

# The West Virginia Baptist Newsletter

December 2025—January 2026

## Expect Great Things from God, Attempt Great Things for God



The **160th Annual Meeting of our WVBC Family** was held October 16-17 at Emmanuel Baptist Church in Charleston. Not only was it a wonderful opportunity for fellowship, but it was also a powerful way to kick off next year's theme: "Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God."

Mike Sisson introduced the theme as part of his Executive Minister address. Quoting the words of William Carey, he challenged us to step out in even greater faith in 2026 and beyond. He pointed out that God is doing an extraordinary work, not just across our state, but around the globe, especially among the younger generations. Not just as a Convention, but as individual churches, we need to be prepared for what God is about to do in this next year.

DaVontaé Edwards delivered the annual sermon, using the theme as his sermon title. Referencing Ephesians 3:20, he shared, "Our expectation of God will always be shaped by our vision of God. Small thoughts about God lead to small prayers, and small prayers lead to small lives. But when our hearts grasp the magnitude of who God is—His sovereignty, His goodness, His power—our faith expands." He then challenged us to "Dream God-sized dreams. Pray prayers that stretch you. Attempt works that make heaven smile and hell nervous. For the God who began a good work in you is still able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or imagine."

One of the challenges that many churches face as they prepare to serve the next generation is a lack of leaders. At this year's Annual Meeting, it was a great privilege to have Mac Lake as our keynote speaker. Mac was born and raised in one of our WVBC churches (Handley Baptist Church) and has become one of the leading voices in leadership development. Across his two keynote addresses, he was able to provide extremely practical ways for churches to better identify and develop leaders.

"The church does a decent job in teaching people how to live like Jesus," Mac shared. "But we are dropping the ball in teaching people how to lead like Jesus." He then walked us through the chronological timeline of Jesus' ministry and provided practical ways to follow Jesus' example.

As we step out in faith over this next year, we invite you to be part of the journey. As the WVBC family, we invite you to pray, we invite you to financially support and we invite you to be involved. In 2026 and beyond, we trust that God will do "exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or imagine." May God be glorified in our efforts!

If you missed this year's Annual Meeting, we highly encourage you to watch the recordings, which can be found on our website or by scanning the QR code.



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

**Doing Christ's Work Together**

by Mike Sisson, Executive Minister

## Two Prayers and a Promise

The apostle Paul is writing to a culture not unlike our own in his letter to the Ephesians. The culture of ancient Ephesus was a blend of Greek and Roman influences. The city was a bustling, cosmopolitan Roman port city known for its economic prosperity, sophisticated infrastructure, pagan and immoral practices and diverse population. While the city claimed to be pluralistic in its social and philosophical approach – promoting the coexistence of diverse groups, ideas and beliefs without one being dominant – the narrative of Paul’s experience in the city demonstrates they were not as pluralistic in practice, especially when it came to the toleration of Christianity. Sounds familiar doesn’t it?

To this context, Paul offers two prayers for the followers of Christ striving to live out their faith and witness in a culture that was not only suspicious of Christianity, but also often hostile to it and to all who promoted it.

His first prayer was for a deeper understanding of the Lord and His power. He prays for the Lord to grant them the much-needed wisdom to navigate the challenges they were facing. Along with wisdom, Paul prays for them to grow in their knowledge and awareness of Jesus Christ, praying especially that the Lord would open their eyes and enlighten them to *“the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places”* (Eph. 1:19-20).

In his second prayer, Paul prays for the Lord to strengthen them with His might through the Holy Spirit and that they would grow to fully comprehend the *“love of Christ, which passeth knowledge”* and *“be filled with all the fulness of God”* (Eph. 3:19).

The prayers Paul offered on behalf of the church of Ephesus are the same prayers the church needs today. Much like the Ephesians, for us to be able to navigate the challenges of being a follower of Christ in this complex and confused world that often appears more adverse to the Christian faith than it does open to it, we need a heightened awareness of Christ’s power and presence. We need to seek Him for the wisdom and strength to be the church He called us to be and to faithfully live out His commands to share the Gospel and make disciples of all peoples in all places and to do so with assurance that He has promised to be with us at all times.

As we look toward 2026, how important is it that we, in William Carey’s words, “Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God!” As the apostle Paul concluded his prayers to the Ephesians, may we recite them from our hearts as well, “Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen” (Eph. 3:20-21).

Blessings,  
Mike

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Starting in 2026, paid subscriptions to **The West Virginia Baptist Newsletter** will increase to \$10 per year.

Digital versions of the newsletter are also sent out for **FREE** to individuals subscribed to our weekly emails.

To switch to the digital-only version, contact Todd McClure at [todd@wvbc.org](mailto:todd@wvbc.org).



## Chad Mugrage Installed as 120th President of the WVBC

It was a great time of celebration during the final session of our WVBC Annual Meeting, as Chad Mugrage was installed as the 120th president of our WVBC family.

During his installation, Mike Stephens shared, "I have been blessed to walk alongside Chad in just about every facet of life. I first met him when he was 18 years-old and his mom lay in the hospital. I then had the privilege of walking alongside him throughout his ministry—first as youth pastor of Glenville First Baptist, later as my successor at Parkersburg Baptist Temple, then as administrative pastor at Williamstown First Baptist, followed by his time as pastor in Marietta, OH. He is now my pastor at Lubeck Community Baptist Church. Throughout his ministry, I have watched him lead with great integrity and mature discernment, especially when navigating through challenging circumstances."

Mike Sisson commented on his appointment, "I am excited to serve alongside Chad as this year's Convention president. Chad has a long history of faithful pastoral service and leadership. He brings with him a love and passion for the WVBC and its ministries and a strong desire to further the Kingdom of God."

Also installed during the meeting was Mike Cornell as first vice president, Sandy Foster Currey as second vice president, David Hoge as secretary and Todd McClure as treasurer. The 2026 slate of board members was also approved.



From left to right: Chad Mugrage, Sandy Foster Currey, Mike Cornell, Todd McClure and David Hoge.

We want to express our gratitude to Rose Copenhaver, who served as president this past year. We also want to say thank you to the many individuals who served on boards.

Please join us over the next year by praying for Chad, our officers and our entire executive board as we continue our mission of "Doing Christ's Work Together."



# 2026 ANNUAL BIBLE CONFERENCE

Saturday, March 7, 2026

Parchment Valley Conference Center

A study of Ezra and Nehemiah: Restoring the People of God, featuring Dr. Trent Eastman.



Learn more at:  
[www.wvbc.org](http://www.wvbc.org)

Join us also for the Pastors4Pastors Pre-Bible Conference event, held on Friday, March 6th at Parchment Valley. Learn more at [wvbc.org](http://wvbc.org).

## Jim Butcher Receives Ward W. Hibbs Ministerial Award

Milton Baptist Church Senior Pastor Jim Butcher has been named the recipient of the **Ward W. Hibbs Ministerial Award** by the West Virginia Baptist Convention. Jon Villers, Southeast Area Minister of the WVBC, made the presentation during the WVBC's Annual Meeting at Emmanuel Baptist Church in Charleston on October 16.

Named for the late Rev. Ward W. Hibbs, who inaugurated an in-service collegiate training program for ministers at Alderson Broaddus College in collaboration with the WVBC, the award is given annually to a pastor who has made an outstanding contribution to strengthening the ministry of town and country churches.

In presenting the award, Jon acknowledged Jim's 29 years in pastoral service and recounted the accomplishments of his ministry, which began with his ordination in 1997 at Poca Baptist Church, where he served 12 years as pastor. While at Poca Baptist, the congregation doubled in size. This led to the decision to build a new sanctuary, which they paid off in one-third of the scheduled term.

Following his time at Poca Baptist, Jim and his family stepped out in faith to do a church plant that was focused on people who had given up on church. He served as pastor of this church plant—NewPoint Church—for four years.

Jim, then, accepted the call to serve as pastor at Madison Baptist Church, where he ministered for 12 years. Under his leadership, the church began to minister outside the walls of the building, including in three local schools. The missions budget also grew by 250% during Jim's tenure. In addition to his role as pastor, Jim served as the moderator for the Coal River Association and as a Fellowship of Christian Athletes leader at the local high school.



Jim Butcher accepts the Ward W. Hibbs Award

In 2024, Jim accepted the call to serve as pastor at Milton Baptist Church. In just over a year, the church has already funded over \$200,000 in needed upgrades to the church, including a new elevator and flooring in the sanctuary. They have also already added staff and he is once again helping to expand the missions budget.

In accepting the award, Jim acknowledged his wife Karen, who has served alongside him in ministry for nearly three decades. He was also joined on stage by his middle son, Jonathan, who serves as pastor of Union Valley Baptist Church in Parkersburg.

Jim also remarked, "It has long been the primary goal of my life to be fruitful for Jesus' kingdom. I receive this award with gratitude to my fellow ministers who have viewed my ministry in that way. However, it is also my fervent prayer that someday when I stand before my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, He will also deem my ministry as fruitful. That's my goal."

# CAMP COWEN 2026 SUMMER SCHEDULE

APRIL 17-19  
WOMEN'S CAMP

APRIL 26  
COWEN SUNDAY

MAY 8-9  
SUMMER KICKOFF

MAY 29-31  
COLLEGE WEEKEND

JUNE 5-7  
YOUNGER MIDDLE  
(GRADES 2-4)

JUNE 7-13  
JUNIOR HIGH 1  
(GRADES 7-9)

JUNE 14-20  
JUNIOR 1  
(GRADES 5-6)

JUNE 21-27  
HIGH SCHOOL 1  
(GRADES 9-12)

JUNE 28 - JULY 4  
JUNIOR 2  
(GRADES 5-6)

JULY 5-11  
JUNIOR HIGH 2  
(GRADES 7-9)

JULY 12-18  
HIGH SCHOOL 2  
(GRADES 9-12)

JULY 24-27  
FAMILY CAMP  
(ALL AGES)

JULY 28-31  
OLDER MIDDLE  
(GRADES 3-5)

JULY 31 - AUGUST 2  
ABMEN & BOYS  
(ALL AGES)

LEARN MORE AT  
[CAMPCOWEN.ORG](http://CAMPCOWEN.ORG)



Where people meet Jesus and grow as His disciples in a community of faith.

## Lee Boso Named Executive Director of the West Virginia Baptist Education Society

Announced at our WVBC Annual Meeting, Lee Boso has been named the new Executive Director of the **West Virginia Baptist Education Society**.

The Education Society was founded in 1891 and exists with a mission of providing financial aid to assist young men and women, who are members of WVBC churches, in acquiring an education for their service in the ministry and mission fields. Since their formation, the Education Society has awarded over 1,500 scholarships and loans.

Earlier this year, the Education Society's beloved previous director, Rev. Dr. Lawrence Hoptry, was called home to the Lord.

Dr. Hoptry, or "Hoppy" as he was often affectionately called, was a dedicated servant to the West Virginia Baptist Education Society, serving with unwavering commitment and compassion. He loved the WVBC, he loved the Education Society and he loved every person he interacted with through those ministries.

The Education Society was such an important ministry to Hoppy that he had previously established a memorial fund that supports students in honor of his wife, Karen. With the permission of his family, the Education Society has decided to rename that fund to the Lawrence L. and Karen S. Hoptry Memorial Fund.

Additionally, to honor Hoppy's service to the WVBC and the Education Society, the Education Society voted unanimously to name the newly created doctoral scholarship the Lawrence Hoptry Memorial Doctoral Scholarship.



Lee Boso (left) and Eric Kendall (right) present at the Annual Meeting.

If you are a member of a WVBC church and have pursued any sort of theological education, it is very likely you have received support from the West Virginia Baptist Education Society. We are eternally grateful for the work of Dr. Hoptry and invite you to pray for the continued work of Lee Boso and the other board members.

To learn more about the **West Virginia Baptist Education Society**, visit their newly-designed website at: [wvbes.org](http://wvbes.org).



The **Missionary Internship Program** places individuals alongside one of our long-term missionary partners for a 3-6 week internship based off their interests and geographical preferences. We will assist individuals with raising their own support, and they will also participate in several training events on the topics of mission theology, culture, conflict resolution and much more.

The application deadline is **January 31, 2025**.

Apply at [www.wvbc.org](http://www.wvbc.org)

## Ministry Internship Program

The Ministry Internship Program provides individuals with the opportunity to explore their long-term calling to ministry by giving them an opportunity to serve within our family of churches and placing them under the guidance of a mentor for a summer-long internship. Internships are customizable to the interests of the applicant, but include pastoral ministry, youth ministry, worship ministry, technology, or intercultural ministry.

Apply now at [wvbc.org](http://wvbc.org)



## Congratulations Bobby Wood School of Christian Studies Graduates

Prior to the **Bobby Wood School of Christian Studies**, over 70% of our bi-vocational pastors had no training at all. Thankfully, those days are gone. The school's mission is to provide a basic level of courses in all areas of practical ministry. Although originally envisioned as a training program for bi-vocational pastors, the School of Christian Studies is designed to meet the practical needs of any person interested in expanding their spiritual maturity, biblical knowledge and ministry skills.

Graduation from the BWSCS is also a pathway for ordination and is being accepted by Palmer Theological Seminary.

At this year's WVBC Annual Meeting, we celebrated the graduation of the following students:

- Brenda Fisher** - Certificate in Lay Ministry
- Austin Helmick** - Diploma in Pastoral Ministry
- Caleb McGrath** - Diploma in Pastoral Ministry
- William Miller** - Diploma in Pastoral Ministry
- Phillip Saunders** - Certificate in Teaching Ministry
- Caroline Shoebridge** - Diploma in Pastoral Ministry
- Callie Starkey** - Certificate in Teaching Ministry
- Jason Starkey** - Diploma in Pastoral Ministry
- Donald Underwood** - Diploma in Pastoral Ministry



Mark McCloy standing with the 2025 BWSCS graduates

The next cycle of our in-person locations begins again in January with New Testament I (B-03). Church History (H-01) and Hospital Ministry (E-04) are also being offered as online courses in January.

Learn more about the Bobby Wood School of Christian Studies under the education tab at [wvbc.org](http://wvbc.org).

Seeking locations  
for host churches

MEN'S PRAYER  
BREAKFAST

February 28, 2026

To host a location, contact: Tracie Emerick at [temerick@wvbc.org](mailto:temerick@wvbc.org)

## Sam Gasaway Receives James Anderson, Sr. Bivocational Pastor Award

At our WVBC Annual Meeting, Sam Gasaway received the **James Anderson, Sr. Bivocational Pastor Award**. This award is presented annually by former WVBC Area Minister, Jim Anderson, in honor of his late father, who served in West Virginia as a bivocational pastor.

Sam was licensed for ministry by Dunbar First Baptist Church and began serving as an interim pastor at Judson Baptist Church in Winfield in 2016. After five months, the interim tag was removed, and he has continued in this role ever since. He graduated from the Bobby Wood School of Christian Studies in 2019 and was ordained in 2023 through the Teays Valley Association.

Many across the state know Sam for his involvement in numerous WVBC ministries. He currently serves on the board of directors for the Parchment Valley Conference Center; he previously served as president of the American Baptist Men of WV; he is frequently nominated to serve on the WVBC Executive Board; and he also often serves as worship leader and/or camp pastor for various youth camps at Camp Cowen. Sam and his wife Carrie were also among the first to sign up for the “Hold the Rope” campaign that financially supports the work of the WVBC, and they have continued to support the WVBC every month since.

Outside of “ministry,” Sam works full-time as the custodian at Alum Creek Elementary School, he works part-time at Keller Funeral Home in Dunbar and he serves as the character coach for the men’s basketball team at West Virginia State University.



From left to right: Dave Workman, Terrie Workman, Stacie Gasaway, Carrie Gasaway, Sam Gasaway, Jim Anderson and Mary Jo Slater

During the presentation, Jim reminded everyone that bivocational pastors are “the heroes of ministry,” serving their churches, their families and their workplaces so faithfully. Sam is certainly a hero and is a well-deserving recipient of this year’s award.

Sam, of course, gave credit to God and also thanked his wife and children. He also thanked those who mentored him along the way, including the late Max Hill, the late Chester Bird and fellow pastor and friend, Dave Workman.

## Baptist Campus Ministry: Changing Lives that Change the World.

Since 1967, the mission of **Baptist Campus Ministry (BCM)** has remained the same: “*Changing lives that change the world.*” Throughout the years, BCM has been such an important outreach and discipleship tool for the WVBC as we seek to reach and raise up the next generation of Christian leaders. Strategically placed on 10 different campuses around the state, our BCM associates serve on the front lines and are eye-witnesses to the incredible work God is doing through this ministry.

The following are just two examples from the fall semester of how God is using BCM to change lives:



Brett Rinehart baptizes BCM student, Alyssa Moss.

*“This past semester, we were able to baptize one of our students, Alyssa Moss. Alyssa’s baptism is the first baptism through BCM since we restarted in 2023. Alyssa had grown up in church but never felt the call to be baptized until God placed it on her heart during BCM. On Sunday October 12th, we baptized her at the Stuart Recreation Area in the Shavers Fork of the Cheat River surrounded by her fellow BCM friends and her family. It was a very cold but blessed day!”*

- **Brett Rinehart, BCM Associate at Davis & Elkins College**

*“Dylan is student at Glenville State and known as a very talented young athlete who excelled in high school basketball. He had a very hard upbringing and home life. He first heard about Jesus as a young guy on the basketball court from his coach. He accepted Christ at a young age but had no one to disciple him. When we met on a basketball court last year, he was at the lowest point he had ever been. But being invited to BCM and seeing a difference in the lives of our students has led to a very different outcome in Dylan’s life. He now has a new set of friends and a Jesus community who loves and is loved by him. He is involved in a small group and reading his Bible on his own. Dylan recently got the courage to share Jesus with his grandfather, who accepted Christ and then passed away a couple days later. Dylan truly is an example of someone who’s life was changed and now he’s changing the world!”*

- **Lance Linden, BCM Associate at Glenville State College**



Marsha Raker leading a Kanawha Valley Association choir



Rose Copenhaver, 2025 President



Todd McClure leading a time of corporate prayer



Rick Gutierrez, IM Global Servant



New ABWM of WV officers installed during Women's Day



Friends take opportunities to catch up in the Exhibit Hall



DaVontae Edwards delivering the Annual Sermon



Several AB Men volunteering at Heart + Hands



Baptist Campus Ministry Banquet



DOING CHRIST'S WORK *together*

by Intentionally Engaging Communities for Christ



Mike Sisson during his Executive Minister address



The Annual Meeting brings friends and family together from all around the state



Keith and Deborah Myers, IM Global Servants



Lori James shares about BCM



Mac Lake speaking during Pastors4Pastors event



More than 250 individuals attended this year's Annual Meeting at Emmanuel Baptist Church.



West Virginia  
Baptist Convention

# Annual Training Event

Saturday, February 7, 2026

Parchment Valley Conference Center

## REGISTRATION FORM

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Church: \_\_\_\_\_

**\*Note:** Students in the General Studies program of the Bobby Wood School of Christian Studies are eligible to receive course credit for participating in two workshops of their choice.

\_\_\_\_\_ Request BWSCS Course Credit

### REGISTRATION FEE:

\_\_\_\_\_ \$30 Annual Training Event Fee (includes lunch)  
\* Registrations after January 24 will not include lunch

\_\_\_\_\_ \$10 Additional Fee for Bobby Wood School of Christian Studies (BWSCS)

**Make checks payable and mail to:**  
West Virginia Baptist Convention  
P.O. Box 1019  
Parkersburg, WV, 26102

### SCHEDULE:

9:00 AM	Registration (Hill Hall)
9:30 AM	Worship (Hill Hall)
10:15 AM	Morning Workshops
Noon	Lunch (Gym or Barn)
1:00 PM	Afternoon Workshops
2:30 PM	Dismissal

**Check WVBC website in case of inclement weather**

## WORKSHOP LIST

Select one morning and afternoon workshop:

### Morning Workshops (10:15 AM)

- \_\_\_\_\_ Short-Term Mission Trip Leader Training (Part 1)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Same Storm, Different Boats: Bridging the Generational Divide in the Church
- \_\_\_\_\_ Identifying and Discipling Leaders
- \_\_\_\_\_ Faithful Innovation: Using AI to Enhance Your Ministry
- \_\_\_\_\_ Recruiting Faithful Volunteers for Children's Ministry
- \_\_\_\_\_ God's People, God's Word, God's Purposes
- \_\_\_\_\_ Planning a Community Festival
- \_\_\_\_\_ Who Are We? Exploring the WVBC
- \_\_\_\_\_ Church Trustees
- \_\_\_\_\_ Church Treasurers and Financial Secretaries
- \_\_\_\_\_ Church Clerks

### Afternoon Workshops (1:00 PM)

- \_\_\_\_\_ Short-Term Mission Trip Leader Training (Part 2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Effectively Communicating with Different Generations
- \_\_\_\_\_ Dinner Church: Exploring Different Contexts and Strategies
- \_\_\_\_\_ Christian Pharisees: The Ways We Look More Like Pharisees Than Jesus
- \_\_\_\_\_ Connected: Building Authentic Community in Youth
- \_\_\_\_\_ How Does What I Believe About God Affect my Mental Health?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Creating Remarkable Experiences
- \_\_\_\_\_ Women's Ministries in the WVBC
- \_\_\_\_\_ Conflict in Church: Why & What & Where Do We Go from Here?
- \_\_\_\_\_ The Escape Plan: Retreats and Advances for Your Ministry
- \_\_\_\_\_ Deacons

**Register for the Annual Training Event online at: [www.wvbc.org](http://www.wvbc.org)**

## What a Mess! Almost 200 Attend the Fall Children's Rally

*What A Mess!* That was the theme for the **Fall Children's Rally** that took place on Saturday, November 1st at Parchment Valley Conference Center. The gym in the Greenlee Activities Center looked like paint was splattered everywhere. *What A Mess!*

The almost 200 attendees got to make a mess with cotton balls and crepe paper, they made stained glass out of tissue paper, scratched bookmarks and painted suncatchers. But that isn't the mess we learned about during the day.

At the first teaching rotation, the children learned that Adam and Eve made the first mess and that the world is a mess because of sin.

At the second rotation, they learned about the story of the rich young ruler who wasn't willing to admit how messy his life truly was. They also learned that Jesus' love covers our mess if we are willing to admit it.

At the third rotation, they learned the sinner's prayer – that we need to be honest about our mess and our need for Him.

At the final rotation, they learned about the prodigal son, discovering that our messy sin can only be addressed by the grace of Jesus.

All of these lessons occurred in the midst of making a mess. There was edible artwork, lots of glitter, hunting for treasures, cleaning their rooms, racing to clean up the laundry and making crayon ornaments. Overall, the children learned that although the people of this world are messy and broken, God cares for them and can make their mess a masterpiece in His strength.



Children go through line to collect their edible art.

The churches that attended were encouraged to bring donations of camp supplies for the Weirton Christian Center (WCC). Over 195 items were contributed, plus cash donations and gift cards. These donations will allow WCC to help with the needs of children who attend summer camp next summer.

**Join us next year for our Spring Children's Rally on Saturday, March 7th, 2026. The theme will be a superhero-theme: FEAR BUSTERS: KIDS vs FEARS.**

# JR HIGH CONVENTION

February  
**20-22**

South Parkersburg  
Baptist Church

**6-9th**  
Grade

**\$40**  
Per Person

register at [wvbc.org/ministries/youth](http://wvbc.org/ministries/youth)



RENDER  THE HEARTS

WORSHIP

Elliott  
Gregory

SPEAKER

**IDENTITY**  
Galatians 2:20



# Northwest Area News

**by Mark McCloy, Northwest Area Minister**

## *Thinking Back but Looking Forward*

*To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.*

**- Ecclesiastes 3:1**



**Pastor Jeremy Karby, joined by fellow pastors at his ordination service.**

Harrisville Baptist had quite the season of celebration with a groundbreaking ceremony for their new multipurpose building – a project that had been delayed because of the pandemic, but which now positions them well to minister to their community and move forward into the future. Less than a month later, the church joined the “200 club” by celebrating a very special anniversary Sunday with many special guests, including Executive Minister Mike Sisson. This was a special time of remembering as we looked back into the past and thought of all the changes the church had been through in its history. To all those who have celebrated special anniversaries – Happy Anniversary and may God bless you with many more!

Also, special congratulations to Prosperity Baptist Church (Little Kanawha) on the ordination of their new pastor, Rev. Jeremy Kerby. Jared Fitzwater of Glenville First Baptist brought the ordination message in a special service held at the church, with former pastor Ken Heiney, pastor John Putnam and pastor John Vannoy also participating.

# Northeast Area News

**by Kevin Sions, Northeast Area Minister**

## *Romney FBC Celebrates 105 Years*

Romney First Baptist Church (Eastern) celebrated 105 years over the weekend of September 13-14. Having canceled their 100th year anniversary due to COVID, the church was ready to remember their 105 years of ministry. During the two-day anniversary celebration, the church celebrated through testimonies, worship and fellowship. Several memories were shared through pictures and stories. Pastor Scott Whetzel provided the message on Saturday and Victor Shields (former WVBC Area Minister) preached for the Sunday service.

## *New Life Ministries Celebrates 25 Years*

On Wednesday, September 24th, New Life Ministries (Fairmont) celebrated 25 years of ministry as a church. Pastors Charlie and Sheila Chipps started this ministry as a church plant. During the celebration, BCM students from Fairmont State led worship, joined by Baillie Myers. Pastor Charlie shared the story of how the church started, built the building and continues to minister. David Hulme (former WVBC Area Minister) also shared words of encouragement and gratitude for New Life Ministries as they serve in the community.

## *Fred Hawkins Ordained as Minister*

Pastor Fred Hawkins was ordained by Hepzibah Baptist Church (Judson) during a service on October 26. Several pastors and churches from the Judson Association, as well as throughout the WVBC, were present to recognize God’s calling on him to serve as minister. The encouragement and charges given from several pastors focused on God’s faithfulness and calling on Fred’s life.

## *Jason Woods Installed as Pastor*

Coon’s Run Baptist Church (Judson) installed Jason Woods as pastor during a worship service on Sunday, November 2. The church had a time of meet and greet for Jason and his family. The service included a time of praise and worship, a report by the search committee, special music by Jason, his wife Denise and his mom, and then a sermon by Pastor Jason.



**New Life Ministries celebrates 25 years of ministry**

# Southwest Area News

by *Evan Arkell, Southwest Area Minister*

## *Youth-Focused Dinner Church at Nitro First Baptist Church*



**Pastor Michael Perry teaching the children on Wednesday evening following dinner.**

Last year the adult Wednesday night class at Nitro First Baptist Church decided they wanted to do something that would help them reach more children and youth through their Wednesday evening services. They came up with the idea of feeding the children a meal and teaching them about Jesus.

After picking up many of the children and youth in the church vans, they start their evening with everyone eating a meal together. Following the meal, the children, youth and adults split into groups with the children and youth going to stations similar to many VBS rotation setups. This rotation includes a Jesus story, games and a craft. Pastor Michael Perry says they now average over 20 children and youth each week, which is far more than when they started.

Thank you to all of those who faithfully cook and serve each week to make your Wednesday evenings so filling, both physically and spiritually.

## *Deacon Ordination at Racine First Baptist Church*

On Sunday evening, October 12, Racine First Baptist Church celebrated a special service for the Deacon Ordination of Josh Dolin. The evening began with special singing and Scripture reading. I then had the privilege of providing the message and a charge to both the candidate and the church. Pastor Anthony Pratt then invited the other ordained deacons to come forward and pray for Josh. This special evening was concluded with a time of food and fellowship in the church's fellowship hall.

# Southeast Area News

by *Jon Villers, Southeast Area Minister*

## *ClearView Fellowship Hosts Fall Festival*

On October 19, ClearView Fellowship marked multiple years in a row of welcoming families from across the region to its Annual Fall Festival, held at the West Virginia Building on the West Virginia State Fairgrounds. The purpose of the event was to offer support and encouragement for families heading into the holiday season and beyond. This year, over 600 people attended the event.

Everyone who attended was offered free winter wardrobes including gloves, socks, shoes and toboggans. Volunteer barbers were in place for complimentary haircuts, while kids also participated in face painting, crafts and inflatable attractions. Several free food options rounded out the day including cotton candy, hotdogs, nachos and homemade cookies.

Local organizations partnered to share resources and connect families with community services. Koreen and I got to help at the food booths. It was truly an amazing day of connecting with folks as they made time with their families! So many people thanked us for serving them as they came through the line.

Before the gates were opened, Pastor Roger gathered the 80+ volunteers to remind us that the reason we do this is to share the love of Christ to all. I saw that lived out throughout the three-hour event.



**Pastor Roger Adams and Koreen Villers at the Annual Fall Festival**

Thank you Pastor Roger and Carol Adams and all the volunteers for being the hands and feet of Jesus! ClearView Fellowship continues to embody Christ's call to serve 'the least of these,' offering tangible hope and heartfelt connection to the Greenbrier Valley and beyond.

September—October 2025

## RMMO2025 Worthy of love

### Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering

The Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering (RMMO) is a congregational offering collected annually in December from participating churches. RMMO funds are distributed as thank you checks to retired ordained ministers and missionaries who have devoted 15+ years to our national denomination, as well as surviving spouses. A certain portion is also allocated for direct emergency assistance.

For resources, visit: [abc-usa.org/rmmo/](http://abc-usa.org/rmmo/)

**RBV. DAVID NOLAN DYE**, 88, of Palestine, died on October 15, 2025. David pastored Little Kanawha Baptist Church, Murphytown Baptist Church, Bethel Baptist Church and Newark Baptist Church.

**REV. JEFFREY ELKINS**, 71, of Corinne, died on September 18, 2025. He was a member of Black Eagle Baptist Church, where he served as a deacon, Sunday School teacher, piano player and pastor.

**EVELYN VIRGINIA “BOOTS” ESTEP**, 100, of Fayetteville, died on October 5, 2025. She was a member of Fayetteville Baptist Church, where she served on the Scholarship Committee. She was the oldest living founder of the church.

**WILLIAM HAROLD GIBSON**, 96, of Masontown, died on September 27, 2025. He was a member of Masontown First Baptist Church, where he served as deacon, Sunday school teacher and superintendent.

**SHARON LEE MALETA**, 79, of York, PA, died on October 2, 2025. She was a member of Kingwood Baptist Church, where she participated in the church choir.

**REV. WILLIAM (BILL) EDWARD MORLAN**, 64, of Gassaway, died on October 18, 2025. He was a member of Gassaway Baptist Church, where he served as the Youth and Outreach Pastor.

**JAMES “JIM” RICHARD ROSS**, 72, of Ona, died on August 28, 2025. He was a member of Beulah Ann Baptist Church, where he served as a deacon, Sunday School teacher and drummer.

**NANCY VAGOTT**, 86, of Port Richey, FL, and formerly of Matewan, died on October 3, 2025. She was a member of Matewan Baptist Church, where she directed the choir for over 30 years.

**DARRELL FRANKLIN WALDEN**, 75, of Huntington, died on September 27, 2025. He was a member of 20<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church and later New Baptist Church, where he served as a deacon, trustee and treasurer.

### Leadership Updates

**JASON WOODS** to Coon’s Run Baptist Church (Judson Association) as pastor 11/02/2025

## MINISTRY EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to the work our Area Ministers do to help churches fill ministry positions, we also created a job posting page on our website to help further advertise those positions. All postings are generic in location to allow our staff to properly vet applicants before referring them to our churches.

**Youth Pastor (Part-Time)**

**Location:** Ripley area

**Student Pastor (Full-Time)**

**Location:** Parkersburg area

**Director of Music (Part-Time)**

**Location:** Beckley area

**Youth Pastor (Part-Time)**

**Location:** Point Pleasant area

**Senior Pastor (Full-Time)**

**Location:** Parkersburg area

**Youth Director (Part-Time)**

**Location:** Marion County

**Pastor (Part-Time)**

**Location:** Parkersburg area

**Youth Pastor (Part-Time)**

**Location:** Grafton area

**Senior Pastor (Full-Time)**

**Location:** Boone County

**Pastor (Part-Time)**

**Location:** Bridgeport area

**Pastor (Part-Time)**

**Location:** Weirton area

**Youth Pastor (Part-Time)**

**Location:** Parkersburg area

**Director of Worship Ministries (Part-Time)**

**Location:** Huntington area

To learn more about any of the above positions, visit: [wvbc.org](http://wvbc.org)

## December 2025

**DECEMBER 1** –The ministry of Hope Baptist Church; Richard Demastus, pastor (Elk Valley Association)  
**DECEMBER 2** – Ray Schellinger, International Ministries Global Consultant  
**DECEMBER 3** – The ministry of Pleasant Grove Baptist Church; Michael Harriman, pastor (Goshen Association)  
**DECEMBER 4** – The ministry of Morrisvale Baptist Church; Josh Hill, pastor (Coal River Association)  
**DECEMBER 5** –Yvette Shafer, member of the WVBC Stewardship Commission  
**DECEMBER 6** –Peter Coffey, Director of Operations, Parchment Valley Conference Center  
**DECEMBER 7** –The ministry of Dunbar First Baptist Church, DaVontaé Edwards, pastor (Kanawha Valley Association)  
**DECEMBER 8** – The ministry of Clarksburg Baptist Church; Phil Wayman, pastor (Union Association)  
**DECEMBER 9** –Barney Stinnett, member of the WVBC Outreach Commission  
**DECEMBER 10** –The ministry of Rockcastle Baptist Church; Silas Mullins, pastor (Rockcastle Association)  
**DECEMBER 11** – The ministry of Sardis Baptist Church; Garry Layfield, pastor (Judson Association)  
**DECEMBER 12** – The ministry of Helen Baptist Church; Danny Lusk, pastor (Greenbrier-Raleigh Association)  
**DECEMBER 13** –The ministry of Matewan Baptist Church; Steve Spurlock, pastor (Logan-Mingo Association)  
**DECEMBER 14** –The ministry of Little Laurel Baptist Church; Ricky Bragg, pastor (Hopewell Association)  
**DECEMBER 15** – Bill Clemmer, International Ministries Global Servant to Africa  
**DECEMBER 16** – The ministry of Parchment Valley Baptist Church; Matt Ash, pastor (Good Hope Association)  
**DECEMBER 17** – Sarah Chetti, International Ministries Global Servant to Lebanon  
**DECEMBER 18** – Jim Hewitt, member of the WVBC Leadership Commission  
**DECEMBER 19** – The ministry of Concord Baptist Church; Justin Moran, pastor (Teays Valley Association)  
**DECEMBER 20** – The ministry of New Hope Baptist Church; Troy Nesselrode, pastor (Parkersburg Association)  
**DECEMBER 21** – Kevin Sions, Northeast Area Minister and Northern Director of Baptist Campus Ministries, WVU  
**DECEMBER 22** – Peter Shaffer, member of the WVBC Discipleship Commission  
**DECEMBER 23** –The ministry of Mount Hope Baptist Temple; Delmas Wolfe, pastor (Fayette Association)  
**DECEMBER 24** – Our families as we gather together to celebrate the birth of our Savior  
**DECEMBER 25** – Prayer of thanksgiving for a Savior that was born to save the world  
**DECEMBER 26** –The ministry of Point Pleasant Baptist Church; Carl Radcliff, pastor (Broad Run Association)  
**DECEMBER 27** – Koreen Villers, Director of Discipleship Ministries, WVBC  
**DECEMBER 28** –David Sagar, International Ministries Global Servant to India  
**DECEMBER 29** – The ministry of New Baptist Church; Trent Eastman, pastor (Guyandotte Association)  
**DECEMBER 30** – Lori Mann, International Ministries Global Servant to Southeast Asia  
**DECEMBER 31** – The ministry of Hebron Baptist Church (Fairmont Association)

## January 2026

**JANUARY 1** – Pray for a blessed New Year  
**JANUARY 2** – Greg Swisher, member of the WVBC Leadership Commission  
**JANUARY 3** – The WVBC Executive Board meeting today at Parchment Valley  
**JANUARY 4** – The ministry of North Fork Baptist Church; Darrell Farley, pastor (Harrisville Association)  
**JANUARY 5** – Mark Juanes, International Ministries Global Servant to Thailand  
**JANUARY 6** – The ministry of Crum Missionary Baptist Church (Twelve Pole Association)  
**JANUARY 7** –The ministry of Bethlehem Baptist Church; Randy Landes, pastor (Judson Association)  
**JANUARY 8** – Melanie Baggao, International Ministries Global Servant to Lebanon  
**JANUARY 9** – The ministry of Comunidad Luz Y Vida; Moises Sarivar, pastor (Eastern Association)  
**JANUARY 10** –Sue Hamric, President of the WV Baptist Historical Society and member of the WVBC Discipleship Commission  
**JANUARY 11** – The ministry of Bethel Baptist Church (Goshen Association)  
**JANUARY 12** –The ministry of Hamlin First Baptist Church; Allen Stewart, pastor (Guyandotte Association)  
**JANUARY 13** – The ministry of Sistersville First Baptist Church; Darrell Mayfield, pastor (Panhandle Association)  
**JANUARY 14** – The ministry of Rush Run Baptist Church; John Vannoy, pastor (Little Kanawha Association)  
**JANUARY 15** –The ministry of Baileysville Baptist Church; Ronald Harvey, pastor (Rockcastle Association)  
**JANUARY 16** –The ministry of Summersville Baptist Church; Dana Gatewood, pastor (Hopewell Association)  
**JANUARY 17** –The ministry of Peterstown Baptist Church; John Pena, pastor (Greenbrier-Raleigh Association)  
**JANUARY 18** –The ministry of Valley Bend Baptist Church (Union Association)  
**JANUARY 19** – The ministry of Providence Baptist Church (Elk Valley Association)  
**JANUARY 20** – Andrea Fling, Bookkeeper, WVBC  
**JANUARY 21** –The ministry of Two Runs Baptist Church (Good Hope Association)  
**JANUARY 22** –Sherry Husted, American Baptist Women's Ministries' president and member of the WVBC Outreach Commission  
**JANUARY 23** –The ministry of Worthington Baptist Church; Everett Palmer, pastor (Fairmont Association)  
**JANUARY 24** –The ministry of Gentry Baptist Church; Warren Eades, pastor (Fayette Association)  
**JANUARY 25** – The ministry of Zion Baptist Church; Lisa Grays, pastor (Parkersburg Association)  
**JANUARY 26** – Carmella Jones, International Ministries Global Servant to Hungary  
**JANUARY 27** – Evan Arkell, Southwest Area Minister, WVBC  
**JANUARY 28** – The ministry of New Hope Community Baptist Church; Jeff Biddle, pastor (Kanawha Valley Association)  
**JANUARY 29** –The ministry of Poca Baptist Church; Thomas Moore, pastor (Teays Valley Association)  
**JANUARY 30** –Faye Carol Yarbrough, International Ministries Global Servant to South Africa  
**JANUARY 31** – Roselee Copenhaver, Past President and member of the WVBC Stewardship Commission

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

## Upcoming Events

### JANUARY

**January 2**  
**WVBC Executive Committee**  
Parchment Valley Conference Center

**January 3**  
**WVBC Executive Board**  
Parchment Valley Conference Center

**January 13**  
**Bobby Wood School of Christian Studies: Theology I (T-01)**  
Various locations

**January 15**  
**Bobby Wood School of Christian Studies: Theology I (T-01)**  
Online

**January 15**  
**Bobby Wood School of Christian Studies: Evangelism (Mod-06)**  
Online

### MARCH

**March 6**  
**P4P Pre-Bible Conference Event**  
Parchment Valley Conference Center

**March 7**  
**Spring Children's Rally**  
Parchment Valley Conference Center

**March 7**  
**Annual Bible Conference**  
Parchment Valley Conference Center

**March 15**  
**Bobby Wood School of Christian Studies: Theology II (T-02)**  
Online

**March 15**  
**Bobby Wood School of Christian Studies: Intro to Missions (Mod-03)**  
Online

### FEBRUARY

**February 7**  
**Annual Training Event**  
Parchment Valley Conference Center

**February 20-22**  
**Junior High Convention**  
South Parkersburg Baptist Church

**February 24**  
**Bobby Wood School of Christian Studies: Theology II (T-02)**  
Various locations

**February 28**  
**ABMen's Prayer Breakfast**  
Various locations

### APRIL

**April 10-11**  
**Worship Summit**  
Camp Cowen

**April 17-19**  
**Women's Camp**  
Camp Cowen

**April 24-25**  
**AB Men's Work Party**  
Camp Cowen

**April 25**  
**Bobby Wood School of Christian Studies: Hospital Ministry (E-04)**  
Parchment Valley Conference Center

**April 26**  
**Camp Cowen Sunday**

## Newsletter Submissions

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

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

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**Saturday, February 7, 2026**      **Parchment Valley Conference Center**

More information can be found inside on page 10

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