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Ohio Baptist MESSENGER

THE STATE CONVENTION OF BAPTISTS IN OHIO



**A Kingdom Story: The Birth of
The Church at Kettering**



Full story on page 8

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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.

SBC Orlando: Worshiping, Equipping, and Connecting

Why should you attend SBC Orlando?

The Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting in Orlando, June 7–10, is a vital opportunity for SCBO pastors and leaders seeking spiritual equipping and directional alignment. The conference is structured around four days of worshiping, equipping, and connecting, featuring nearly 200 events and gatherings.

The annual meeting theme, “Walking Worthy” (based on Ephesians 4:1-3), provides a unified vision for how the gospel must visibly influence our lives and churches, establishing a strong collective witness.

Preceding the annual meeting, the SBC Pastors’ Conference, June 7–8, is a critical time for corporate encouragement and theological refreshment with the theme “Together.” This time is essential for us to gather with fellow leaders from across the nation for impactful worship, preaching, and an energized commitment to ministry.

Attending the convention reaffirms the SCBO’s strong commitment to the Cooperative Program and global missions, a dedication underscored by our recent record-setting of \$4.8 million in CP giving last year.

It provides a valuable platform for you to connect directly with the broader Southern Baptist mission and exercise your voice in shaping the convention’s direction as messengers.

Specific mission-focused gatherings highlight this partnership: the IMB Dinner on Monday, June 8, serves as a crucial “window into the front lines of the mission field” with powerful missionary stories to inspire local church generosity and advocacy.

The highlight for me every year is the IMB Sending Celebration, where we commission another group of mis-

sionaries who forsake the American dream to take the gospel to the nations. These gatherings underscore the work of SCBO churches, which contributes directly to worldwide kingdom impact.

The Orlando meeting also offers highly specialized, practical training designed for entire church staff teams, which is invaluable to your church leaders.

The SBC Pastors’ Conference features four specialized micro-conferences aimed at worship leaders, discipleship and education leaders, student pastors, and children’s ministry leaders. By bringing as many leaders as you can, SCBO churches can provide targeted equipping and encouragement alongside the general sessions.

Our associational leaders will be there attending a special conference designed just for them.

Of course, the weather, Disney World, and great golf courses are major attractions as well.

So, let me ask you differently: **Why wouldn’t you attend SBC Orlando?**

See you there!

Learn more at www.sbcannualmeeting.net

Moving Forward,

Dr. Jeremy Westbrook
Executive Director-Treasurer, SCBO





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Tee up for a purpose at the OBF Golf Outing! Enjoy a great day on the course while supporting CampUCan and learning how OBF investing can help your church grow funds and strengthen ministry impact across Ohio.

President's Pen

Join the Great Work of God Across Ohio

"The Lord had done great things for us; we were joyful." – Ps 126:3

An article in Baptist Press recently highlighted the amazing ways God is working in Ohio.

Over the last five years, baptisms in Ohio have been up a staggering 182%. Ohio's Cooperative Program (CP) giving set an SCBO record, increasing over \$490,000 in the past four years. The Lord gets all the glory for pouring out his blessings on our state.

It's easy to get discouraged in our own local contexts. However, zoom out and see the bigger picture. It's clear that God is working in unique and powerful ways.

I want to encourage every pastor and ministry leader in Ohio – this is the time to lean into what God is doing in our state. If your church isn't giving to CP, it's time to start. Churches are being planted, missionaries are being sent, people are being saved and baptized, and your church can be a part of this through CP giving.

Invest in kingdom work right here in our state. Don't let the kingdom of darkness convince you that it's better to quarrel over non-essential matters and hoard money.

If you haven't had a baptism Sunday in a while, announce one this week. Then be intentional about asking people whether they have trusted in Christ and been baptized. I don't know about you, but I don't want to just read about the great work God is doing. I want to see it happen in my church.

I am grateful for our great SCBO staff and Dr. Jeremy Westbrook, who is spearheading the vision in Ohio. God gets all the glory and credit. He is the only one who can revive hearts and bring revival, and it's clear that he is using Dr. Westbrook, our state staff, our pastors, and our ministry leaders throughout the state to do great things.

Commit to being a part of it, not just an observer. Pray for even greater things. Pray for God to multiply his great work in Ohio.



In Christ,

Dave Welsch
SCBO President

SCBO Catalysts Josh Remy, Reagan Wagoner, Matt Pardi, Chad Keck, NAMB President Kevin Ezell, Ryan Strother, SCBO director of convention support, and Catalysts Stephen Owens, and Rick Williams at the North American Mission Board.



SCBO Regional Catalysts Visit NAMB, IMB

By Ryan Strother, director of convention support

Last month, I had the privilege of taking our six SCBO Regional Catalysts to visit both of our SBC mission boards: the North American Mission Board (NAMB) in Alpharetta, Georgia, and the International Mission Board (IMB) in Richmond, Virginia. I've led trips like this with pastors before, and the reaction is almost always the same. People walk away saying, "I didn't know we did all of this."

That was true again for our team.

There is a lot of noise online about our SBC entities. Much of it is exaggerated, and some of it is simply not true. I believe the best response to that noise is to go see for yourself because relationships trump ignorance.

Our team toured the buildings of both boards, sat with NAMB President Kevin Ezell, attended the IMB's weekly staff worship service, and heard directly from the people doing the work. What they found did not match the criticism they had seen online.

Reagan Wagoner, southwest catalyst, came away with a clear picture of where giving actually goes. "Every dollar given through CP to NAMB now goes directly to ministry," he said. He was also moved by the scale of the NAMB support: "We not only support over 3,500 missionaries through CP, but also their children."

Stephen Owens, northeast catalyst, reflected on what care for missionaries actually looks like up close. "I found the level of care and consideration for our missionaries by NAMB and IMB to be inspiring. As local churches, we can help in caring for our missionaries as they take the gospel across the globe, as we give to the CP and missions' offerings."

Rick Williams, central catalyst, put it this way: "Through our cooperative efforts, churches of every size and context are able to send missionaries, plant churches, and engage lostness both across North America and around

the world. This is not just a strategy—it is a conviction rooted deeply in our commitment to the Great Commission."

In Ohio, 50% of every CP dollar stays right here to serve Ohio churches. The remaining 50% goes to the SBC; currently, 50.41% goes to the IMB and 22.79% to NAMB.

When your church gives generously through the Co-operative Program, it truly makes a difference in Ohio, our country, and the world. If you have questions about where your giving goes, I'd love to talk. Reach out to your SCBO Regional Catalyst, or contact me directly at rstrother@scbo.org.

Author's Note: For the last two years, no CP dollars or Annie Armstrong dollars were used to cover administrative costs, per NAMB.

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August 6th-8th

Columbus, OH

One Plants, Another Waters: Harvest Begins in Cincinnati Church

By Stephanie Heading, managing editor

Churches across the Buckeye State are plateaued or declining. Without revitalization or replanting, these churches will eventually close their doors, and gospel lights will disappear from Ohio communities.

The good news is that churches don't have to decline and close. Help is available.

Beacon Church was struggling. The sixty-year-old congregation on the west side of Cincinnati was in danger of closing.

Following The Call Home

Since 2023, Pastor Fran Trascritti has been leading Beacon Church.

A Cincinnati native, Trascritti has spent over 30 years in ministry, including serving in churches, at Lifeway Christian Resources, and at the Illinois Baptist State Association (IBSA).

While working at IBSA, he sensed the Lord was moving him into a new season.

"I felt God just pulling me back to Cincinnati. Part of it was family, but at the same time, I felt like they were my people," he said. "I would watch ball games. I would watch football games. I would watch baseball games. I would see the people in the stands. Those are my people, and I wanted to get back."

He also felt a familiar call back to the local church.



Pastor Fran Trascritti baptizes a new believer – one of ten baptisms since July 2025.

"God put a real hunger in my heart to pastor again. Although I loved ministering at the state convention level and helping a lot of churches, I missed the one-on-one, the disciple-making."

Trascritti and his wife Teresa prayed and sought wise counsel.

"I saw that Beacon was available. It was called Beacon of Christ Church at the time," he said.

He called Pastor Ron Renner, who was preparing to retire from Beacon, and they discussed his interest in the church.

"He said, 'Well, put in your resume. Let's talk. Let's see what God's doing.' That was the only resume I submit-

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ted, so we started talking, and it was very clear that God was in it,” Trascritti recalled.

“Not many people leave a state convention position to go to a small church, but we came to Beacon Church.”

Building on a New Foundation

In February 2023, the Trascrittis returned to Cincinnati to lead Beacon. On their first Sunday, the 50 people in the congregation were mostly octogenarians.

Pastor Renner had started a revitalization process with the church during his five years there. The church was originally known as First Baptist Church of Dent. Under Renner’s leadership, it was renamed Beacon of Christ Church.

“They agreed when he (Renner) came that they would do certain things for revitalization,” said Trascritti. “They agreed to change the name. They agreed to restructure some things. Some of the sacred cows that churches hold on to, they were willing to give up.”

However, when Renner initiated the revitalization process, not all members agreed, and some left the church.

“I’m just going to say this. He did some things I could have never done,” Trascritti remarked. “And God used his personality, and God used his abilities to get a great head start. He cleared the land and planted some seeds. I got to water and began to see some harvest. He’s an unsung hero.”

Building on the foundation that Renner laid, Fran tackled a pervasive belief that church revitalization is a one-and-done process.

“When people say we’re going through revitalization, they feel like we’ve been revitalized,” Trascritti noted. “I would challenge every church to look back at itself every few years and say, ‘Okay, where are we on this continuum? Are we growing? Are we plateaued? Are we declining? It’s like a maintenance thing. It’s like changing your oil in a car. It’s needed once in a while. Check yourself out and make sure that everything is functioning properly.’”

Beacon was revitalizing, but needed to continue rebuilding and reaching out to its community.

“The biggest emphasis for us has been missions, evangelism, and discipleship,” he said. “We’ve recaptured the heart for missions.”

Seeing God at Work

Beacon is growing and is slowly becoming a younger church as families with children join the fellowship. Attendance has increased to 80-90 people and sometimes reaches 100. Since July 1, 2025, 10 new believers have been baptized.

Activities such as Kids’ Camp (VBS) in the summer, an Egg-a-Palooza Easter event in the spring, and a Candy-Palooza event in the fall are growing connections in the community.



Events like Egg-a-Palooza draw families to Beacon Church.

The church is also reaching out overseas.

“So we took SCBO’s partnership with Florida seriously and connected with One More Child, a partner ministry there,” he said.

The partnership opened the door to multiple church mission trips to Costa Rica with One More Child.

“It’s (Costa Rica) gorgeous, and the poverty is real, and the need for the gospel is huge,” he noted.

Finding Hope in Revitalization

The revitalization/rebuilding of any church is a slow process. Trascritti has a few pointers for pastors whose churches need revitalization or are currently revitalizing.

“There’s always hope. Jesus is still on the throne, even if it’s discouraging. There’s hope for the church. God gets the glory when a church reaches one person, but we always want to see more. The second is, I would pray for breakthroughs -- breakthroughs in the congregation, breakthroughs in their leadership.”

SCBO has resources for replanting, revitalization, and fostering. Visit <https://scbo.org/revitalize> for more information.”



A Kingdom Story: The Birth of The Church at Kettering

By Chad Keck, West Region catalyst, Dan Mullins, and Ralph Green IV

Some of the most powerful moves of God begin not with a grand vision statement or a strategic plan — but with a pastor on his knees, asking God what to do next.

That is exactly where this story begins.

A Pastor's Hardest Decision

After thirty years of faithful ministry at Gathering Place Baptist Church, Pastor Dan Mullins faced what he describes as one of a pastor's hardest decisions — when to retire. “It isn't about leaving the ministry,” he reflects, “because a pastor never truly stops serving the Lord. It is about how to preserve and protect the members he has served.”

As Pastor Mullins prayed, God gave him a clear insight — the church needed a younger pastor to reach a new generation. “The priorities of God's church have remained the same — evangelism and edification. However, ministry outreach to the new society has changed.”

A full year before his retirement, Pastor Mullins began preparing his congregation for the transition — laying a foundation of doctrinal stability and shepherding their hearts toward change. His congregation excelled at that. But he knew the new man would need more than a willing congregation. He would need financial support, experienced leadership, and the backing of a larger church. That conviction led him to call a friend.



The Church at Kettering worships together.

Two Pastors, One Vision

As the pastor of First Baptist Church, Kettering, I had my own burden. When I became pastor, I believed strongly that First Baptist needed a Kettering presence — a gospel witness planted firmly in the community for which the church was named.

When Dan Mullins called, we discovered that God had been working on both sides of the same equation. “We began to meet and pray about the change for both our churches,” Pastor Mullins recalls. What emerged was a



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Featuring
Dr. Mark Johnson

shared conviction — that Gathering Place Baptist and First Baptist Kettering could come together not merely to survive, but to advance the kingdom in a way neither could accomplish alone.

That partnership would become The Church at Kettering. All they needed was the right man.

God's Man for the Mission

His name was Ralph Green — a young pastor whom Dan Mullins recognized immediately. “I knew he was God’s man for the new ministry.” Called into ministry out of the military, Ralph was young, passionate, and willing to step into the beautiful uncertainty of a church plant.

“Church revitalization and church planting can be some of the most challenging yet rewarding work you will ever witness,” Ralph reflects. “The opportunities we’ve experienced in planting The Church at Kettering have been nothing short of phenomenal.”

With Ralph’s acceptance of the call, the building was revitalized by volunteers from First Baptist, who poured labor and love into the space. A core team of around 35 believers gathered, prayed, and prepared. “For months we prayed faithfully leading up to that first service, trusting the Lord to move in ways only He can.”

God Shows Up on Easter Sunday

No one fully anticipated what Easter morning would look like.

277 people from the community walked through the doors. The kids’ ministry welcomed 29 children. Spanish-speaking families engaged through AI translation. A family from the Congo worshiped in the overflow space through live translation provided by a core team member.

And God moved in hearts. Six people responded to the gospel, including a seven-year-old boy who made a profession of faith. Several others came forward expressing a desire for baptism and church membership.

“All of this was possible because the Spirit of God was moving that Sunday morning,” Ralph says — and then adds: “but His work began long before that day. He had been moving for months and years prior — calling me into ministry, stirring in Dan Mullins’ heart, and preparing the way for what we are now seeing unfold.”

The Heart Behind the Story

When Pastor Mullins was asked whether he agreed with all the changes, his answer was direct: “If I didn’t think God wanted change, He would not have led me to retire.” He encourages other pastors in similar seasons to “broaden your vision and seek a new vision and solution outside of your walls.”

For Ralph Green, the lesson is equally clear. “At the end of the day, it’s not about one church or one pastor — it’s about advancing the kingdom of God and the gospel in our community.”

What Lies Ahead

The Church at Kettering exists because a seasoned pastor was willing to loosen his grip, a younger pastor was willing to pick up what was laid down, and two churches chose partnership over independence.

As Ralph Green looks ahead, his confidence is settled: “God has been incredibly good to us and has already blessed The Church at Kettering in remarkable ways. And by his grace, we believe the best days are still ahead.”



On Easter Sunday, 277 people gather to launch The Church at Kettering.

Called to Serve: Bringing Hope and Healing When Disaster Strikes

By NAMB Staff Writers

The photo album on John Heading's smartphone is filled with prized pictures—every one of them worth exponentially more than just a thousand words.

"I've got pictures like nobody's business," he says. "Pictures of people we've worked with and prayed with, pictures of people who've made professions of faith, pictures of people I will never forget—and there's something beautiful and unforgettable behind every single one."

In his work as a disaster relief chaplain and Disaster Relief Director for the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio, John has amassed not just an extensive collection of personally priceless pictures, but a mental library of beautifully unforgettable redemption stories.



An Ohio DR team deploys to Spain after massive flooding in Valencia.

October 2024 Flooding in Valencia, Spain

"Not long ago, we were sent to Spain to work with a disaster relief team who'd been asked to help clean up after a terrible flood," he says. "More than 200 people had been killed, and one day a man came to me and said he'd just walked into a building and saw a little girl with a backpack on who'd drowned. I asked him how he was doing, and all he could say was, 'I'm fine, I guess.'"

"What do you say to that? That's the challenge that comes with being a disaster relief chaplain."

A flood in Spain, a hurricane in Jamaica, a mass shooting in Texas—almost anytime, anywhere there's a natural or manmade disaster, Southern Baptist Disaster Relief (SBDR) teams are there, ready and willing to point people towards help, hope, and healing. But the chaplains who travel with many of those teams are often the ones who get the most opportunities to explicitly share the gospel.

"Even though all SBDR volunteers are trained in evangelism, most of them need to focus more or less on the chainsaw job, cooking food, or mudding out," John says. "But the disaster relief chaplain is trained in trauma care and can just meet people, talk with them, and hear their stories."

"Any kind of disaster really knocks down the walls that people put up, and so many times, because we're often wearing a vest that says, 'Chaplain,' all it takes to make a gospel conversation happen is just walking down the street."

April 2025 Flooding in Cincinnati, Ohio

"Michael got saved on a Monday."

When he first met him 24 hours earlier, John would've never expected that to be the opening line in his story about the 2025 Cincinnati flood. After all, his first encounter with Michael was relatively business-like.

"When SBDR first shows up at someone's house, it's just to assess the damage and see what can be done," he says, "so I met Michael on Sunday when I went with an SBDR team to assess his house. Michael had cancer, he was doing chemo, he could barely walk, and he was really struggling. But that day, our conversation didn't really go into spiritual things. It was really just, 'Tell us what you need, how can we help?'"

The next day, when an SBDR team and two more chaplains returned to Michael's house, they discovered the previous day's conversation was actually more spiritual than John realized.

"Those chaplains started talking to Michael and realized God had been working on him overnight," John says, "so they began to tell him how this flood—you may never get over it, but there is a way through it, and that's through a relationship with Jesus. They explained to him how Christ is the one who will give you hope and heal your heart and soul."

"Michael made a profession of faith that day, and when I saw him on Tuesday, he was a changed person. His ex-wife was there, and he was telling her about the gospel. One of our chaplains ended up leading her to Christ as well."

"We saw transformation right in front of us, and that's the



Michael accepted Jesus Christ during a DR deployment to flooding in Cincinnati.

most exciting part of what we do—when we see people like Michael and his ex-wife realize, “We’re going to be ok, and we can move forward with Christ.”

Stories Yet to Be Written

Now, John Heading wants everyone to see what he’s seen and hear what he’s heard. That’s why he shares these stories everywhere he goes, beginning with the people at his own church, University Baptist Church in Beavercreek, Ohio. “Several years ago, I was asked to preach on Mission Sunday, and I talked about chaplaincy and disaster relief,” he says. “That was really the beginning of a lot of people in our church realizing the breadth of who we as Southern Baptists really are and what we do.”

“Since then, the awareness, support, and encouragement that’s come from people in my own church has been huge, and it’s shown me that people out there really need to know these chaplain stories because there’s a great spiritual need out there.”

SBDR desperately needs more endorsed SBC chaplains. “The need is growing with the number of disasters we’re continuing to see,” John says, “and I realize it’s not for everyone. But if you think this might be something God has shaped you for, start by signing up for disaster relief training. Get out into the field and see what it’s really like. And then if you still have that heart and want to connect with people in this way, go through the process.”

Disaster relief chaplains go to some of the saddest plac-

es on earth. They meet people who’ve experienced unimaginable pain. And they get to tell them the most wonderful news in all of history.

If the Lord calls you to become an SBC-endorsed chaplain, just imagine the stories you’ll one day be able to tell. Learn more about how you can become an SBC-endorsed chaplain.

Article courtesy of the North American Mission Board

Partner Church Needed to Manage DR Quick Response Unit

Ohio Disaster Relief needs a church partner to manage the physical aspects of the Quick Response Feeding Unit. It would involve housing the QRU, the pantry trailer, and the 2017 Dodge RAM truck. The church partner would maintain the units and transport them for deployment. Ohio Disaster Relief would cover all expenses. Partner volunteers must be trained and certified with Ohio Disaster Relief. To learn more, please contact John Heading at jheading@sco.org or call 614-309-9751.



DISASTER RELIEF UNIT TRAINING

APRIL 11, 2026

Reynoldsburg Baptist

887 Rosehill Rd. Reynoldsburg, OH 43068
8:00 AM - 1:30 PM

APRIL 18, 2026

Urbancrest Baptist

2634 Drake Rd. Lebanon, OH 45036
8:00 AM - 1:30 PM

SEPTEMBER 12, 2026

Ebenezer Baptist

6935 Township Rd. #234 Logan, OH 43138
8:00 AM - 1:30 PM

OCTOBER 3, 2026

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3943 Fishcreek Rd. Stow, OH 44224
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SCBO Evangelism Grant Updates

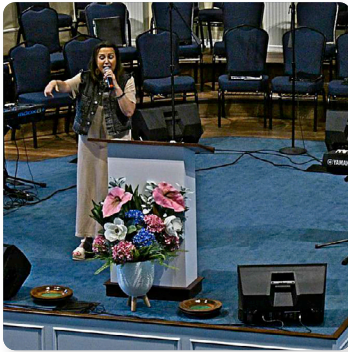


Good Friday Outreach, The Valley Church, Cincinnati

We connected with a local faith-based organization, Shoes 4 the Shoeless, and distributed 245 new pairs of sneakers to children in our local low-income elementary school. We hired a food truck to feed the entire school staff a Good Friday lunch. We met dozens of parents and had gospel conversations that included Easter invites with each one of them. We also connected with all 70 staff members, and our team had the same conversations with them.

The biggest win from this annual event is getting to tell families about the bus ministry that we provide on Sunday mornings for children. We are anticipating new families taking advantage of that opportunity.

– Pastor Chuck Smith, The Valley Church



IGNITE Weekend - Community Outreach & Evangelistic Weekend, Mt Carmel BC, Cincinnati

The IGNITE Weekend was held at Mt Carmel Baptist Church from Friday evening, April 10, to Sunday evening, April 12. This weekend has been a profound blessing to our local congregation. Through intentional fellowship, heartfelt worship led by the group Satisfied, and biblical teaching through speaker Rich Henry, we witnessed lives touched, challenged, and transformed by the power of the gospel.

Saturday morning's session was on "Hearing God." During that session, some new Gen Z members experienced a spiritual awakening to God's will, and seeds of faith were planted and nurtured.

– Pastor Cliff Myers, Mt. Carmel Baptist Church



Easter Egg-Splosion Outreach Event, Found Church, Gahanna

What an incredible weekend! God moved in a powerful way through our Easter Eggsploration and Easter Sunday services. We saw over 1,700 people in attendance at Eggsploration—families from across our community came out to experience the love and joy of Jesus in a fun and welcoming environment. The impact didn't stop there. The outreach led to over 100 first-time visitors joining us on Easter Sunday! Even more incredible, 20 people gave their lives to Jesus during our Easter Sunday worship service. Lives were changed forever! Lives are being touched, seeds are being planted, and people are finding their way to Jesus, and YOU were a part of it. Thank you for supporting the mission financially. Your generosity made this outreach possible and helped create space for people to encounter Jesus. Thank you for every prayer and every act of faith that made this possible. This is just the beginning of what God is doing through Found Church!

– Pastor Dan York, Found Church



Easter Egg Hunt, Fellowship Baptist Church, Maineville

We had another great year at our annual Easter Egg Hunt! Over 400 children and their families attended. We feel so grateful to be able to serve our community and celebrate Easter with them in this way. Our prayer for this type of community event is that people would have a positive association with our church, so that if and when they want to connect to a church, they would remember how they have been served and loved by us.

We had inflatables, face painting, food, egg hunts with treat bags, egg tosses, and spring crafts! We love having this event as part of our Easter Weekend celebration. We are prayerful that those in our community would get plugged into the life of our church because of events like this one!

– Darcy Land, Children's Director, Fellowship Baptist Church



Stow Bunny Hop Outreach, Freedom Hill Community Church, Stow

We were able to “egg” over 300 people with gospel cards and distribute over 500 children’s toys during the City of Stow’s “Bunny Hop” event. We have had an increase on our gospel webpage. It was a great day partnering with other gospel-centric churches to make a difference in Stow.

– Pastor Mark Jones, Freedom Hill Community Church



Easter Egg Hunt, College Heights Baptist Church, Elyria

Our annual Egg Hunt was held on March 28. We had thirty-eight children registered. We served a light breakfast to the kids and their families. The kids made crafts, played games, and enjoyed an egg hunt. They exchanged their eggs for a gift bag containing goodies and church/gospel material. They also heard the Easter story through an “old school” flannel graph presentation. Several families indicated a desire to return on Easter Sunday. We have begun follow-up with those families.

– Pastor Darrell Deer, College Heights Baptist Church

Getting Clear on Church Renewal - Replanting - Revitalization

By Bob Bickford, Nashville Baptist Association executive director, Tennessee

There’s a lot of conversation right now—and a lot being written—about helping churches move from plateau and decline toward health.

In those conversations, three words surface repeatedly: *Renewal, Revitalization, and Replanting*.

Each communicates something important. Each represents something different.

When these terms are clearly understood, confusion begins to fade, strategy becomes more precise, and leaders are better positioned to guide churches forward—so that, by God’s grace, congregations experience the kind of change they hope and pray for.

Clarity here is not academic. It is practical.

Church Renewal is the destination toward which every effort is aimed.

It is the collective efforts—both spiritual and strategic—of pastors, leaders, and people to see their congregation renewed in spiritual passion, faithful obedience, and missional action to the glory of God and the good of the community in which He has placed them.

Renewal is evidenced when God’s word is the authority, relationships reflect biblical unity, and the church is actively engaged in the Great Commission.

This aligns with the description of restored health marked by submission to God’s Word, right relationships, and renewed mission.

Renewal is not a model or a method. It is the outcome every church is seeking.

The challenge is discerning the right pathway to pursue.

Revitalization: Renewal From Within

Revitalization is one pathway toward renewal.

It is the supernatural work of God that restores health and vitality in a plateaued or declining church.

Operationally, it involves: existing church + existing leaders + existing structure + history + renewed/new effort. Revitalization works within the existing framework of the church. It seeks to restore health without replacing core leadership structures or identity.

It is often the most appropriate pathway when there is sufficient unity within the congregation; leadership remains functional and trusted; and there is openness to change, even if gradual.

Forms of Revitalization

Revitalization generally takes shape in three ways:

Self-Guided Revitalization: The church leads its own process internally. Pastors and leaders take responsibility for assessment, direction, and implementation. It maintains full autonomy; requires strong internal leadership clarity; and can be limited by blind spots or entrenched patterns.

Assisted / Coached Revitalization: Outside leaders or organizations come alongside to provide guidance,

coaching, and perspective. This brings objectivity and experience, strengthens strategy and accountability, and still depends on internal willingness to act.

Covenant Revitalization: A more formalized partnership is established with clear expectations, defined processes, and mutual commitments. This provides structure and accountability, clarifies expectations and outcomes, and requires humility and alignment with outside leadership.

Observations on Church Revitalization

Revitalization is the least invasive pathway, but it requires time, patience, and sustained alignment.

It often progresses slowly and can struggle to overcome long-standing cultural patterns or resistance within the church.

It is also important to note that this approach is not well-suited to churches facing imminent closure.

Replanting: Renewal Through a New Beginning

Replanting is a second pathway toward renewal.

Replanting is the process in which members of a church facing imminent closure begin a new church for a new season of ministry.

Practically, it includes new leadership + existing people + new structures and approaches + outside partnership + new people + history.

Replanting recognizes that the current structure is no longer sufficient to sustain or produce renewal. It creates a new foundation while building on what remains.

It is often appropriate when decline has progressed significantly, leadership structures are no longer effective, or sustainability is no longer viable without major change.

Forms of Replanting: Replanting can take several forms depending on context, readiness, and available partnerships.

Solo Replant: A new, qualified pastor is called to lead the church through a restart process. This establishes new direction and leadership, requires strong support and resources, and places significant responsibility on the replanter.

Replant Within: Leadership emerges from within the church to guide a restart. This leverages existing relationships and trust, and may face greater difficulty breaking from past patterns.

Assisted Replant: External partners play a central role in leadership, structure, and support. This provides shared leadership and resources, strengthens sustainability, and requires openness to outside influence.

Additional Replanting Expressions: In many contexts, replanting is expressed through specific structural approaches:

Merger (Marriage): Two congregations unite, typically with a stronger church taking the lead. This combines

people, leadership, and resources, and requires clarity, humility, and strong communication.

Adoption / Campus Model: A healthy church absorbs a declining church and assumes leadership and direction. This transfers control and responsibility, and often results in immediate stability and renewed momentum.

Fostering: A temporary partnership where a healthy church provides support, leadership, and resources for a defined period. This aims to restore health and return autonomy, and requires clear expectations and mutual commitment.

Bringing Clarity to the Work: The relationship between these terms is straightforward, but critical: **Renewal** is the goal. **Revitalization** is renewal pursued from within. **Replanting** is renewal pursued through a new beginning.

Each pathway serves a different context.

For pastors, this clarity informs how to lead their congregation.

For associational leaders and convention staff, it strengthens assessment, recommendation, and support strategies.

Final Thought: Clarity in these definitions leads to better decisions, healthier expectations, and more effective leadership.

When the situation of the church is rightly understood, and the appropriate pathway is pursued, the likelihood of meaningful and lasting renewal increases significantly.

And that is the aim—churches renewed in heart, aligned in truth, and engaged in mission where God has placed them.

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The SCBO Annual Preaching Conference is a day set apart to equip pastors for faithful exposition of God's Word. Join us on August 27th at Violet Baptist Church in Pickerington for encouragement, practical training, and sharpening conversations around best practices in preaching and planning. You'll hear from national speakers and choose from breakout sessions led by pastors from across Ohio, all designed to help you preach with clarity, conviction, and care for your people.

Whether you're refining your sermon prep rhythm, strengthening your outlines, or looking for tools to plan ahead with consistency, this conference is built to help you grow in confidence and faithfulness in the pulpit.

Register today at go.scbo.org/preaching

Advance Worship Leader Training Retreat Set for Columbus in September

By Zac James, worship consultant

Are you looking to help develop a future worship leader in your church? Or help your paid staff member go deeper in their worship leading, theology, and practical ministry?

The Advanced Worship Leader Training Retreat is an intensive three-day training experience designed for worship leaders of all skill levels.

Whether you serve as a volunteer, part-time worship leader, or full-time worship pastor, this retreat will challenge and equip you to lead with greater biblical depth,

intentionality, and effectiveness.

Led by Kenny Lamm, North Carolina SBC worship strategist, this small-group experience is limited to just 20 participants — ensuring personalized instruction and meaningful peer interaction.

The retreat is September 10-12, 2026, at the Hyatt at Polaris in Columbus. We'll begin with lunch at noon on Thursday and conclude at 3 pm on Saturday. All meals are included. The cost is \$235/person to stay on-site in the Hyatt, or \$125 if you are commuting, providing your own lodging, or sharing a room with another attendee.

What topics will Kenny cover? Through focused sessions, you will gain practical insights and biblical foundations across every dimension of worship ministry.

Topics addressed during retreat will include:

- Planning services that genuinely engage your congregation.
- Making disciples through the worship ministry.
- Preparing your entire worship team to lead well.
- Helping your congregation worship well in all of life.
- Incorporating media effectively into the service.
- Selecting the best songs for worship.
- Planning and implementing smooth transitions.
- Personal preparation for leading worship.
- Leading change in a healthy and God-honoring manner.

I've been privileged to attend two of Kenny's worship consultant retreats, and they have become "must-attend" events for the value he provides. I am confident you will grow, and your ministry will benefit.

Space is extremely limited. Don't miss this opportunity to invest deeply in your calling!

SCBO»

ADVANCED

WORSHIP LEADER TRAINING RETREAT

September 10-12
go.scbo.org/worshipRetreat
Columbus Ohio

Is your worship ministry growing or just going through the motions? The Advanced Worship Leader Training Retreat is an intensive 3-day experience designed to equip worship leaders at every level — from volunteers to full-time pastors. Join us and walk away with biblical foundations, practical skills, and a renewed vision for leading your congregation in transformational worship.

Classified Ads

Discipleship Pastor/Director | Covenant Church, Grove City

Covenant Church, Grove City, is seeking a full-time Discipleship Pastor/Director who oversees the small groups ministry. Responsibilities include working closely with the lead pastor, providing resources and training for small group leaders, championing participation, and ensuring healthy leaders and apprentices. Email David@covenantchurch.us to apply.

Lead Pastor | First Baptist Church of Mt. Healthy, Cincinnati

First Baptist Church of Mt. Healthy is seeking their next Lead Pastor. A diverse, multi-ethnic, multi-generational SBC church seeking a pastor who preaches biblically faithful sermons, shepherds with compassion, invests in discipleship, strengthens multi-cultural unity, and leads with humility. Seminary training preferred. Submit resumes to: fbcmhpastorsearch@gmail.com

Worship Team Leader (Part-Time) | Pleasant Valley Church, Parma

Pleasant Valley Church in Parma, Ohio, is seeking a part-time Worship Team Leader (10 hrs/week) passionate about leading biblically faithful, Spirit-filled corporate worship. Responsibilities include planning and leading Sunday gatherings, developing worship and AVL team members, and serving as a covenant member. Email resume and cover letter to: jjohnson@pvcmail.org

Bi-Vocational Pastor | Hamersville Baptist Church, Hamersville

Hamersville Baptist Church, located ~30 miles east of Cincinnati on SR 125, is seeking a Bi-Vocational Pastor. Candidate should affirm the Baptist Faith and Message, meet biblical requirements, and appreciate expository preaching (congregation uses KJV). Send cover letter and 1-2 page resume to: Pulpit Committee, Hamersville Baptist Church, PO Box 78, Hamersville, OH 45130. Questions: call David Coppedge, Interim Pastor, 513-505-2570.

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November 9-10, 2026

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

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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@sco.org

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