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Ohio Baptist MESSENGER

THE STATE CONVENTION OF BAPTISTS IN OHIO



SCBO Leaders Participate in Prayer at the Ohio Statehouse

Ohio faith leaders met at the Ohio Statehouse for “Prayer at the Statehouse” on Thursday, May 16. Dr. Jeremy Westbrook, SCBO executive director, brought the message, and SCBO Worship Consultant Zac James and the FBC Lancaster Worship Team led the music. Pastor Johnathan Newman, Koinos Church, Troy, led in a time of corporate prayer. Photo by Steve Hopkins.

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-- Tell us your story --

The Ohio Baptist Messenger is a monthly publication highlighting what the Lord is doing in SCBO churches or ministries, and we need your help! Tell us your story and we could feature it in an upcoming issue of *The Messenger*.

Please submit your stories to messenger@scbo.org.

For more information, please contact Stephanie Heading at messenger@scbo.org.

Praying for Leaders in America, Ohio, and the SBC

God and government are not mutually exclusive. As a matter of fact, God created and established governments for us to abide by. The Scriptures exhort us in the book of Romans to pray, engage, and submit to our authorities.

“Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God. 2 So anyone who rebels against authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and they will be punished,” Romans 13:1-2.

What an honor and a joy it was for the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio to help lead a special prayer service at the Ohio Statehouse recently! SCBO Worship Consultant Zac James and the FBC Lancaster Worship Team led music and Pastor Johnathan Newman from Koinos Church, Troy, led in a time of corporate prayer.

We may not endorse or agree with the decisions of the current President of the United States or Governor of Ohio, but the Bible is clear that we are to pray for our leaders and submit to their authority as a testimony of our faith.

This is not the time to put our heads in the sand and hope it all just magically works itself out. We must pray, engage, and redeem what the Lord has created for us...a godly government with a biblical worldview.

Let us pray and raise up a new generation of legislators, educators, and politicians who make decisions

not based on the current trends of culture or the crowd, but of Christ and His Gospel.

Just as it is important to pray for the leaders of our country, we must also pray for the leaders of our convention.

Just as a friendly reminder that the annual Southern Baptist Convention in Indianapolis is quickly approaching. The dates, times, and schedule can be found at <https://sbcannualmeeting.net>.

Currently, there are six candidates running for the office of President of the Southern Baptist Convention. I hope you will take the time to research, pray, and vote for the candidate of your choice.

If your candidate is not elected, I hope you will still pray for him and support his kingdom efforts. Let us pray for our leaders not only in our government, but also in our faith family--the Southern Baptist Convention.

Why? Because we are better together, stronger together, so we must stick together.



Dr. Jeremy Westbrook
Executive Director-Treasurer, SCBO



Ohio Deaf Missions met this spring for part one of its two-part Conference, “Be Strong and Courageous,” based on Joshua 1:9. Seventy-two people attended the event at Miami Valley Baptist Deaf and Hearing Church. Todd Stinson from Louisville, Kentucky was the speaker, and Allen and Jade Stinson led the children’s and youth program. The second part of the event is Saturday, August 17 at Oakwood Deaf Community Church, Cleveland. For more information, contact Pastor Mason Fenner at pastormason07@gmail.com.

Pastor Reagan Wagoner and Grace Point Fellowship are celebrating the recent acquisition of a second campus that will house two new churches, Grace Point Hunter, and Grace Point Espanol, as well as a new school, Grace Point Preschool



Grace Point Fellowship, Franklin, is Living a “God Story”

By Stephanie Heading, managing editor

Grace Point Fellowship, Franklin, is in the middle of a “God story.”

The church plant recently closed on the purchase of a second location which will become home to two new church plants, Grace Point Fellowship Hunter, and Grace Point Espanol, as well as a new preschool, Grace Point Preschool.

Lead Pastor Reagan Wagoner says closing on the location in late April was surreal. “We had the opportunity because of anonymous givers, partnerships, and people who have supported us, to just walk into the signing and didn’t have to sign anything or bring one dollar.

“Just an amazing God story that kind of started with one breakfast at Thanksgiving,” he recounted. “Some men that have a company said, ‘Hey, we want to walk through this with you.’ They created an LLC and helped us buy the building.” The church will make interest only payments.

This provision enables Grace Point to take the funds it raised to purchase the building and use them instead to renovate the new space. “I’m not in the building business,” Wagoner said. “I’m in the people business,

so I don’t care if we ever own it. They basically said as long as we’re doing ministry, they’re going to help us take care of it.”

Questions about Grace Point’s future sent the church down the path of seeking to expand its footprint in southwest Ohio, according to Wagoner. “We began to ask the question a couple of years ago, ‘What are we going to do next?’ because we were wrestling with space. We’re already in three services, but our 9:45 am and 11:15 am services are pretty full.”

The need for more room led leaders to begin looking at land and seeking the Lord’s provision to build a larger facility. “Then we began to just look at prices go up and up and up,” Wagoner said. “We started realizing to build anything bigger than where we’re at could be as much as eight to ten million dollars with the land.”

Grace Point is less than ten years old, and leaders felt it didn’t make sense to go that far into debt. “Even though we believe that God could do anything, we weren’t sure if that was the best way for us to be good stewards with the money that God was giving us.”

Story continues on the next page...

However, a call from an elder's wife pointed Wagoner and Grace Point in a new direction. She learned that a Church of Christ six miles away was going to be selling its building and property.

"So, the day it got listed, we got all of our elders over there," he said. "It was an exit further south than what we were thinking, but we thought we could potentially do two locations. Instead of being all together, we could send out 150 to 200 people, and that would give us more space to continue to reach people where we are. And then we could have another place that could grow and thrive."

After seeing the facility, Wagoner says he and the elders discussed the possibility of relocating Grace Point to the 27,000 square foot building that also features 17 acres of property. However, during discussions it became clear that two locations would better meet the needs of the congregation.

"This needs to be two locations, not just one bigger church," Wagoner said. "I have been really thankful for our people in how they have walked through that process with us."

He notes that his church could have been hesitant to launch another location. "I think because of our heart for multiplication, our heart for church planting, and just being focused on the kingdom, I've not had any push back."

"You can split, or you can multiply," he said. "It's always better to find ways to multiply where we're doing it together."

Multiplication is important at Grace Point. In the past seven years, Wagoner and Pastor Spencer Walters, pastor of leadership development and men's ministry, have trained 42 different pastors through Send Network Training.

"We are all about church planting, planting autonomous churches. We're continuing to do that," he noted. "But we also feel like in this case, it's time to plant another Grace Point."

Preparation for launching Grace Point Hunter and Grace Point Espanol has already started. Pastor Spencer Walters will be one of the campus pastors for Hunter and Pastor Adrian Cespedes from Bolivia will lead the Espanol congregation.

Renovations will get underway in the new building and both Grace Point locations will be working toward the launch of the new churches on Easter Sunday 2025.

In addition to two churches, the new site will also house Grace Point Preschool, which will open in September, according to Wagoner. "We've never had a preschool during the week," he said. The preschool will be open Monday-Thursday with approximately 60 children enrolled.

Grace Point has big plans for its current location and its new one as well. "At the closing their pastor opened in prayer and then I got to close, even though we weren't even signing, and they gave me a key," Wagoner noted. "God put in my head, 'Upon this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom.'"



The second site of Grace Point Fellowship features 27,000 square feet and 17 acres of land.

Christmas Backpacks for Appalachia Welcomes New Point Person



Anne Lock,
Ohio point person for Christmas
Backpacks for Appalachia

Meet Anne Lock, a member of Cornerstone Baptist Church, Batavia. Anne has accepted the position of Ohio Point Person for Christmas Backpacks for Appalachia.

Using Christmas backpacks as a tangible expression of Christ's love for children and young people who call the mountains of Appalachia home, Ohio Baptists partner with Appalachian Mountain Ministry to help meet physical and spiritual needs during the Christmas season.

It is reported that 1.4 million children in Appalachia live in poverty. One out of four children there go to bed hungry every night. These children need adequate clothing, hygiene products, bedding, proper shoes, food, and most importantly they need to know the love of Christ.

To learn how you can get involved with Christmas Backpacks for Appalachia, please visit <https://www.scbo.org/content/christmas-backpacks> or contact Anne Lock at christmasbackpacksohio@gmail.com.



Mission:Dignity Sunday

Give Help. Give Honor. Give Dignity. Give Today.

Mission:Dignity® serves retirement-aged ministers, workers and widows as they face advancing age, illness, infirmity, death of a spouse and even natural disasters. Through it all, we provide constant care, prayer and financial assistance directly at the point of need.



Brenda Collins

Pastor's Widow
More than 50 Years of Ministry

"Pure and undefiled religion before God the Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress ..."

James 1:27 (CSB)

Pastors Cast Vision for Reaching People in SW Ohio

By Reagan Wagoner, Southwest Region catalyst



Florida pastors pray over Cincinnati pastors, Allen Stinson and Terry Lee Kirkland, at The Oaks Church on the Florida Partnership Vision Trip in April.

Recently, I have been inspired listening to the hopes and dreams of pastors all over Cincinnati. Pastors are re-thinking how to reach people all over our region. They are not just considering how to give a strong sermon on Sunday, but also how to mobilize their people outside the church building locally and globally.

When we had the opportunity to host pastors from Florida in April, what moved me was the passion of our pastors as they shared what God is laying on their hearts. As both established pastors and church planters shared their visions and their hopes for the future of churches in southwest Ohio, I got pumped up about what God is going to do!

One place where the vision struck me was at FBC Mt. Orab where Pastor Jonathan Lawler had his staff and members ready to receive our Florida guests. We met a charter member of the church who had been attending FBC Mt. Orab since the 1950's. The lady next to her said, "I'm new here compared to her. I've only been going here for around 30 years or so!" Getting to meet these ladies was a joy.

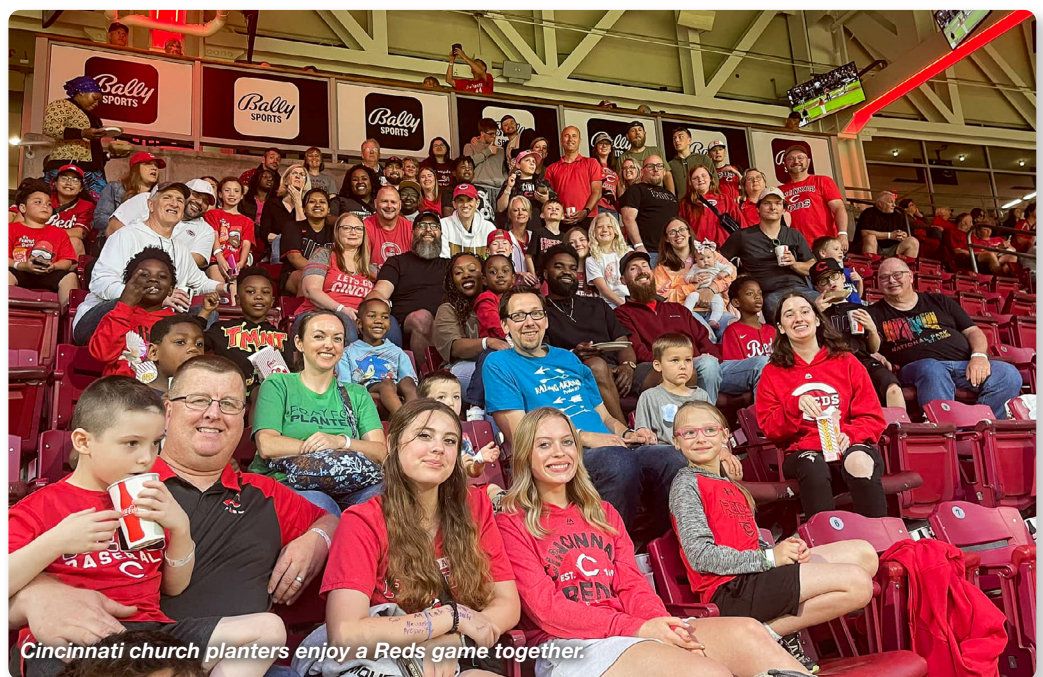
When Pastor Jonathan and Pastor Mark Marriot of FBC Mt. Orab shared their hearts, not only for reaching their community but also the rural river town of Ripley, where they sponsor a church

plant, you could have heard a pin drop. Just two days later, Florida pastor Jon Matthews preached at the Ripley church plant on Sunday and four people came to know Christ. Even in this small town on the banks of the Ohio River, God is moving. Please continue to pray for God's continued movement in Ripley!

This past month, we also got to enjoy a Reds game with our church planters here in Cincinnati. I could hardly get to my seat as planter after planter shared with me what God was doing in their churches.

Our church plants across Cincinnati have recorded the following stats for the last quarter: Average Weekly Worship Attendance: 1,860; Gospel Conversations: 540; Salvations: 69; Baptisms: 42; Intentional Discipleship Participants: 1,157; Cooperative Program Giving: \$20,943; Annie Armstrong Giving: \$1,464; Residency Missional Leader Participants: 7; and Residency Church Planting Participants: 44.

I am so grateful for all that God is doing so far in 2024 through our SW Ohio churches. It is obvious that you want to lead the way in furthering the Gospel. And as 55+ of us heard at Lakota Hills Church this past month from Dr. Jeremy Westbrook, our best days for reaching people here in Ohio are still ahead!



Cincinnati church planters enjoy a Reds game together.

President's Pen

Don't Resist God's Command to Go

10 But Moses said to the Lord, "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue." 11 Then the Lord said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? 12 Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak." 13 But he said, "Oh, my Lord, please send someone else."

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Ex 4:10–13). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

Ministry is difficult. Like Moses, we have been commissioned to go and proclaim a message. Like Moses, sometimes we're resistant to God's command to go. We can become preoccupied by our perceived lack of the requisite wisdom, skill, or strength to be effective in the work, or we can simply allow ourselves to become busy with other stuff.

Imagine if Moses had rejected God's command to go to Egypt. Imagine if he intended to go...but unintentionally drifted back into the busyness and distraction of the ongoing demands of shepherding Jethro's flock.

But Moses didn't do that. After his initial resistance, he obeyed the Lord's command to go and proclaim...and, as they say, the rest is history!

Jesus has commanded us to go and make disciples. He has promised to be with us, giving us everything we need to be effective in the work. Let's resist the temptation to resist the command to go. There are people in every community in Ohio who are enslaved to sin, without hope, and without God. Jesus has sent us.

Let's never respond to Him with, "Oh, my Lord, please send someone else."

One of the great things about being an Ohio Baptist is the support. Help is just an email or phone call away. There are amazing resources in our state to help church leaders who are struggling. We can help you proclaim the Word of Christ in your community so that lost people can hear and respond to the Gospel! You can always reach me at president@scbo.org.

Grace and Peace,

Adam Pursel
SCBO President



It's Time to be Real in Revitalization

By Mark Jones, SCBO revitalization consultant

According to a Lifeway Research article released on April 2, 2024, the SBC has seen an average of 900 churches disband or close each year. In 2022, 994 SBC churches closed their doors. This is devastating news when you consider lostness continues to increase.

In Ohio, we have quite a few churches struggling to keep the lights on. We may even be a 2024 statistic in the next Lifeway Research article.

In Nehemiah 1:1- 3, Nehemiah receives the report of the devastation in Jerusalem. It had seemed as though all hope was lost, the walls of Jerusalem were in disrepair, and that the remaining people were in despair. How would you respond to this news?

Watch how Nehemiah responds. "As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven..." (Nehemiah 1:4 CSB) He sat down. He wept and mourned for days. He continued fasting and praying before God. And it is in verses 5-11, we see Nehemiah being real with what has happened.

Assessing the devastation in our "Jerusalem" is the first step. We must be real with what has happened and is happening. We must then reflect on the news and

mourn what has happened over the weeks, months, and years past. We must fast, pray, and focus all efforts on the Chief Shepherd and His Kingdom. We must be real with prayers of confession and repentance seeking direction from God and looking forward to what He has planned next regardless of our agendas.

This could be a path to revitalization that includes a sister congregation coming alongside to coach us through the journey. It could be a decision to surrender all to a church replanter to start building new walls in their "Jerusalem." Whatever this time of prayer and fasting reveal, obedience must be our response.

In the fall, we will be introducing a partnership that will help us move forward in assisting churches and associations on a biblical path forward in revitalization. It will cause us to refocus on the kingdom, but first we must be real and repent. The training of Pathfinder coaches will begin in August with the assistance of the Illinois Baptist Convention.

Know that I am praying for you. If I can be of any assistance to you or your congregation, please email me at mjones@scbo.org.

The poster features a dark background with orange and red geometric shapes. At the top left, there is a grid of orange squares. The SCBO logo is prominently displayed in the upper center. Below it, the main title 'LEADING WELL FROM THE SECOND CHAIR' is written in large, bold, white and orange letters. To the right of the title, there are two rows of small orange squares. In the bottom left, there is a location pin icon next to the address 'SCBO 9000 ANTARES AVE COLUMBUS, OH 43230'. Below that is a calendar icon next to the date 'AUGUST 1, 2024'. On the right side, there is a portrait of Luke Francis, with his name and title 'EXECUTIVE PASTOR FIRST LIGHT CHURCH VANDALIA, OHIO' listed below it.

SCBO

LEADING WELL
FROM THE SECOND CHAIR

SCBO
9000 ANTARES AVE
COLUMBUS, OH 43230

AUGUST 1, 2024

LUKE FRANCIS
EXECUTIVE PASTOR
FIRST LIGHT CHURCH
VANDALIA, OHIO

Cincinnati Planter Leverages Church Building as Co-Working Space to Fuel Ministry



Growing up, Austin Mathis didn't know many pastors who held jobs outside their pastoral roles. So, naturally, when he felt God's call to plant a church in 2014, Austin didn't picture himself pastoring while also starting a business and coaching at the local high school.

He'd also never seen a church leverage its building as a for-profit coworking space during the week. So, naturally, he wasn't quite sure how to start one when the church he planted, Grace Church, acquired its first meeting space in a strip mall on the west side of Cincinnati this past year.

What he did know was that God designed the global economy in such a way that churches can send people everywhere. "And if we can do that internationally," he says, "why don't we leverage the local economy for the kingdom of God?"

So, that's what he did – even when he wasn't sure exactly what he was doing.

When Austin and his wife, Amy, moved back to their home city of Cincinnati in 2021 to pursue church planting, they wanted to make sure they were setting up Grace Church for long-term success. "If you can find a way early in church planting to alleviate operational costs, it can impact the ministry for years to come," Austin shares.

That's why Austin chose to plant Grace Church while working as a strength and conditioning coach at Harrison High School. But seeing marketplace opportunities that could be harnessed for God's kingdom wasn't something he intertwined just into his own life—he also applied this to his church's strategy.

Grace Church first began meeting in Mathis' living room in 2021. Despite Cincinnati's cultural Catholicism, God drew people to the church until they outgrew the living room and moved into a nearby elementary school. When Grace Church signed a lease on a retail space in 2022, Austin was excited to see how God would allow them to leverage this new gathering place for His mission.

"Then came the hard part," Austin laughs.

As members of Grace Church and ministry teams from partnering churches came to help renovate the space in the following weeks, Austin started consulting with finance and business experts to help set up Co:Mission Collaborative, a for-profit coworking space owned by and for the financial benefit of Grace Church.

"The motivation for starting a business wasn't only financial, but missional," Austin shares. "Church planters need to think more like a missionary engaging their community than a preacher starting a Sunday morning event. This business is helping Grace Church accomplish that."

During the week, Grace Church transforms into an office space for businesses and individuals in their community. Not only does the workspace meet a need in the church's neighborhood, but this creative opportunity also helps sustain the church's ministries – ministries that have helped them meet couples like Logan and Dana.

Members from Grace Church first met Logan and Dana at a community yard sale event but didn't see them

Story continues on the next page...

again until a year and a half later, when their family encountered a difficult season and decided to visit Grace Church. In the past year, Logan and Dana have accepted Christ, followed in believer's baptism, and dedicated their four children to God.

Austin's job as a coach has also helped him reach out to different pockets of his community that wouldn't have been as easy for him to access as a full-time pastor. Several high school athletes he coaches have visited Grace Church; some even attend with their families.

"Whether it's being on the sidelines on Friday nights with the football team or getting to know the mayor through my role at the business and church, I've seen my multiple roles intersect in the community," Austin says. It's all come together, and I've seen how God has gone before to prepare the ground and open doors."

Being a part of Send Network has provided crucial encouragement for Austin as he's jumped through the hoops of covocational church planting. "Knowing that the entire network is behind you, that everyone is rooting for one another and wants your church to do well – it's crucial for all church planters, covocational or not."

Austin encourages churches who own a meeting space to develop a core team of leaders, then ask, "How can your church leverage your space to reach your community? What could God do within the walls of the building not just on Sunday but throughout the week?" *Editor's Note: This article first appeared on [SendNetwork.com](https://sendnetwork.com).*

Free Women's Evangelism Resources Available from NAMB

The North American Mission Board (NAMB) has developed free resources designed to encourage and challenge women to create a culture of evangelism—in their lives, in their families and in their ministries. These resources encourage women to experience evangelism as a lifestyle discipline rather than as a task or campaign. To access these free resources, please visit learn.namb.net and scroll down to "Creating a Culture of Evangelism for Women."

In addition, Catherine Renfro, national director, Women's Evangelism, NAMB, has created a free eBook, "Women in the Mission of God." It is a 30-day prayer guide for women as they pray for a specific person in their life who needs the hope of the gospel. To download this free resource visit <https://www.namb.net/resource/womens-ministry/>.

SCBO **VISION TOUR**
With Executive Director Jeremy Westbrook

Apr 23 May 9 Sept 26 Sept 12 Aug 15

Next Stop
FBC Logan
Logan, Ohio

Go to sco.org/VisionTour for more details...

**WOMEN
IN THE
MISSION
OF GOD**

BY CATHERINE RENFRO

After Surprise Calling, Pastor Leads Living Water Church to Renewal

By Stephanie Heading, managing editor

In 2021, Pastor Adam Hunt filled the pulpit at Living Water Church, Ashtabula, a church of 10-15 people in rural Ashtabula County northeast of Cleveland.

"I remember when I came out to speak and then they invited me to come speak again," Hunt said. "I'm from New York and so my family is back in New York."

He accepted the invitation to preach again. "And I come back a second time, and I'm a candidate. And the next thing I know they voted me to be their pastor."

After the vote church leaders asked for his response. He said, "Well, I can't give you an answer. I didn't expect this to happen today."

On his way back home, he called his wife and shared the unexpected job offer. "I drove out to New York, and I get my wife on the phone in the car, and I'm like, they just voted me in as their pastor."

Relocating to Ashtabula was not a simple proposition for the Hunt family. He and his wife, Rebekah, had 11 children at the time. Today they have 13 children, ages 16 years to 5 months old.

The Hunts took time to consider the offer. "I actually took two to three months to say yes to that," he said. "I prayed about it and waited to let my wife speak into the situation, and then we decided to do it."

However, the move itself didn't happen overnight. "We had a lot of stuff we had to unravel in New York – a lot of stuff that had to happen in order for us to get there," Hunt said.

He finally got to Living Water in August 2021. His family moved to the Ashtabula area in February 2022.

The work started immediately. "We came two years ago, and it was kind of a church rescue operation. We came knowing full well that there was going to be a lot of work," Hunt noted.

He remembers Sundays when the congregation was so small and scattered throughout the sanctuary that he moved everyone to a tiny overflow wing in the building so they could be together.

Since the days in the overflow wing, things have changed for the better. "Now we have a hard time fitting into our building," he said. "We've grown quite a bit, and the church is almost completely changed."

Hunt believes that change is a process. "It takes time to form the church body, to kind of figure out who you are. What builds the church, what forms a church, if you want a healthy church, is the Word of God."



Members of Living Water Church, Ashtabula, prepare 130 Easter baskets for foster children in Ashtabula County.

He also believes in bold, unapologetic preaching of God's Word. "I think faithful consistent preaching of scripture will inform people on what they ought to be," he said. "It has to be unashamed preaching. It can't be somebody saying, 'Well, I'm afraid they're going to judge me or they're gonna be upset with me if I tell them this truth.' You do it in love but you're telling the truth."

One truth Hunt is instilling in his congregation is having a heart for the lost. "I believe as God changes us we don't become judgmental. We become sympathetic. Sympathetic towards the world."

Living Water is putting this truth in action through community outreach. "The people who are outcasts, the people who are the sojourners, the people who have the greatest need tend to be the people that can't speak up for themselves," he said.

This spring the church reached out to foster children through Ashtabula County Children's Services.

Members prepared 130 Easter baskets for foster children. The baskets included candy, toys, and even religious materials. Children's Services workers personally delivered them to the children.

With an SCBO Evangelism Grant, Hunt purchased multiple copies of "God's Great Plan" written by Melissa Cutrera, a Southern Baptist Theological Seminary graduate. "I strongly recommend it. Every time I read it, tears run down my face," Hunt said.

Story continues on the next page...

The book was offered to foster families when Easter baskets were delivered. “We purchased a bunch of those books and most of them were distributed,” he said.

Not only did the gospel reach the families who received the Easter baskets, but the evangelism grant was also an encouragement to Living Water.

“There’s always the question of is there going to be enough money for something. So that helped, knowing that money was available,” Hunt said. “And I was glad to have a partnership with the state convention. I think it tells the church that we’re in this together. We’re not alone.”

Living Water also distributed 450 door hangers for Easter, up 350 from last year. “We make Christmas

and Easter big in this church,” Hunt noted. “I bought over 500 invitations. We have them custom printed. I figure if lawn mowing companies can do glossy advertisements that they hand out to people, we could do the same thing, right?”

While Living Water hasn’t seen fruit from their recent outreach efforts yet, Hunt believes that it will come.

“When God says that His Word is going to go out and not return to him void, you know what that means?” he said. “That means when we go and share the Word of God that we’re doing something that has an effect. There’s no question God promises that it will have an effect.”

What Does It Take To Be an Ohio Disaster Relief Volunteer?

By John Heading, Ohio Disaster Relief director

According to recent estimates, there are currently approximately 1400 disaster relief agencies in the United States. Southern Baptist Disaster Relief (SBDR) is one of about a dozen organizations that are active on a regular basis and is one of the few organizations that are faith based.

Ohio Disaster Relief exists to bring Help, Hope and Healing to people affected by disaster. We do this with the heart of Jesus who had compassion for people in need and responded by meeting their needs. So, what does it take for be a good disaster relief volunteer? According to the “Introduction to Southern Baptist Disaster Relief,” there are eight characteristics to consider.

Having a servant’s heart - When teams hit the field we must care more about serving than completing jobs. It’s easy to rattle off the number of jobs completed, but it’s another thing to share how we were able to serve those affected.

Willing to take directions from others - SBDR is highly organized. Volunteers wear gold caps. Team leaders wear blue hats. Incident commanders wear white hats. When teams are serving in the field, the team leaders call the shots. They have more experience and may know things the gold caps may not know.

Adapting to ever-changing circumstances - Serving in a disaster area is fluid. It is normal to hit the field planning to one thing but doing something else instead.

Knowing how to be part of the team - Ohio Disaster Relief is a team. There’s no way to remove a tree, clean out a flooded home, or cook food for 100 people

alone. We accomplish more together than we can on our own.

Serving to help people in need - Some volunteer in disaster zones to help people in need, but others are there to feel good about themselves. SBDR volunteers must always be there to serve people.

Willing to work where needed - Following the train derailment in East Palestine in 2023, Ohio DR contacted emergency management and learned that residents needed help cleaning their houses so they would feel more confident going home. Volunteers from all Disaster Relief disciplines answered the call and cleaned homes. Although cleaning homes isn’t something we usually do, it met the needs of people in this disaster.

Self-controlling in speech, attitude, and actions - When we deploy to a disaster zone we must remember that we represent Christ in all that we do. We must be mature enough that our faith produces speech, attitude and actions that represent Christ without having to think about it.

Having physical strength to work long and strenuous days - Disaster Relief is strenuous work that requires significant exertion. The feeding team stands for long periods of time. The chainsaw and flood recovery teams are physically demanding.

Ohio Disaster Relief is looking for people with a heart to serve, train, and deploy to share the love of Christ with hurting people. Please, prayerfully consider if the Lord is leading you to serve in this ministry.

Pastors from the Southeast Region of the Florida Baptist Convention visit the Northeast Region of Ohio to learn more about the region and explore partnership options.



Northeast Ohio's Chill and Gray Can't Keep the Florida Guys Away

By Darin Avery, associational mission strategist, Cleveland Hope

Over two dozen Cleveland Hope pastors and church planters recently greeted ten Florida Baptist leaders. With SCBO Northeast Regional Catalyst Stephen Owens as guide, the Florida team visited the Summit and Steel Valley associations and concluded their April 21-23 vision trip in Cleveland.

Buckeye and Sunshine state ministers rubbed shoulders over an evening of bowling and dinner at Pinstripes, a great venue for fun, food, and conversation. Other Clevelanders came the next morning to share about their ministries and hear from each of our new Florida friends over a delicious fellowship breakfast hosted by Mt. Calvary Baptist, Bedford.

Encouraged by the Florida team's Black, white, Hispanic, and Haitian makeup, I trust the Florida brothers were similarly excited to tour urban, suburban, and rural mission contexts while engaging with northeast Ohio leaders from varied backgrounds and abilities including a deaf pastor/planter!

The final van ride to the airport included not only teeth-chattering smiles for a chilly group photo backdropped by downtown Cleveland but, more importantly, three church visits to meet and pray with Anglo, African American, and Hungarian pastors respectively, in hopes of sending our guests home with a taste of Cleveland's incredible diversity and immense gospel need.

Since the April visit strategic conversations are underway on both ends and at every level of this

budding partnership. Details will need to be hammered out, but desires expressed among Florida leaders in a post-trip Zoom huddle include:

Association-to-Association/Pastor-to-Pastor Partnering - Two Florida association leaders commit to help their churches partner with Cleveland area churches and their pastors with our pastors.

Hispanic Church Planting - Four Hispanic Florida pastors desire to help plant Spanish-speaking churches among Cleveland's sizeable Hispanic community.

Outreach & Construction - A Miami, Florida, pastor hopes to send mission teams in 2025 to conduct minor building repairs as well as community outreach.

VBS Training & Mission Teams - In 2025 another Florida pastor plans to send not only vacation Bible school mission teams, but a training team to prep VBS leaders across northeast Ohio.

Joint Mission Trips - One Florida pastor wants to play a lead role in coordinating joint mission trips by southeast Florida churches to northeast Ohio.

Monthly Prayer Call - One pastor looks to host a monthly prayer call with pastors in both states as a means of mutual encouragement.

Only God sees the eternal fruit to be borne of earthly gospel partnering. We in northeast Ohio are grateful for Florida brothers willing to invest beyond their

Story continues on the next page...

immediate fields of ministry in kingdom opportunities where the sun shines less and they name football teams after nuts and colors!

Their tough endurance of our colder climate for a few days was so inspiring that Gary Frost, Mark Jones,

and I refuse to let sunny 70 degree temperatures keep us from taking a few leaders south to explore paths to mutual partnership this coming January!

Connect with your AMS or SCBO regional catalyst today and be part of this exciting partnership!



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 **September 14, 2024**

 **First Baptist Church Kettering
Dayton, OH**

Pastors, Church Leaders Encouraged to Participate in Biennial Church Compensation Survey

By Roy Hayhurst, Guidestone Financial Resources

(BP) – Guidestone Financial Resources, Lifeway Research and Baptist state conventions have again teamed up for the SBC Church Compensation Survey. The survey – the largest free study focused on churches in the United States – is conducted every two years.

The survey’s results will be available in early fall, in time for many churches considering their 2025 budgets.

Churches of all sizes can utilize the survey’s results to determine comparable wages and benefits. The survey takes about 10 minutes to complete at GuideStone.org/CompensationSurvey. The survey started April 1 and goes on until the end of June.

“The SBC Church Compensation Survey provides a snapshot of what churches across our Convention are doing in paying their pastors and other church staff members,” said GuideStone President Hance Dilbeck. “We want to make sure that churches understand their

responsibility to pay the right wage the right way, and so taking this information when it’s available and following best compensation practices will go a long way to help pastors as they seek to be financially secure and resilient servants to the Lord’s churches.”

Individual survey results can be contributed anonymously; survey results are not reported individually. Lifeway Research will compile the results once the survey closes on June 30. Survey respondents will receive advance notice of the survey’s availability.

Respondents should have the church’s average weekly attendance, membership and 2024 annual budget. Additional information needed to complete the survey is the employees’ yearly salary, the church’s annual contributions to a retirement plan, annual church-paid insurance premiums, annual housing allowance, Social Security offset, and the rental value and utilities for church-provided housing.

Job Postings

FULL TIME PASTOR-TEACHER

New Covenant Community Church, Johnstown

New Covenant Community Church is in search of a full time pastor-teacher to lead our congregation in reaching the community with the saving message of Jesus Christ in Johnstown. The Johnstown area is growing, and our desire is for God to send us the man with a loving, caring and warm personality, combined with a deep knowledge of the inerrant Word of God, and a passion to share the message of Jesus Christ to join us in our mission. To learn more about the church please visit www.new-covenant.org.

The Pastor-Teacher shall be responsible for general oversight of the spiritual welfare of the church, arrange for and conduct all public and regular services of the church, provide leadership among church staff, and provide recommendations for eldership. He shall be an ex-officio member of all councils and committees. He shall be responsible to the Council of Elders.

To learn more about the position and to apply, go to www.new-covenant.org/pastor-teacher-application

PASTOR

Good Shepherd Baptist Church, Amherst

Good Shepherd Baptist Church, Amherst, is prayerfully seeking a pastor who will be in the instrumental role of teaching and expository preaching the whole counsel of God's Word and shepherding the church family at GSBC. He will lead the development and implementation of a strategic vision, along with the congregation, for the future of the church. He is to be engaged in pastoral care, providing supervisory and administrative leadership in all areas of congregational care including paid and volunteer staff.

For a full job description or to apply, please contact Chris Jordan at cmjordanranch@frontier.com.

GUEST AND INTERIM WORSHIP LEADERS NEEDED

Do you know of anyone who could serve another church as a guest or interim worship leader? If you know of someone with potential in this area, email SCBO Worship Consultant Zac James at zjames@scbo.org. Developing and sending worship leaders is a critical part of our missional cooperation as Southern Baptists who fulfill the Great Commission. There is a significant need for worship leaders who are willing to be sent, and we want to help connect them with churches in need.

Let the Ohio Baptist Messenger help your church find a new pastor or staff member!

The Messenger is offering classified ads free of charge for Ohio churches searching for new pastors and staff members. The Messenger is read by churches and individuals in Ohio and across the country.

To submit a classified ad, please send brief information about the position along with a return phone number or email:

classifieds@scbo.org