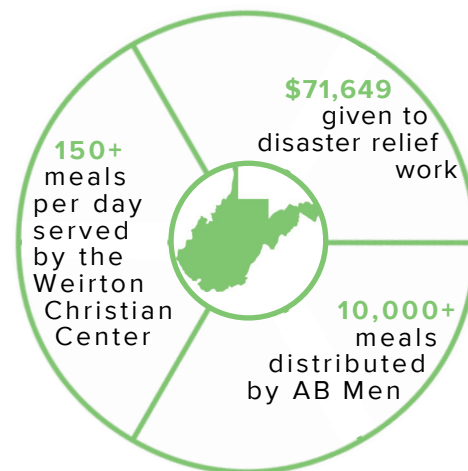
Total Amount Given:
\$69,921



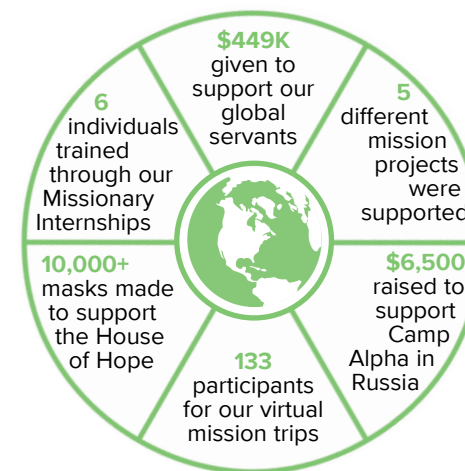
EDUCATION

10 graduates from the Bobby Wood School of Christian Studies
7 enrolled in the DMin. program and 30 enrolled in the MDiv. program through West Virginia's Palmer Theological Seminary
16 girls received scholarships from the American Baptist Women's Ministries of West Virginia
46 individuals received scholarships from the West Virginia Baptist Education Society
\$250,000+ given by the Bowen Charitable Trust to strengthen vocational ministry around the state.

LOCAL MISSIONS



GLOBAL MISSIONS



MISSION SUPPORT



Leaving a Legacy: Weirton Christian Center

*Written by Michael Stephens,
retired Northwest Area Minister,
West Virginia Baptist Convention*

Founded on May 9, 1909 (the same year as the Weirton Steel Company) a small Baptist Sunday School, under an apple tree within blocks of the new mill, soon became Weirton First Baptist Church. A ministry began for all the children and their families who had come from many cities and nations to Weirton to seek a better life.

In 1917, the Women's American Baptist Home Mission Society sent Mrs. Olive Lord as the first missionary (1917-1918), credited with founding the Weirton Christian Center. Programs were designed to assist the immigrants who came to work in the mill. At this "community center," immigrants were taught English, took citizenship courses and received immunizations. Many community activities were held at the center - especially Bible studies.

It was to this location and in this ministry context that Betty Killian came in 1961 to be executive director of the Weirton Christian Center. She served faithfully for 45 years in this role as a missionary with the American Baptist Home Mission Society, also known as National Ministries. She administered a healthy balance of love, discipline and wise counsel to the children and parents who came to the center. As the center was originally part of the ministry of Weirton First Baptist Church

(Panhandle), Betty taught Sunday School and served in many other roles and ministries of the church, effectively recruiting and engaging church and community leaders as volunteers in the Christian center ministry. She also drove many miles telling the story of the Christian center to churches and denominational groups throughout West Virginia and American Baptist Churches in the USA.



Betty Killian

When kindergarten was added to the public school system in the 1970s, the center converted its kindergarten to a preschool program. In 1979, due to the declining neighborhood and the deteriorating condition of the building, the center moved from Avenue D to 3012 Elm Street, again choosing a neighborhood of great need. Betty served and lived in this location until her retirement in 2006, when Kim Weaver became executive director. With afterschool and many other youth and family services added, the ministry outgrew the Elm Street location and has since moved to a new building next door to Weirton Heights Memorial Baptist Church (Panhandle) at 117 Ivy Street, but carries on the same consistent and Christ-honoring ministry which was Betty's legacy.

We also have great opportunity to carry on Betty's legacy by giving financially, in prayer and service to this recognized mission project of the West Virginia Baptist Convention and American Baptist Churches, USA.

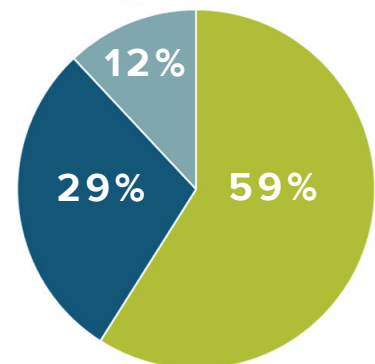
AMERICA FOR CHRIST OFFERING 2021

For the Purpose of Equipping Saints

EPHESIANS 4:11-13 (NIV)

Every year, typically during the month of March, dozens of churches from around our West Virginia Baptist Convention (WVBC) family collect the **America for Christ Offering**. Not only does this offering support national ministries like the Weirton Christian Center, but 29% of the offering also supports the mission and ministry of the WVBC.

If your church needs promotional resources, you may contact Jennifer Huber at our office at jennifer@wvbc.org or by calling 304.422.6449.



National Ministries, WVBC and Promotional

Spring Children's Rally

For children currently in grades K-fifth grade, sixth grade is optional.

Saturday, March 6, 2021

Parchment Valley Conference Center, Greenlee Activities Center



"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" John 14:6

Mission Project: Baby Needs for Life Choice Pregnancy and Resource Center

Items Needed: diapers, wipes, newborn outfits/onesies, receiving blanket, baby nasal aspirator, infant Tylenol, prenatal vitamins, giftcards to Walmart or Target

COST:

\$13.00, if postmarked by February 22, 2021.

\$25.00, if postmarked after February 22, 2021 or at the door.

SCHEDULE:

9:00 a.m.	Registration
9:30-9:50 a.m.	Welcome, Instructions, Singing
10:00-10:40 a.m.	Lesson One
10:45-11:25 a.m.	Lesson Two
11:30-12:10 p.m.	Lesson Three
12:15-12:45 p.m.	Lunch
12:45-1:10 p.m.	Singing
1:15-1:55 p.m.	Lesson Four
2:00-2:40 p.m.	Lesson Five
2:45-3:00 p.m.	Singing, Closing

T-SHIRTS: Pre-sale only. The cost is \$10.00 each and must be pre-ordered and pre-paid by February 22, 2021. Please note: No t-shirts will be for sale at the rally.

We will be following COVID-19 guidelines that are set at the time of the event. Please wear a mask.

Register online at www.wvbc.org.

Featuring:
Dr. Trent Eastman
Pastor, New Baptist Church,
Huntington and
Adjunct Professor, Palmer
Theological Seminary

Conference Fee:
\$20.00 per person
Pastors pay half price: \$10.00

Schedule:
Registration: 9:00 a.m.
Event begins at 9:30 a.m.
Event ends at 3:00 p.m.

To Register:
www.wvbc.org

2021 West Virginia Baptist Convention Annual Bible Conference

March 6, 2021
Parchment Valley Conference Center in Hill Hall
The in-person event will be limited to 25 people.
The event will also be online via Zoom.

The Book of Galatians: Amazing Grace
Registration deadline (with money enclosed): March 3, 2021
Bobby Wood School of Christian Studies' Advanced credit will be available.

Evan Arkell, Southwest Area Minister

Perspective

God is good! I know this is something we say a lot, but throughout this pandemic season we have been given the opportunity to allow the light of Christ to shine through us. This may be easy for me to say, since at the time of this writing neither my family nor I have been physically affected by COVID. However, my heart breaks for many within our churches where some have been extremely sick and others have died from this virus. But we still have hope! While our hearts break for those who have passed, we rejoice that so many of these saints have graduated to their eternal home where they have lived their lives to be.

There are many things we can choose to chase after in our lives, so I pray this time of shutdowns, cancelled events, broken traditions, etc., can give us the perspective to see what is truly important in our lives. I'm not saying everything we do is bad, but I am reminded of the words of Solomon, "Vanity of vanities," says the preacher; "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 1:2). I don't want to take this verse out of context, but it is a verse I have gone back to many times over the years to check my motives and the value of the things in which I invest my time and energy. Left to my own desires, I can waste a lot of time on things of no value or to the calling of advancing God's kingdom. While I have heard many people complain about what they could not do during this pandemic, it has been a blessing to so many that have chosen to do what they can for the glory of God.

Can you pray to draw closer to God? Can you use your time to pray for others? Can you draw closer to God by spending



Zach Stevens, Director of Children and Family Ministries at Pea Ridge Baptist Church (Guyandotte), prepares for a baptism during the Christmas season. God is still on the move!

time in His word? The list could go on and you can be challenged by your own questions. But if you are struggling with all of the things you can't do or by the hurt you have experienced through this time, allow yourself to be drawn closer to the love of God. Be thankful and praise God for the good things and allow Him to change your perspective (Philippians 4:8).

Southeast Area News

Jim Anderson, Southeast Area Minister

Rockcastle Baptist Church and the 1918 Spanish Flu

In my journeys since the outbreak of COVID-19 in March 2020 as churches were restricted from meeting until Mother's Day and now with the virus surging again, I have been impressed and blessed to see many churches adapt, through technology, to continue worshipping together. However, on several occasions I have also heard the lament "We never thought we would see the day churches would be restricted from having services" in regard



Rockcastle Baptist Church

to end times. Let me share a story with you.

On November 30, 2020, before I shared in sermon and song with Rockcastle Baptist Church (Rockcastle), Pastor Silas Mullins shared that he had gone back and read minutes of the church during the latter part of 1918 and early part

of 1919 during what we now refer to as the Spanish Flu. I was fascinated and asked Silas to send me a copy, which he did. Below are the exact minutes from the clerk of the church.

"January 1, 1919

Due to an epidemic of influenza, and owing to the closing orders by the state and county boards of health, no services were held at Rockcastle Baptist Church in the months of October, November and December 1918.

February 15, 1919 - Saturday morning

A small congregation met at the church where Pastor G.P. Goode (who was the great grandfather of current Pastor Silas's wife, Peggy) conducted a short service. But due to another outbreak of the influenza and the death of Bro. Lemmel Good, no services were held on the 16th."

The church did not meet again until March 15, 1919.

I share this because even in the midst of a pandemic, the church adapted and survived (with no technology available), and afterwards flourished and continues to this day to be a light of hope for Pineville and the surrounding area.

It is my hope and prayer as we begin 2021, the West Virginia Baptist Convention family of churches will continue to adapt to the current resurgence of COVID-19, being safe in all we do (wearing masks and social distancing) as we continue to be the "light of the world" sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. Not only will we survive, but with the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit we will flourish.

Strange Blessings

On that day, a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Acts 8:1

I feel certain that the early church found it hard to think of persecution as a blessing. However, God turned the situation into a mission opportunity to reach people with the gospel in places and ways they had not been reached before. In coming years, people like Paul and Barnabas would begin to go on missionary journeys and spread the message even farther, as they traveled and preached and founded churches throughout the Roman empire. The mission trip was born, and still exists today (although most are on hold right now). Adversity - much like necessity - is often a driving force of invention. The early church did not end because of the difficulties. Instead, it grew.

Jump forward in time to present day, and it is hard to think of the challenges of the previous year as a blessing. Many have fallen ill, and some have been hospitalized or even died. At the same time, the church has experienced radical changes and struggled to find new ways to minister, worship and serve. I still remember several years ago, when a controversy broke out over using plastic communion cups (as opposed to glass cups) in the church I pastored. Many of those who were bothered by the cup controversy have since passed away. But I wonder, what would they make of today? I was able to experience live, in-person communion this year on Christmas Eve, but even that was



The Christmas Star

self-serve and socially distanced. The cups were not only plastic, but were pre-filled and individually sealed. But I considered it a blessing, just to be able to do it.

According to Pew Research Center, one quarter of Americans say their faith has grown stronger since the pandemic began. Likewise, an article by the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) says that people who have previously found it difficult to connect with a church or who have even left church are finding an opportunity to come back through the explosion of online services. “The pandemic has not only fueled people’s interest in spirituality, but the necessary move to online services has also made it easier for people to explore these feelings.” Trends in previous decades have been toward a radical decline in worship attendance, especially amongst the 40 and under crowd. “But the pandemic may just be reversing that trend.”

In the modern parable by Dr. Seuss known affectionately as “the Grinch,” in spite of his efforts, the Grinch could not stop Christmas from coming, “It came! Somehow or other, it came just the same!” Christmas this year was different, but it came. The pandemic could not stop it. And although church is different right now, it is still church, and it is still happening. Adversity, persecution and trouble have often tried to stop it, but have never been able to do so. What strange blessing is God showing you?

Northeast Area News

David Hulme, Northeast Area Minister

Fairmont Baptist Temple Honors Veterans



Members of Fairmont Baptist Temple work to set up crosses on the church lawn.

In November 2020, Fairmont Baptist Temple (Fairmont) continued its tradition of honoring the service of Marion County veterans with a sea of crosses on the church lawn. The remembrance has been an annual event for almost two decades. More than 500 crosses, each bearing the name of a deceased veteran, graced the area along Morgantown Avenue.

The names represent veterans from the Spanish American War to the present, including a special marker for the unknown. While most of the names are associated with families in the church, the display is visited and appreciated by members of the greater Marion County community.

Microchurches

Brian Sanders, author of *Microchurches: A Smaller Way*, asks, “What is the church at its most basic level?” He continues, “This may be the most important strategic question in our time because the way you answer it will then inform the way you both start and multiply churches. If we are not the church in its simplest form, then we cannot be the church in a more complex form.”

Sanders asserts that worship, community and mission are the basic elements. As time has passed, though, these three elements have been understood using ever narrowing definitions and practiced in limited and controlled contexts. However, under closer examination, say a “biblical microscope,” you find an entire world of micro definitions and applications.

As we move forward with church planting in 2021, those micro definitions and applications have opened up a world of planting opportunities. Some call them “microchurches.” Rob Wegner writes, “Microchurch refers to a church that intentionally plants a missional community among every subculture in a community. Ordinary men and women are equipped to plant their own simple church in their workplace, neighborhood or wherever God has already placed them.”

Are you interested in learning more? I would invite you to register for Phygital: Church Planting and Microchurches at our Annual Training Event, or contact me at hulme@wvbc.org.

October - December 2020

SHIRLEY MARIE (MILLER) BAKER, 81, of Petersburg, died December 24, 2020. She was a lifelong member of Petersburg First Baptist Church (Eastern) and served as Sunday School secretary and treasurer of American Baptist Women's Ministries.

CLYDE WAITMAN DRAKE, 92, of Hurricane, died December 5, 2020. He was a member of Hurricane First Baptist Church (Teays Valley), where he served as a deacon, trustee and usher. He also helped upgrade and operate the audio/visual systems of the church.

VIRGIL "V FRED" FITZER, 94, of Parkersburg, died December 20, 2020. He was a charter member of Emmanuel Baptist Church (Parkersburg) for over 50 years and was later active at Parkersburg First Baptist Church (Parkersburg), where he was active in the church choir up until the pandemic limited church participation. He was past president and treasurer of the West Virginia Baptist Convention.

ERNIE BROOKS FOX, 68, of Spencer, died December 20, 2020. He was an active member of Gilboa Baptist Church (Good Hope), where he served as a deacon and Sunday School teacher. He also provided Bible study each week to the patients in the long term unit of Roane General Hospital for 13 years. He had also been a member of Gideons International.

ROBERT (BOB) RAY LARSEN, 85, of Santa Barbara, California, died November 10, 2020. He was an American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (ABFMS) alumnus, who served in India.

OPAL MARIE TRICKETT MARTIN, 97, of Kingwood, died December 8, 2020. She was a member of Kingwood Baptist Church (Goshen), where she spent many years teaching Sunday School.

ROSEMARY JOYCE MCDONALD, 71, of Grafton, died November 9, 2020. She was a member of Beulah Baptist Church

(Union). She was the widow of Charles "Mac" McDonald, who preceded her in death on September 18, 2020.

PAUL RYAN MEADOWS, 74, of Ona, died December 23, 2020. He was the retired pastor of Beulah Ann Missionary Baptist Church (Guyandotte), where he preached the gospel for 35 years. He also served as a night minister for 25 years at Saint Mary's Hospital in Huntington.

PHYLLIS AUDREY WALTON MILLER, 87, of Lewisburg, died October 18, 2020. She was a member of Shuck Memorial Baptist Church (Greenbrier-Raleigh). She was the mother of Ronald Miller, pastor of West Point Baptist Church (Greenbrier-Raleigh).

PAUL W. PREDDY, 85, of San Diego, California, died November 18, 2020. He was an American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (ABFMS) alumnus, who served in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

WILLIAM F (BILL) ROWAN, 63, of Weston, died December 1, 2020. He was a member of Weston First Baptist Church (Broad Run), having served on several boards and committees within the church and was a representative of Fisher Baptist Camp.

MELAVEE STUCKEY, 88, of Diamond, died December 14, 2020. She was a 30-year member of Diamond Baptist Church (Kanawha Valley).

Leadership Updates

REV. J. KEITH COOK to Page Baptist Church (Fayette) as interim pastor on December 1, 2020

REV. ROGER MCKINNEY to Big Union Baptist Church (Elk Valley) as interim pastor on November 29, 2020

2021 National Annual Men's Prayer Breakfast - In-Person and Online

Calling all men to join us for our 2021 Annual Men's Prayer Breakfast, a most important day on the American Baptist (AB) Men's ministry calendar! This is a time for our West Virginia Baptist Convention (WVBC) men to gather together for prayer and Bible study, while enjoying breakfast with friends. An updated list of both in-person and online locations as well as a link to the online prayer breakfast will be made available on the WVBC website and Facebook page.



Offerings received are designated to support the WVBC Ministerial Aid Fund.



Pictured above is a group from one of last year's Men's Prayer Breakfasts.

February 2021

FEBRUARY 1 - The ministry of Sabraton Baptist Church; Scott Whetzel, pastor (Goshen)
FEBRUARY 2 - The ministry of Bethesda Baptist Church; David Cyphers, pastor (Fairmont)
FEBRUARY 3 - The ministry of Vermont Baptist Church; Chad Ash, pastor (Judson)
FEBRUARY 4 - The ministry of Cairo Baptist Church (Harrisville)
FEBRUARY 5 - The ministry of Yawkey Missionary Baptist Church; Darrell Searls, pastor (Coal River)
FEBRUARY 6 - The ministry of Harmony Baptist Church; Gary Crislip, pastor (Eastern)
FEBRUARY 7 - Matt Ash, president of Pastors4Pastors; chair, Committee on Ministerial Standing; and member, West Virginia Baptist Convention Christian Leadership Commission
FEBRUARY 8 - The ministry of Hurricane Baptist Church (Good Hope)
FEBRUARY 9 - Isabelle Damasceno, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant (youth) to the United Kingdom
FEBRUARY 10 - Taylor Wood, member, West Virginia Baptist Convention Christian Outreach Commission
FEBRUARY 11 - The ministry of Point Pleasant Baptist Church; Carl Radcliff, pastor (Broad Run)
FEBRUARY 12 - The ministry of Charleston Baptist Temple; Jimmie Hewitt, pastor (Kanawha Valley)
FEBRUARY 13 - The ministry of Vienna Baptist Church; Bill Brown, pastor (Parkersburg)
FEBRUARY 14 - Jae Stockton, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant to Mexico
FEBRUARY 15 - Eliberto Juarez, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant to El Salvador
FEBRUARY 16 - Tan and Sammy (youth) Coats, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant to Myanmar and Thailand
FEBRUARY 17 - The ministry of Leading Creek Baptist Church; George Jones, pastor (Little Kanawha)
FEBRUARY 18 - The ministry of Stump Chapel Baptist Church (Elk Valley)
FEBRUARY 19 - Don Biram, second vice-president, West Virginia Baptist Convention and member, West Virginia Baptist Convention Christian Discipleship Commission
FEBRUARY 20 - The ministry of Peterstown Missionary Baptist Church; John Pena, pastor (Greenbrier-Raleigh)
FEBRUARY 21 - Ricardo Mayol-Bracero, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant to Guatemala
FEBRUARY 22 - The ministry of Calvary Baptist Church; Greg Swisher, pastor (Fayette)
FEBRUARY 23 - Greg O'Neal, trustee and member, West Virginia Baptist Convention Christian Stewardship Commission
FEBRUARY 24 - Michael Sisson, executive minister, West Virginia Baptist Convention
FEBRUARY 25 - Boyden Myers, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant (youth) to Mexico
FEBRUARY 26 - The ministry of Fairview Baptist Church; Warren Eades, pastor (Hopewell)
FEBRUARY 27 - The American Baptist Men's Prayer Breakfasts happening around the state
FEBRUARY 28 - The ministry of Portersville Baptist Church; Harry Moore, pastor (Guyandotte)

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

March 2021

MARCH 1 - Emerson Wu, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant to South and East Asia
MARCH 2 - Annie Dieselberg, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant to Thailand
MARCH 3 - David Parajon, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant to Nicaragua
MARCH 4 - Taku Longkumer, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant to India
MARCH 5 - Matthew Hwang, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant (youth) to Japan
MARCH 6 - Annual Bible Conference and the Spring Children's Rally, happening at Parchment Valley Conference Center
MARCH 7 - The ministry of Pine Grove First Baptist Church; Jerry Kuhens, pastor (Panhandle)
MARCH 8 - The ministry of Standard First Baptist Church; Philip Walton, pastor (Kanawha Valley)
MARCH 9 - The ministry of Cyrus Baptist Church; Manfred Langer, pastor (Twelve Pole)
MARCH 10 - Nathan Reed, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant (youth) to Bolivia
MARCH 11 - The ministry of Bethany Baptist Church; Bradley Tenney, pastor (Union)
MARCH 12 - Clark Swepston, member, West Virginia Baptist Convention Christian Leadership Commission
MARCH 13 - The ministry of Man First Baptist Church; Perry Brown, pastor (Logan-Mingo)
MARCH 14 - Jim Anderson, Southeast Area Minister, West Virginia Baptist Convention
MARCH 15 - The ministry of Saint Albans First Baptist Church; Joel Harpold, pastor (Teays Valley)
MARCH 16 - The ministry of Sutton First Southern Baptist Church; Shane Boggs, pastor (Elk Valley)
MARCH 17 - Miki Hwang, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant (youth) to Japan
MARCH 18 - Tim Long, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant to Mexico
MARCH 19 - Kristy Engel, International Ministries' (IM) Global Consultant
MARCH 20 - Mayra Giovanetti, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant to Iberoamerica and the Caribbean
MARCH 21 - Steve McCartney, site maintenance manager, Camp Cowen
MARCH 22 - The ministry of Black Eagle Baptist Church; Jeffrey Elkins, pastor (Rockcastle)
MARCH 23 - Ryan Stoner, president, West Virginia Baptist Convention and member, West Virginia Baptist Convention Christian Discipleship Commission
MARCH 24 - Donna Snyder, assistant for Leadership Ministries, West Virginia Baptist Convention
MARCH 25 - The ministry of Belleville Baptist Church; Randy Dornon, pastor (Parkersburg)
MARCH 26 - Ruth Stanton, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant (youth) to Hungary
MARCH 27 - Kathy Hudson, president, West Virginia American Baptist Women's Ministries and member, West Virginia Baptist Convention Christian Outreach Commission
MARCH 28 - Esther Dieselberg, International Ministries' (IM) Global Servant (youth) to Thailand
MARCH 29 - The ministry of Smoot Baptist Church (Hopewell)
MARCH 30 - The ministry of Sardis Baptist Church; Garry Layfield, pastor (Judson)
MARCH 31 - David Hoge, member, West Virginia Baptist Convention Christian Stewardship Commission

Coming Events

FEBRUARY

February 1, 2 and 4
Annual Training Event
 Online Via Zoom

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 6
Annual Bible Conference
 Parchment Valley Conference Center
 and Online Via Zoom

March 6
Spring Children's 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

April 17
Ministers' Wives' Encouragement Zoom
 Online Via Zoom

April 23-24
American Baptist Men's Work Party
 Camp Cowen

April 24
Bobby Wood School of Christian Studies
Weddings and Funerals (E-05) One-Day
Class
 Parchment Valley Conference Center

April 30
West Virginia Baptist Convention
Executive Committee
 Parchment Valley Conference Center
 Santrock Building

MAY

May 1
West Virginia Baptist Convention
Executive Board and Commission
Meeting
 Parchment Valley Conference Center

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.

The **West Virginia Baptist** is a newsletter of the West Virginia Baptist Convention, associated with the American Baptist Churches, USA,

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2021 Annual Training Event

Join us for three evenings of workshops as we better learn to serve Christ and our church!

COST:
 Free to all!

SCHEDULE:
 6:30 p.m.: Workshop Session 1
 7:30 p.m.: Workshop Session 2



**Monday, February 1;
 Tuesday, February 2; and
 Thursday, February 4, 2021**

Online via Zoom

6:30 - 8:30 p.m. each evening

To Register: www.wvbc.org