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THE STATE CONVENTION OF BAPTISTS IN OHIO

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**Baptism Numbers Continue
to Rise in the SCBO!**

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The Ohio Baptist Messenger Staff

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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.

Baptism Numbers Continue to Rise in the SCBO!

Numbers represent souls.

Once again, I am thrilled to share with you that baptisms are on the rise here in the SCBO. We experienced a 27% increase in 2025 and have seen a 182% increase since 2021. To God be the glory!!

I pray that we never get over the gospel and stay focused on sharing the hope of Christ across the street and around the world. Thank you for your faithful and sacrificial generosity to the Cooperative Program.

As you may already be aware, 2025 was the highest year of Cooperative Program giving in SCBO's 71-year history! As a former pastor and church planter here in the Buckeye State, I always love hearing and seeing the impact of our missions' giving.

Did you know that your giving to the Cooperative Program helps provide evangelism grants to cooperating SCBO churches?

If your church is faithfully contributing to the Cooperative Program and has a vision to share the gospel in your community, then we would like to bless you with a small financial grant, enabling you to accomplish this vision.

The first step is to send an email to grants@scbo.org, and you will receive a link to fill out a digital form. Once

submitted, your request will be reviewed, and if the evangelism grant is approved, your church will receive funds within two to three weeks of your initial submission. You may submit one request annually, and then you must provide a follow-up report on how the Lord blessed your evangelistic efforts.

The Lord has placed his hand upon our churches here in Ohio, and I hope it remains upon us. If I can ever come to preach or serve your church in any way, please contact me at jwestbrook@scbo.org.

It is an honor and a joy to serve the Lord and you. Ohio Baptists, let's stay focused on the mission because numbers represent souls.

Moving Forward,



Dr. Jeremy Westbrook
Executive Director-Treasurer, SCBO



President's Pen

Be Steadfast In The Battle Against Discouragement

One of the greatest challenges that pastors and ministry leaders face is discouragement.

In Nehemiah 6, we read about the enemies of God strategically working to hinder and stop the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. As Nehemiah pushed forward in what God had called him to do, the enemy commissioned “professional discouragers” to stop him. The leaders of the opposition were Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem.

A.W. Tozer wrote, “The devil is a master of discouragement, and the closer a believer gets to God’s purposes, the harder he will work.”

The enemy attempted to stop Nehemiah from doing God’s work in two ways.

First, through distraction. In Nehemiah 6:2, they try to get him off the wall. Tried to get him to take his focus off what God had called him to do, and instead focus on something that wasn’t as important.

The day-to-day demands of ministry can easily cause us to lose our focus on the mission, and it becomes even more challenging when the enemy is strategically working to distract us.

Second, they spread false rumors about Nehemiah. If you’re going to serve God, being slandered, gossiped about, and lied about pretty much comes with the territory. No one likes to be falsely accused, and it not only causes personal hurt but can also be incredibly discouraging.

Pastors begin to ask questions like, “Why am I sacrificing and giving of myself for people who are going to lie about me, and don’t trust me at all?” In Nehemiah 6:10-13, the opposition goes so far as to hire Shemaiah, a prophet, to frighten Nehemiah. Their goal is to discourage him, scare him, and simply run him off.

It would be nice if these stories were just for Old Testament rebuilding projects, but the reality is the enemy is still using the same tactics to discourage and discredit pastors and ministry leaders today.

All of us have dealt with our own Sanballats, Tobiahs, and even the hired Shemiahs. But opposition doesn’t mean we have failed at the work. Actually, it most often means exactly the opposite. The more we step out in faith, taking bold risks for kingdom advancement, the more we get the enemy’s attention and the greater threat we become.

You may be fighting professional discouragers right now, but I want to encourage you not to give up. Don’t let them scare you off, intimidate you, or make you doubt your calling. Jesus was routinely slandered and falsely accused, and He was the perfect example of remaining steadfast in doing the Father’s will despite opposition. So, keep pressing on, stay encouraged, and don’t let the enemy cause you to give up.

“Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.” – 1 Corinthians 15:58.



In Christ,

Dave Welsch
SCBO President

The Beauty of Celebrating New Life Through Outdoor Baptism

By Josh Remy, Southeast Region catalyst

Long before many churches had indoor baptistries, believers in rural Appalachia were baptized in lakes, creeks, rivers, and farm ponds. In small towns across southeast Ohio, it wasn't unusual for entire congregations to gather along a riverbank to celebrate new life in Christ.

While most churches in our region today have baptistries inside their buildings, congregations are increasingly rediscovering the beauty of celebrating baptism outdoors, inviting their communities to witness the moment.

That spirit was on display last summer during a family fun day hosted by Faith Baptist Church in Belle Valley. The event included games, food, and activities for church families and the community. The highlight of the day was when several individuals made a public profession of their faith in Christ through baptism in Seneca Lake.

One of those baptized was Tommy.

Tommy grew up in a household that did not acknowledge God. He would often say, "If I cannot see it, how can I believe it?"

In recent years, he battled depression with bouts of alcoholism. Like many people, he carried the weight of these struggles in every part of his life. But through relationships with believers and the work of God in his life, Tommy began to encounter the hope found in Christ.

When he stepped into Seneca Lake, it marked more than just an emotional highlight at a church gathering. It began a new chapter in Tommy's life.

"When Tommy started attending our church, the darkness and the depression that he was carrying were palpable. But over time, the walls in his life began to come down. He was at every service, asking great questions, and he began meeting with another member in the church for personal Bible study and guidance.

"When he surrendered his life to Jesus, not only were the hosts of heaven rejoicing, but we were too! Tommy is now a shining example of the fruits of the Spirit. No longer is darkness and depression palpable, but the joy and glory of the Lord Jesus shines through him." - Pastor Stephen Hannum, Faith Baptist Church.

For Christians, baptism is more than a religious ceremony. It is a public declaration of faith and a picture of transformation. Going into the water symbolizes leaving behind an old life, while rising again represents the new life that comes through faith in Jesus Christ.

While Tommy's example highlights a dramatic transformation, every single baptism is a changed life on display



for the world to see. In an increasingly visual and experiential world, baptisms connect with people in ways that sermons sometimes can't.

The crowd on the beach that day took notice of the baptisms, but those in his circle witnessed Tommy's new life. Just a few weeks ago, at a community church gathering, also sponsored by Faith Baptist Church, Tommy's mother gave her life to Christ, prompted largely by the difference she had witnessed in her son.

Having never attended church regularly in her life, she was moved not by the religious act but by genuine transformation. She plans to be baptized in the near future as evidence of her new life.

Across southeast Ohio, churches, both large and small, faithfully share the gospel and walk alongside people through life's difficulties. And sometimes, the results are seen in a local body of water just as believers in this region have done for generations. But as Tommy's story shows, those moments are far more than tradition. They are about new life.

Columbus Legacy Church Begins New Life Through Replanting

By Stephanie Heading, managing editor

God is bringing new life to dying churches in Ohio, and he is using church replanting to do it.

On Sunday, March 15, an Ohio legacy church celebrated its launch into a fresh season of ministry as a church replant.

Southside Baptist Church, Columbus, was founded 72 years ago. The church, on South High Street not far from downtown, became a mainstay in its community.

Over time, as families left Columbus for the suburbs, Southside's community changed, becoming more multi-cultural. As the church struggled to transition to a new ministry context, it spiraled into decline.

With fewer than a dozen remaining members, Southside was on the verge of closing.

As hope dimmed for its survival, Summit Baptist Church, Pataskala, and its pastor, Mark Glenn, reached out, offering to foster the ailing church.

"Our small church loves to foster dying and declining churches and help bring them back to health," Glenn said. "We spend about a year with these churches as we love on them, serve them, supply their pulpit, and eventually, help find them a new pastor."

Southside accepted Summit's offer, and the search began for a sending church for the replant. In January 2025, Glenn approached Maranatha Community Church, Pickerington.

"Last January, Mark reached out to us. He said he wanted a like-minded church in the SBC that plants churches or revitalizes churches. We have a track record of that," said Justin Bubar, one of the elders at Maranatha Pickerington.

However, Maranatha already had plans to plant a church in another location, so the timing wasn't right.

"We actually said 'no,' originally," he said.

A few months later, a group from Maranatha, including Justin, attended a conference where they heard a message about ministry in hard-to-reach places.

The pastor said, "If you are doing compassion ministry in hard areas, and you do not have a church, just stop. Stop and reassess, and then look at how you can plant in those areas. If your goal is not just meeting the physical needs of people, and they get saved, well, then where do they go? You're 25 minutes away in the suburbs."

The message hit a nerve.

"We were like, 'Lord, you're knocking on our door again. It looks like you're gonna kick it down. So we're just gonna say yes to this,'" Justin recalled.



Pastor Justin Bubar preaches his first sermon at Maranatha Community Church Southside, a replant of Southside Baptist Church, Columbus.

Maranatha became Southside's sending church, and they needed to find a replanter.

"It was going to have to be from within our eldership collective, and none of us were jumping at it, not even me at the time," Justin noted. "I worked full-time in roofing. I'm just grinding, trying to work hard to pay our bills."

The elder collective and their wives prayed, asking the Lord to raise up the man to lead the Southside replant.

During the season of prayer, Justin and his wife Jenna prayed, but didn't talk about Southside.

Finally, Justin broached the subject with Jenna.

"Are you thinking about Southside?" he asked. "And she said, 'Yes, Justin, are you?' And I said, 'Yes, I am.'"

It was time to share with the elder collective.

"They were all very excited – affirming and confirming," he remembered. "They said, 'Justin, if anyone was going to do this, we wanted it to be you. We just didn't want to pressure you. We wanted this to be from the Lord.'"

The elders also loved Justin and Jenna's hearts for the nations.

"My wife and I have an extensive global missions background, so this is in my wheelhouse," Justin said. This (Southside) is a hard area. It's not the suburbs."

In October 2025, Justin committed to replanting Southside, which is now Maranatha Community Church Southside.

"Now we're walking into this sort of exciting, yet scary

thing, because I wasn't planning on planting a church. This was really the Lord," he said.

"I started to preach there a few times to meet with the congregation that is left. I already love Judy, and Diana, and Jimmy, and Ray, and Jay, and Norma, and Jack, and Hazel, and Linda."

The congregation readily accepted Justin and Jenna.

"They ended up saying, 'Yes, Justin will be our pastor. We understand that this church has to die, but we're excited for Justin to be our pastor,'" he said. "It meant so much because I don't want to be swimming upstream as we plant the church."

Justin wasted no time getting ready to launch Maranatha Southside. The church held a workday to clean out the church building. Everything that was in good shape and still usable was put outside and offered to the community.

They knocked on doors, sharing about the church and inviting their neighbors to take home any items they wanted.

"We had probably over 20 people from the community who came. We had about 40 people from our (Maranatha) churches come and fill a whole dumpster with junk, and then we were able to give away most of what we were going to donate to the Salvation Army to actual people, which was such a special thing," Justin said.

"The only thing that would have made it better was if someone got saved. We were able to share the gospel with some of the neighbors and pray for people."

Since its launch, Maranatha Southside and Pastor Justin are on mission, sharing the gospel and praying for people. On Launch Sunday, he started a series in Colossians.

"Launch Sunday went great! It was a huge blessing. Over 80 in attendance. The parking lot was so full that people had to park in the grass," he said. "The gospel was preached, and we worshiped our King!"



Over 80 people attend the launch service at church replant, Maranatha Community Church Southside in Columbus.



SCBO
The State Convention Of Baptists In Ohio

REGISTER TODAY
scbo.org/dr



DISASTER RELIEF OHIO

DISASTER RELIEF UNIT TRAINING

April 11, 2026
8:00 AM – 1:30 PM
Reynoldsburg Baptist
887 Rosehill Rd.
Reynoldsburg, OH 43068

April 18, 2026
8:00 AM – 1:30 PM
Urbancrest Baptist
2634 Drake Rd.
Lebanon, OH 45036

September 12, 2026
8:00 AM – 1:30 PM
Ebenezer Baptist
6935 Township Rd. #234
Logan, OH 43138

October 3, 2026
8:00 AM – 1:30 PM
Freedom Hill Community
3943 Fishcreek Rd.
Stow, OH 44224



scbo.org/dr

Testimony

SCBO Resources Available to Help Pastors. Just Reach Out!

By Brian Naess, associate pastor, Violet Baptist Church, Pickerington

I do not know about you, but in my tenure of ministry and my personal walk with God, I experience seasons of dryness. Those times in our spiritual lives when we read scripture, pray, and try to drink from the well, but, to be very honest, it is more like drinking from a sandbox.

I was just in such a season. My routine with God had become mainly centered on listening to the Bible each day. I have had seasons when I have faithfully journaled, using the S.O.A.P. method (Scripture, Observation, Application, and Prayer), prayed, and studied, but it was almost all I could do to listen to my passages each day.

I knew I needed a recharge, but was having difficulty doing it. This past November, I attended the SCBO Annual Meeting in Mount Vernon and heard that the convention is investing in us as pastors by providing opportunities to spend time with a counselor and a health coach. I said to myself, “Why would I not take advantage of these resources?”

I have been meeting with a counselor since that time. He is a fellow pastor trained in biblical counseling. My conversations with him have been life-giving. We have poured over the book of Colossians, focusing on me going deeper in my intimate relationship with Christ. The things we discuss are things I use often to counsel others, but I need to hear them again. Since meeting with him, I have revived several of my daily routines with Christ. They have been rich times of fellowship with my Father.

The other area in which I have been convicted is my health. It is not a news flash that pastors are not the picture of health. In addition, last November, my doctor gave me an ultimatum: either focus more on your health in the next decade, or “these” things are going to be in your future.

In God’s perfect timing, I heard about the state giving us the opportunity to connect with a health coach. This has also been life-giving to me as I spend more time focusing on the only “temple” God has given

me. Pastor, if we are going to finish well, our health needs to be a focus.

My encouragement to you is: do not ever get to the point where you say, “I do not need counseling or help from others with my health.”

God has placed us in biblical communities for such purposes. I have heard it said that leaders who finish well are lifetime learners and individuals who have experienced repeated times of renewal.

If you are stagnant in your faith or just need that time of renewal, my question is this: Why wouldn’t you take advantage of the resources that the SCBO is offering?

Finally, thank you, State Convention, for investing in us!

To God be the glory!!



Pastor Brian Naess and family.

DR Enters New Partnership with Ohio Military Reserve

By Dr. John Heading, Ohio Disaster Relief director

When disaster strikes, many organizations respond.

Some are faith-based, non-government organizations, like Ohio Disaster Relief. Others are well-known government groups such as the National Guard and FEMA.



Ohio DR Director Dr. John Heading discusses the role of DR during the Ohio Military Reserve training exercise with Ohio Governor Mike DeWine and Colonel Gary Lehman.

In Ohio, it's the Ohio Military Reserve (OHMR). You might not know who they are, but they respond to statewide disasters under the direction of the Governor of Ohio.

The OHMR commander is Colonel Gary Lehman. At one time, he was an active Ohio Disaster Relief volunteer. His background in DR has given him a good understanding of what Ohio DR can do.

Col. Gary Lehman and I met together, and a partnership was formed.

Our first partnership event was in March during the OHMR annual training exercise in Columbus. Ohio DR members used our Quick Response Feeding Unit (QRU) to feed 180 volunteers during the three-day event.

During the training, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine visited to inspect the exercise and learn about the capabilities of the participating organizations. I had the opportunity to share with the governor about what we were providing and showed him our Quick Response Feeding Unit so he



Ohio Governor Mike DeWine thanks the Ohio DR volunteers who cooked meals for the recent Ohio Military Reserve training exercise.

could see how we respond to feeding emergencies.

Since the event, communications between the Ohio Military Reserve and Ohio Disaster Relief have continued. We have a plan in the works to hold a combined chaplain training in Critical Incident Stress Management, and initial discussions have begun for a partnership between the Ohio National Guard and Ohio Disaster Relief.

These new partnerships will give Ohio Disaster Relief volunteers access to areas of disaster response that we previously could only watch from the sidelines. Each new partnership gives an opportunity to represent Christ and reach out to people in crisis.

Ohio DR Member Honored with Lifetime Service Award



Dixon Award Recipient Dale Patterson and Ohio DR Director Dr. John Heading.

A member of Ohio Disaster Relief is the recipient of the 2026 Southern Baptist Disaster Relief (SBDR) Lifetime Achievement Award.

The Dixon Award is presented in recognition of a lifetime of service that helped shape the course of SBDR. Nominated individuals are considered pioneers who have made a significant impact on the ministry of SBDR, both inside and outside their state. Only two Dixon Lifetime Service Awards are presented each year.

Dale Patterson from First Baptist Church, Westerville, is one of this year's recipients of this honor.

Dale has served in Ohio Disaster Relief since 1991 and has trained countless DR volunteers who serve on chainsaw teams. He has served above and beyond the call of duty, setting a faithful standard for many to follow.

Next Gen, New Churches, and Faithfulness in the Southwest Region

By Reagan Wagoner, Southwest Region catalyst

We can always look around and see what the world is doing, or we can look around and celebrate what God is doing. There is always such a big difference!

Where else do you hear good news? It's hard to find in our world today, unless you are watching and waiting to see what God is going to do! And as many of us learned when we were younger... God is good... all the time! And all the time... God is good!

In the first quarter of 2026, the Southwest Region is celebrating God's goodness.

Send Network Training Cohort - Recently, eight church planters began Send Network Training. This is the largest cohort we have ever had in our region! These church planters are praying, planning, working other jobs, and even meeting outside of our cohorts as they get ready for the task ahead of them.



The new Send Network Training Cohort.

Partnership Event with CCC and Send Cincinnati - I attended a partnership event between one of our associations, the Cincinnati Church Collective (CCC), led by Pastor Chuck Smith, and Send Cincinnati at The Valley Church. CCC now has 31 churches partnering together, up from fewer than ten churches just a few years ago. Thirty church planters and partners gathered to discuss Easter outreach — one pastor to another.

Church Planter Faithfulness — I had a conversation with a planter, and he showed me his church budget. It was small, but his church is still planning to give to its association, send 6% as a NAMB church planter to the Cooperative Program, and has 10% budgeted overall to go towards giving outside the church.

I am grateful for pastors who still desire to be a part of something greater than themselves. I can't wait to see how God uses their unseen faithfulness in leading their churches to give to the kingdom.

Next Gen Lunch – Recently, my church, Grace Point, hosted about 40 people for our Next Gen Lunch. Pastor Austin Mathis, SCBO second vice president, reminded us that students are not just looking for a place to belong, but a place to believe.

Speaking from Deuteronomy 6, Mathis shared that truth comes first, since faith that cannot say what it believes has no destination. This is why we must continue to share the gospel with the next generation, because, if we don't, the world will repeat a false message to them over and over again! Mathis shared that we must teach them that there is a cost, an anchor, and something meaningful in following Jesus. I am thankful for those who know the importance of helping the next generation meet Jesus now.



SCBO **RULE 3**

Family Fun
DAY

GO.SCBO.ORG/FAMILY-FUN

RULE 3 | PICKERINGTON, OH | 4/25

A ministry pace reset, together!

Pastors, church staff, and families are invited to a relaxed Family Fun Day filled with bowling, arcade time, pizza, and plenty of FUN!!

Come connect with other ministry families, make memories, and enjoy a refreshing break!



Austin Mathis speaks to attendees at the Next Gen Lunch at Grace Point Church.

Long-Term Faithfulness – It is always a privilege to celebrate faithfulness. At the recent CABA meeting at Clough Pike, three new churches joined the list of churches that partner together. Jeff Prowes, Senior Pastor at Urbancrest, shared from 2 Timothy 4 on finishing well. Other business and reports were discussed, but the night concluded with a tribute to retiring CABA AMS Mark Snowden for his faithful 10 years of service. Everyone gathered around Mark and Mary Leigh to pray as they transition to their next chapter.

Consistency is important in leadership, and I am grateful for those who serve faithfully to make a difference in our city.



Buzz Kocher, SCBO director of Strategic Initiatives, presents a plaque to CABA AMS Mark Snowden in honor of his retirement after 10 years at CABA.

SCBO ▶

WOMEN'S RETREAT

UNSHAKABLE TRUST

go.scbo.org/NW-Women
April 18
Amherst, OH

Women, you're invited to a day of worship, encouragement, and meaningful connection at our Women's Retreat: Unshaken Trust.

Come be strengthened with biblical hope as we talk honestly about grief and learn what it looks like to stand steady in the Lord through every season.

You'll leave refreshed, equipped, and reminded you're not walking this road alone. Gather your friends and join us!

Continuing the Conversation in Replant, Revitalization, Renewal, Fostering

By Mark Jones, Revitalization consultant

My involvement in revitalizing churches dates back to the early 2000s.

In those days, the prevailing advice for struggling congregations was a cold-hearted suggestion to simply surrender their affairs to a stronger church or association for future decisions. It reeked of a corporate takeover, with little empathy for the loyal congregants.

However, I have faith that those advocating for complete surrender had good intentions.

Perhaps you have been hesitant to contact our Revitalization Team because you fear we will simply tell you there is no hope for your congregation.

Recently, Pastor Mark Glenn, Summit Baptist Church, Pataskala, reminded our SCBO staff that according to Romans 8:11, "God can still bring the dead back to life." His words were a source of encouragement, as he reminded us that even seemingly lifeless churches can experience a resurrection.

For struggling congregations seeking renewal, there are customizable options available. One such option is a replant, where the entire church surrenders to an assessed replanter and their sending church for a chance at new life.

This was the path chosen by Southside Baptist Church in Columbus and First Southern Baptist Church in Johnstown. Other churches, such as London Baptist Church, have opted for a road to revitalization. "Renewal" has become a newer term used in place of "revitalization."

An incredible way for a healthy congregation to become even stronger is by taking in a struggling church as a foster. In this scenario, the healthier church provides resources and nurtures the struggling church as it journeys towards health. The fostering church takes the lead in guiding and supporting the struggling congregation. Perhaps your congregational team would consider fostering. Pastor Mark Glenn and Summit Baptist Church do this well.

There is hope for your congregation if you are willing to have a kingdom mindset. Connect with me at mjones@scbo.org.

Let me leave you with a fitting benediction of hope: Ephesians 3:20-21. It declares, "Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen."



June 23-27

SuperSummerOhio.com

Super Summer is a one-of-a-kind program that develops student leaders who are founded in Biblical truths in order to make a Kingdom impact.



Featuring
Dr. Mark Johnson

Creating Pipelines for Sending Ohio African American Pastors to Mission Fields

By Reginald Hayes, director of Community Relations



Reginald Hayes with an Ethiopian family.

Of the approximately 3,600 IMB Missionaries on the mission field worldwide, only 30 are African American.

I was invited to partner with the International Mission Board (IMB) to travel to Ethiopia earlier this year on a vision trip with pastors from across the country.

In Ethiopia, cities were assessed, from Addis Ababa, with 5.9 million people, to villages with a few hundred people. Due to missionary safety, some locations cannot be shared. In some parts of Ethiopia, along the Somali and Yemen borders, many locations are 98% Muslim.

IMB missionaries are making huge strides in bringing the gospel of Jesus Christ to Muslims. Using specific skills learned in an area outside of ministry, opportunities often arise to present the gospel. Muslims are hearing the gospel and accepting Jesus Christ.

On each of my mission trips to Africa over the past 6 months, I've heard Africans say they love the brothers and sisters who come from America to bring the gospel. Yet the epiphany was hearing how excited they are to see people who look like them presenting the gospel. One person said, seeing black brothers and sisters

traveling to the Motherland to teach makes them feel so special.


Dr. Jeremy Westbrook, SCBO executive director, said, "What a joy it is to partner with the IMB in helping create pipelines to help prepare and send future missionaries from our own mission field right here in the Buckeye State."

One of the biggest highlights of the mission trip was seeing a husband whose small, two-room home, inside of a barn, is his payment for taking care of the farm animals. This man rejected the gospel for a very long time. After two other men and I ministered to him, in front of his wife and two children, he accepted Jesus Christ.

The SCBO is committed to sending teams of Ohio African American pastors to mission fields over the next five years. The hope is that Ohio will help increase the number of African Americans who become missionaries.



During the IMB Vision Trip, Ethiopian cities, both large and small, were assessed.



SCBO

BEARING BURDENS CONFERENCE 2026

May 2nd - Mansfield, OH
go.SCBO.org/burdens

As Christ followers, we are called to bear one another's burdens throughout life's many struggles. If we aren't well-prepared, this can be overwhelming, and the burden may become ours.

The Bearing Burdens Conference is for everyone. We all have people in our lives who are hurting. Whether you are in a counseling role or simply a comforting friend, we invite you to become better equipped to care for others and yourselves from a biblical perspective.

The Impact of Evangelism Grants:

“Hope Has A Name” Outreach Event, Faith Baptist Church, Belle Valley



The event was an incredible success! We wanted to encourage local churches of every denomination to remember the power found in the gospel and send them out energized and renewed in their purpose and passion for ministering in our community.

We also wanted to evangelize the lost. This night consisted of several sets of worship in song, preaching the gospel, sharing personal testimonies, and audience participation for kids and adults. We had attenders from every denomination in our area. Many reached out to thank us and ask us to do this again in the future.

We had over 700 people in attendance, with nine responding to an invitation call. Two made professions of faith; one was encouraged in assurance of salvation and counseled about baptism. Several others sought prayer.

Overall, we had an incredible experience and hope to do it again. We cannot thank the SCBO and NAMB enough for their help in funding this event. The evangelism grant enabled us to present a high-quality professional event for our community. Thank you, SCBO, your funds have been well used to encourage the Lord’s church here in Noble County and bring a few more of the Lord’s sheep home!

– Pastor Stephen Hannum, Faith Baptist Church

2026 National Day of Prayer Celebrates 75 Years of Prayer for America

In 2026, the National Day of Prayer (NDOP) Task Force will commemorate two historic milestones: 250 years of prayer in America and 75 years of prayer for America.

As we observe the 250th anniversary of our nation’s founding, alongside the 75th annual National Day of Prayer, we recognize this as a significant and sacred moment in our history. We believe God is stirring the hearts of believers across our nation to increase their prayers for America in this pivotal year.

NDOP designed the “Pray Across America” prayer guide to help launch and sustain those prayers. You can download it free at nationaldayofprayer.org. The scriptures and prayers, prayerfully selected by National Day of Prayer Task Force leadership across America, include prayers for every state, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands; uniting us as “One nation under God,” seeking the Lord together.

Join us as we begin on the East Coast, praying east to west across our nation, following the order of state

capitals as they appear on the map. Each scripture has been prayerfully selected by a National Day of Prayer Task Force State or Territory Coordinator, and these same leaders share their hearts for their state through brief, focused prayers.

Several other resources are available at the NDOP website. Please share your National Day of Prayer story! Please share your experience with us at Steve-Hopkins@scbo.org and with the National Day of Prayer at glory.story@nationaldayofprayer.org.



FIRST-PERSON: Pastors Should Be Able to Opt Back in to Social Security

By Gary Hollingsworth, Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission interim president

For the past 50 years, in some form or another, I have had the privilege of serving in ministry in the Southern Baptist Convention. While I now serve as interim president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, I have pastored churches in Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky and Virginia, and most recently, retired as executive director of the South Carolina Baptist Convention.

The financial strain of retirement

While a privilege to bear, the demands on pastors are great. For most, ministry is not glamorous. Roughly half of Southern Baptist churches consist of [fewer than 50 people](#) in weekly attendance. Thus, a growing segment of pastors are bivocational to lessen the financial strain on their churches. Very few churches are able to offer [medical insurance](#) to their pastor as a benefit. The Lord greatly blesses us by supplying all that we need, but we know that many pastors may not have the financial security they had anticipated or hoped for heading toward retirement.

As some may recall when first entering ministry, within the first two years of receiving payment for ministry work, pastors must permanently decide if they want to exempt any ministry income from Social Security. For a variety of reasons, often convictional, a pastor may opt-out of Social Security withholdings early on in his career. Yet, throughout years of ministry, pastors cannot anticipate the journey God has planned personally, ministerially and financially. A significant decision made years earlier may not seem so wise anymore given the present context. And most often the ones who feel the impact are the families of pastors.

Pastors make personal and familial sacrifices for the sake of Christ and his Church. And while we do it for

the joy of the Lord and in faithfulness to our calling, the effects for pastors and families are real. The enemy uses the demands of ministry to create hardships in families and marriages. Sadly, for many pastors, or their widows, opting out of social security has inadvertently contributed to that hardship.

The Clergy Act offers a second chance

The Clergy Act, introduced by Rep. Vince Fong (R-CA-20) and Sen. Katie Britt (R-AL) is a bipartisan bill that offers a second chance for clergy members to revoke their previous Social Security exemption. If signed into law, the bill would open a one-time re-enrollment window for two years where clergy could opt back in and start contributing to Social Security. Then, after meeting withdrawal eligibility, including 10 years of contributions for full retired-workers benefits, they can draw Social Security benefits proportional with their contributions.

Remarkably, the Clergy Act passed out of the House Ways & Means Committee unanimously, 40-0, back in December. The ERLC has endorsed this legislation and calls on Congress to swiftly put this bill up for a vote.

Congress should offer this second chance to our spiritual shepherds who have given tremendously to tell people about their second chance at a life reconciled to Christ. Ministry is sacrificial, rightly reflecting the One who gave His Son as a sacrifice for us. Yet, to honor those who do so much for our communities, and in turn, our country, our government should remove additional strain and make a way for our pastors and their families to comfortably retire with dignity.

[Article courtesy of Baptist Press.](#)

Prayer at the Statehouse Event Draws Record Crowd

A record crowd gathered for the March Prayer at the Statehouse event sponsored by the Center for Christian Virtue. SCBO Executive-Director Dr. Jeremy Westbrook was the keynote speaker.

“It was such a joy to preach the gospel and represent the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio,” he said. “We must not only pray for our leaders unconditionally, but also engage them biblically!”



Job Postings

LEAD PASTOR | First Baptist Church of Mt. Healthy

First Baptist Church of Mt. Healthy, near Cincinnati, is prayerfully seeking the man God is calling to serve as our next Lead Pastor. We are a diverse, multi-ethnic, multi-generational Southern Baptist church with a long history of faithful ministry. Our congregation is united around the desire for a pastor who preaches biblically faithful, Christ-centered sermons; shepherds with compassion, presence, and relational warmth; invests in discipleship and leadership development; strengthens multi-cultural and multi-generational unity; leads with humility, clarity, and a servant's heart; and possesses a strong biblical foundation and seminary training.

Interested candidates may submit resumes to: fbcmhpastorsearch@gmail.com

WORSHIP TEAM LEADER | Pleasant Valley Church, Parma

Pleasant Valley Church in Parma, Ohio, is seeking a part-time Worship Team Leader, 10 hours per week, who is passionate about leading biblically faithful, theologically rich, and Spirit-filled corporate worship in partnership with our Lead Pastor. This individual will model a gospel-centered vision of worship, plan and lead Sunday gatherings, invest in and develop worship and AVL team members, and serve as a covenant member of our elder-led, congregational church family. Compensation will be discussed upon inquiry; interested candidates may email a resume and brief cover letter to jjohnson@pvcmail.org.

BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR | Hamersville Baptist Church, Hamersville

Hamersville Baptist Church is a rural congregation located about thirty miles east of Cincinnati on State Route 125. The candidate should agree with the Baptist Faith and Message and meet the biblical requirements for a pastor. The congregation appreciates expository preaching, and most of the congregation uses the KJV Bible. Please send a brief cover letter and a 1-2 page resume to: Pulpit Committee, Hamersville Baptist Church, PO Box 78, Hamersville, OH 45130. For any questions call or message David Coppedge, Interim Pastor at 513-505-2570.

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go.scbo.org/leadwell

Lead Well is a gathering for pastors and church leaders who want to lead with conviction—for the name and fame of Jesus—right where God has placed them. With this year's theme, "Breaking Barriers," we'll challenge what's holding leaders back and point the way forward with biblical clarity, practical wisdom, and fresh encouragement.

You'll walk away inspired to lead well in the local church, equipped with real tools you can use, and strengthened by practitioners who are actively doing ministry and willing to share what's working. Expect meaningful worship, helpful teaching, and the kind of fellowship that reminds you: you're not leading alone.

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