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Ohio Baptist MESSENGER

THE STATE CONVENTION OF BAPTISTS IN OHIO



**Ohio African American Pastors
Take Historic Mission
Trip to Uganda**

Full story on page 10

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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.

The Cooperative Program: One Hundred Years and Counting

On May 13, 1925, nearly 5,000 Southern Baptists gathered at Ellis Auditorium in Memphis, Tennessee, and adopted The Cooperative Program as the way to partner in missions funding.

A century later, on May 13, 2025, Southern Baptist leaders once again gathered in Memphis, Tennessee, just a few steps from where Ellis Auditorium once stood to commemorate 100 years of cooperation.

Using the same pulpit from 1925, once owned by Pastor M.E. Dodd, over 70 SBC and state convention leaders signed a Declaration of Cooperation declaring our continued commitment to cooperation. I had the honor and joy of representing Ohio Baptists and affixing my signature to this important and historic document that will be preserved in the SBC historical library and archives.

Dr. Jeff Iorg, president and CEO of the SBC Executive Committee, reminded all of those in attendance and watching online of the historical significance of the Cooperative Program. “While commonplace to us, the Cooperative Program was a never-before-attempted method of funding shared ministry and mission efforts,” Dr. Iorg said.



Since the beginning of SCBO in 1954, Ohio Baptist churches have sacrificially and generously given over \$188,000,000 to missions through the Cooperative Program.

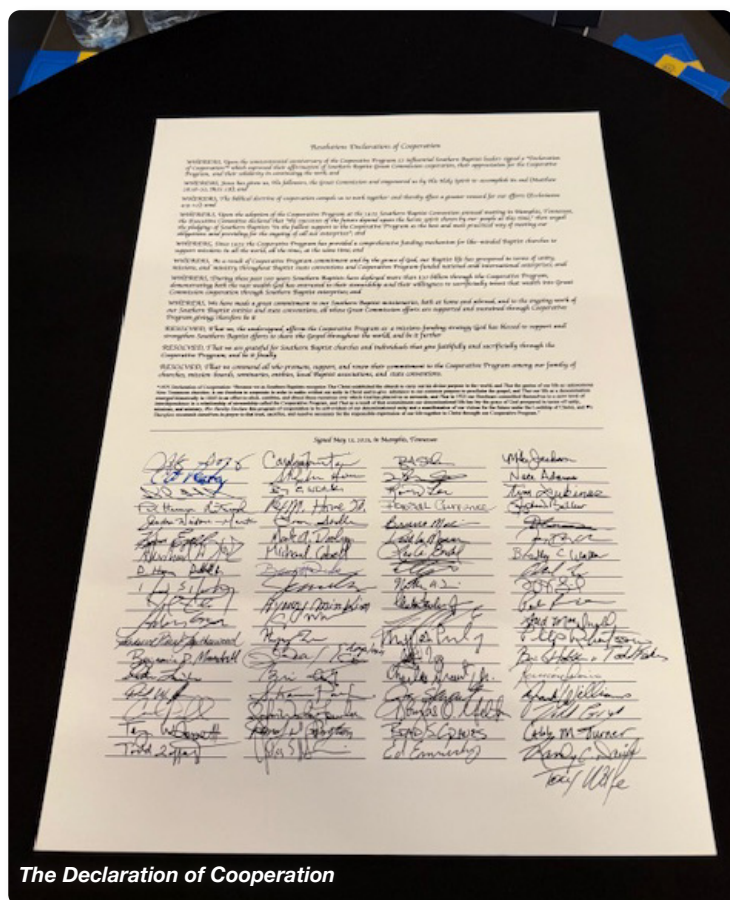
Because of the generosity of all Southern Baptists, we now have over 3,500 fully-funded missionaries across every continent, help provide financial and organizational support for over 600 church plants annually and assist in the training of thousands of seminary students to spread the gospel of Jesus and make disciples.

When Southern Baptists gather together in Dallas, Texas, for the 2025 SBC Annual Meeting, we will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Cooperative Program as well as cast the vision for another 100 years of partnering together for missions through this incredible funding method, should Jesus tarry.

If you would like to learn more about the Cooperative Program and how it supports the mission work of reaching our neighborhoods here in Ohio and the nations around the world, please visit the SCBO website and learn more at <https://scbo.org/cooperative-program>.

Moving Forward,

Dr. Jeremy Westbrook
Executive Director-Treasurer, SCBO



President's Pen

Stay Focused on the One Above Us

And Hannah prayed and said,

"My heart exults in the Lord;

my horn is exalted in the Lord.

My mouth derides my enemies,

because I rejoice in your salvation.

2 "There is none holy like the Lord:

for there is none besides you;

there is no rock like our God.

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (1 Sa 2:1-2)). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

Life is difficult. Ministry is difficult.

Hannah was just coming out of a really difficult season. She longed to have a child, but it just wasn't happening. But God, in his mercy, heard her prayers for a son.

As a result, Hannah burst forth in praise!

As you read her prayer of praise in 1 Samuel 2, it's striking that her praise has absolutely nothing to do with her current circumstances. That's because she's not focused on what's around her...she's focused on the One above her!

Life and ministry can be really difficult. But let's not allow whatever challenges we may be facing to rob us of the amazing opportunity we have - every day - to exult in the Lord! Let's not allow what's around us to distract us from the One above us...the One who is with us, all the time, to the end of the age.

There is none holy like the Lord.

There is no rock besides our God.

I rejoice in his salvation!

If you're in a particularly discouraging season, you're not alone. Help is just an email or phone call away. There are amazing resources in our state to help church leaders who are walking through challenging seasons. You can always reach me at president@scbo.org.

Grace and Peace,

Adam Pursel
SCBO President



Play Golf, Change Lives at OBF Invitational Golf Tournament



Grab your clubs and get ready to tee it up at the Ohio Baptist Foundation Invitational Golf Tournament on Monday, September 15. It will be a great day of golf full of putting and purpose!

The OBF Invitational Golf Tournament combines a fun round of golf, great gifts, and a delicious dinner—all while supporting a kingdom cause.

Golfers will gather at The Lakes Golf & Country Club, 6740 Worthington Rd., Westerville, which will again serve as a final qualifying site for both amateur and professional golfers who are playing their way into this year's US Open Golf Championship.

Once again, the proceeds from this year's tournament will go to CampUCan, a ministry of the SCBO. CampUCan introduces young men from inner-city communities to the love of Jesus through a week-long summer camp and ongoing mentorship from godly Christian men. It's a life-changing investment in the next generation.

In 2024, the tournament raised almost \$5,000 which funded campers fees, making camp free for the young men who attended. During last year's CampUCan, 65 young men accepted Christ and 27 of them were baptized in the lake at the camp!

Registration for the 2025 OBF Invitational Golf Tournament is \$200 for an individual and \$700 for a foursome and includes golf and cart, practice range, door prize, all meals and awards reception.

This year's tournament has space for 88 golfers as well as several levels of sponsorship. Registration is available now at <http://go.scbo.org/Golf2025>

This year's fundraising goal is \$5,400 which will fully sponsor 18 young men to attend CampUCan free of charge.

Foursomes will also be able to make an additional \$300 scholarship donation or a \$75 individual scholarship donation during registration. Each \$300 donation will sponsor one camper to CampUCan, and donors will receive a special thank you during check-in which includes a muligan and raffle ticket (four per team, 1 per individual).

There are several sponsorship levels available as well. These include Title Sponsor - \$10,000; Gold Sponsor - \$5,000; Silver Sponsor - \$2,500; Dinner Sponsor - \$2,000; Driving Range Sponsor - \$1,000; Beverage Cart Sponsor - \$1,000; and Hole Sponsor - \$300.

In addition to golfing, attendees will have the opportunity to learn more about investing with the Ohio Baptist Foundation and how your stewardship can support ministries across the state.

Whether you're a seasoned golfer or just want to support a kingdom-impacting cause, this is an event you won't want to miss!

Learn more about CampUCan at scbo.org/ucan

Plenty of Chances for SBC25 Messengers to Celebrate CP's 100th Birthday

By Diana Chandler, Baptist Press senior writer

DALLAS (BP) – As early as 1884, Southern Baptist mission leaders sensed a need for something other than “spasmodic” giving to fund denominational work at home and abroad.

“Our people must be taught to give by system,” Home Mission Board Secretary I.T. Tichenor put it at the time. “They must be taught that when each does his part, how easy it would be to supply all that is needed for the spread of the Gospel and how small a contribution from everyone will hush the cries of destitution and fill our own and distant lands with songs of joy.”

The idea of systematic giving gained momentum in the 20th century and, with the encouragement of Louisiana pastor M.E. Dodd, messengers to the 1925 Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting adopted it.

Messengers to the 2025 SBC Annual Meeting June 10-11 in Dallas will have several opportunities to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the CP, including in the exhibit hall and during general sessions of the meeting.

Brandon Porter, SBC Executive Committee vice president for convention communications, said the celebration’s planning drew broad participation.

“It has been exciting to see state conventions begin to celebrate the Cooperative Program’s 100th anniversary,” Porter told Baptist Press. “We’re looking forward to Southern Baptists from across the convention joining together to thank God for His faithfulness and to recommit to our cooperative partnership.”

Exhibit hall

Learn more of CP’s history, view such historic artifacts as the pulpit used by M.E. Dodd and record a 30-second video of what CP means to you at the CP booth in the SBC Exhibit Hall in Dallas.

The Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives contributed to the exhibit in its display of historical artifacts and the compilation of a timeline of Southern Baptists’ journey to adopt the Cooperative Program and efforts to maintain it since 1925.

“We’ve been working for months to prepare the Cooperative Program 100 exhibit, and we’re happy to share it with Southern Baptists,” Porter said.

The Shreveport Baptist Association loaned the pulpit Dodd used at First Baptist Church of Shreveport, La., from 1925-1955, Porter said, as Dodd’s encouragement of the CP at the 1925 SBC Annual Meeting gained him the moniker “Father of the Cooperative Program.”

The CP booth will provide a special backdrop for messengers and guests to record short videos titled, “What

does the Cooperative Program mean to me?” and post them on social media.

In the same booth, Kentucky Baptist Convention Communications Director Lawrence Smith will record podcasts with a series of guests, highlighting how CP is impacting missions, church planting, disaster relief and other Southern Baptist work.

CP 100 book

“Unity of Purpose,” a brand new book featuring Southern Baptist leaders’ stories of how the Cooperative Program was created and its impact over the past 100 years, will be available in the Lifeway Village. The book was edited by Tony Wolfe, executive director-treasurer of the South Carolina Baptist Convention, and W. Madison Grace, provost, vice president and dean at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

CP on the main stage

The SBC Annual Meeting will include a CP 100 celebration Tuesday, June 10, at 2:40 p.m. on the main meeting stage in Hall F of the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center in Dallas.

Jeff Iorg, SBC Executive Committee president, will lead messengers and leaders in prayer and reflection, thanking God for His faithfulness through cooperative partnership.

At 2:55 pm, the SBC Committee on Resolutions is scheduled to ask Southern Baptists to make a declaration of cooperation reaffirming commitment to the CP partnership.

Article courtesy of Baptist Press



The Importance of Associations in SBC Life

By Steve Hopkins, Associational and Prayer consultant

At the Southern Baptist Conference for Associational Leaders (SBCAL) Dr. Jeff Iorg, president of the SBC Executive Committee, led a breakout session outlining six reasons the association matters in SBC life.

The association coordinates churches in a local context to do missions together. It can be the catalyst for networking churches to make an impact in the community for the gospel. Smaller churches can partner to plant churches, create a counseling center, and help one another in mission projects. Nobody else can unite local churches like the association.

A local association can network small churches for international missions. The association can partner with a country, mobilize international mission efforts like disaster relief, and plan international mission trips together.

Associational leaders can speak the truth in love, with objectivity, and challenge people to change. They can visit a church and provide an objective view of its facility and atmosphere. Leaders must build a relationship of trust to help people see the need for change. An associational leader's investment in the church builds that trust so he can confront the needs.

The association can advocate for and interpret the larger convention for the churches. Who can they call at the SCBO, SBC, LifeWay, etc.? How does the local church get connected on the state and national levels? Bi-vocational pastors focus on working their jobs, caring for people, and preparing Sunday sermons. They don't have time to research and find the truth about what's happening in the state convention and national convention. Associational leaders can confront misinformation. The point is not to unthinkingly follow, but to know the truth and make it known.

Association leaders and fellow pastors can provide care for pastors. The primary role of the associational leader is not to be a pastor to the pastors, but it is essential. No one can know the pastors and provide care for them and their families like the association can. They can be first responders in family and church crises.

The local association can provide crisis intervention. When a pastor is fired, a church splits, or a leader is unfaithful to his call, associations must move toward the need, not run from it; they are the front lines in the battle.

"Before there were state conventions, there were associations in SBC history," said Dr. Jeremy Westbrook, SCBO executive director. "As a former AMS leader myself, I believe a healthy and missional local association is critical to the health of the SCBO. That is why we have dedicated Cooperative Program dollars within our budget and staff to ensure a strong partnership with our local associations here in the Buckeye State."

What would you add to the list? How have you seen the association make a difference as we invite churches to rediscover gospel multiplication? Please send your thoughts and comments to SteveHopkins@scbo.org.

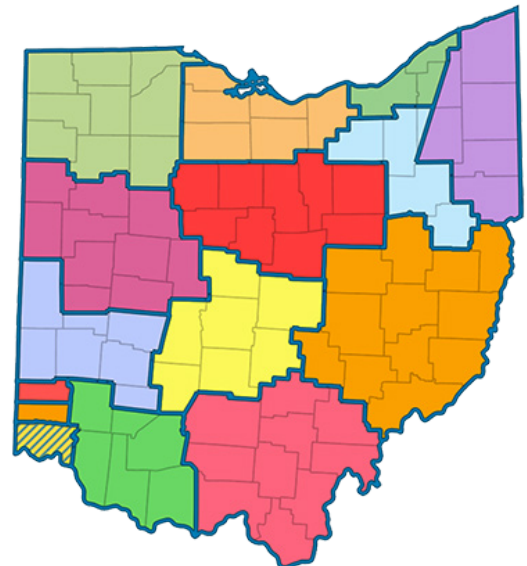
Celebrating the Cooperative Program Episode Two: CP100: H2O Athens

SCBO is celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the Cooperative Program with "CP100," a series of interviews highlighting the impact of the Cooperative Program on churches and individuals in each of Ohio's six regions.

This month, CP100 visits the Southeast Region of Ohio.

Students on college campuses are among the least reached people groups in North America. Pastors and Church Planters Joe Kaloger and Caleb Burlile plan to change those statistics at Ohio University, Athens, through the ministry of H2O Church. Ohio University sits in the Appalachian region of Ohio where great need meets great opportunities for sharing the gospel in a post-Christian culture.

Don't miss episode two of CP100: H2O Athens.



[Click Here to find your Association](#)

Pastor Runs Miles for Annie Armstrong, Church Planting

By Stephanie Heading, managing editor

Aaron Taylor hates running. Period.

“My church knows how much I despise running,” he said. “It’s kind of a running joke. No pun intended.”

However, as the church planter of Living Hope Church, Columbus, and a Church Planting Catalyst for Send Network Ohio, he has a true passion for church planting and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.

During a spring break vacation in March, Taylor decided to run for two causes – to raise money for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering and to bring awareness to church planting efforts across Ohio and North America.

With his wife’s approval, Taylor created a graphic explaining his intention to run during April for Annie Armstrong. For every 25 dollars donated to the offering, he would run one mile. His goal was to run 75 miles during April breaking the runs into one or two-mile segments twice a day.

“A couple of days before April started, I threw it out there to see if people would be interested in contributing to my disdain for running,” he said.

And people started giving and kept giving.

“It kind of became a game,” he said. “I would get down to like, five or six miles to go and then someone would make another donation and bring me back to 15 or 20 miles to go.”

In total, he ran 80 miles and raised \$2,000 for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.

Even though Taylor disdained running, he loved the spotlight it created on church planting.

“This was just a way to also raise awareness for church planting, not just in Ohio, but also across North America at the same time,” he said. “It’s been kind of neat. I’ve made connections with people from my past that I haven’t seen in ten-plus years.”

People have reached out to him from different parts of the country, asking questions and seeking his input on the best practices for church planting as well as other things he learned along the way in his own church planting experiences.

Over the 29 days of running, people followed Taylor’s journey through his daily video posts which put Annie Armstrong and church planting in the public eye.

“It just raised awareness and got people hopefully praying for church planting efforts,” he said.

More than anyone, his church members enjoyed seeing him run daily. He updated the church regularly throughout the month and used the opportunity to share about church planting in the Columbus area.



“I’d say, ‘This week we raised this amount of money, and also this church launched on the east side of Columbus,’” he noted. “So as you’re giving to my demise in running you also just supported a Congolese church starting or just supported a church in the suburbs getting off the ground.”

Taylor’s also been surprised by the number of people who saw his running videos on social media. As he went to places outside of his church, he had people approach him and comment about watching and enjoying his nightly posts.

“That’s the goal,” he said. “It’s not about what I’m doing, but by seeing those, they’re thinking about church planting and that’s what my desire was.”

One special supporter of his efforts was his youngest daughter, age 7. “She wanted to start going with me, but she was calling it ‘riding her bike for church planting,’” he said. “So I would run two miles and then my youngest daughter would ride her bike alongside me. She felt like she was giving back.”

After 80 miles of doing something he hates for something he loves, Taylor believes he will probably run for Annie Armstrong again next year.

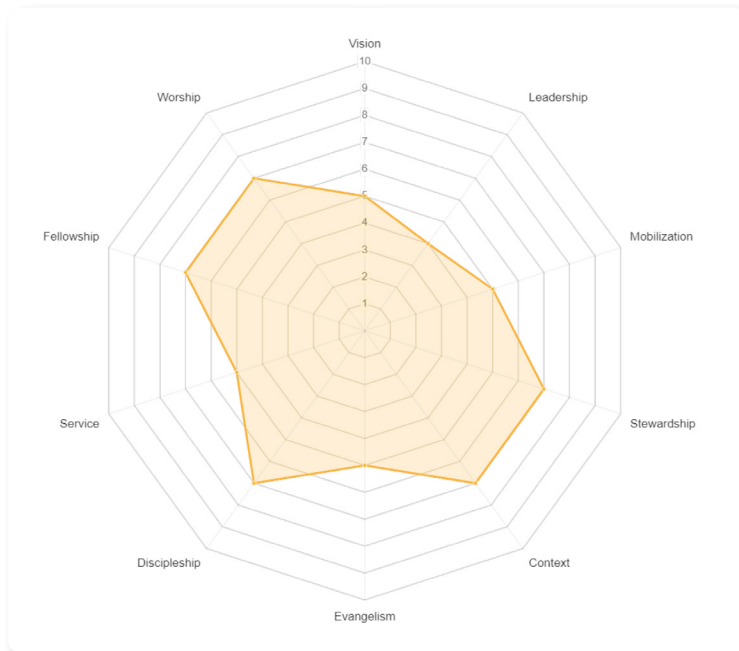
“I think I just saw, even in a small way, the awareness that it raised around church planting and even just assisting in getting the brand of Send Network known on a little broader scale.”

Have You Taken Your “Pulse” Lately?

Mark Jones, SCBO revitalization catalyst

In last month’s article, I shared a tool that I have used for many years to assist me in leading congregations. It is called the Pulse Health Assessment. When we listen to our body’s vital signs, we can determine the adjustments necessary to become healthier.

Every year, I get a physical from my primary care physician. That physical includes vital readings and lab work. During my appointment the doctor reveals what the lab results are. I then have a choice to listen to what the doctor prescribes and progress to health or keep doing what I have been doing and watch the results of future lab work decline even more.



When coaching this congregation’s leadership team, we share ways to determine giftedness and pathways to engage within and outside of the church building. The leadership team then implements those tools they are comfortable with.

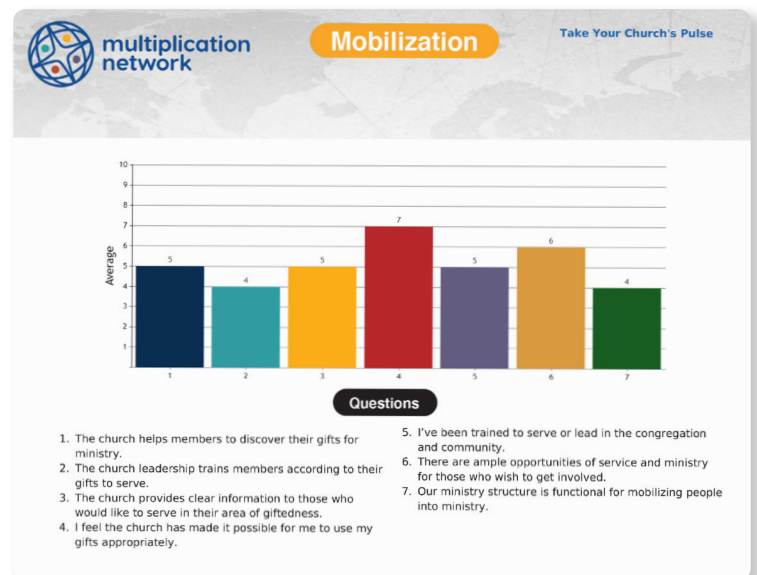
When a congregation receives its Pulse results, it chooses to accept or ignore the recommendations given. The goal is to become a healthier congregation. It is recommended that a congregation takes its Pulse once per year for three years and then every three years.

I would love to help your congregation take its pulse. This is a free assessment with invaluable results.

Interested? Contact me at mjones@scbo.org and simply ask about the Pulse Assessment. Imagine what it would look like to be healthier a year from now.

Look at the Pulse images included in this article. This sample radar/spider graph reveals some areas of concern presented by the church body’s responses. It is necessary that a sampling of 25% or more congregants participate in the survey so that we can see real results.

This particular sampling shows some stronger areas – worship, fellowship, discipleship, context, and stewardship, as well as those that are in crucial need of attention and coaching. For instance, this Mobilization sampling speaks of preparing and mobilizing your congregation utilizing their giftedness and skillsets.



Ohio African American Pastors Take Historic Mission Trip to Uganda

By Stephanie Heading, managing editor and Reginald Hayes, SCBO senior staff

Seven SCBO African American pastors made history in early April as they traveled to Uganda on an international mission trip.

The project marked the first time a team of African American pastors has been to Uganda with the International Mission Board (IMB).

SCBO in partnership with IMB is creating an international mission pipeline through Ohio's African American churches.

"The scriptures reveal to us that heaven will be full of believers from every tribe, nation, and tongue. Therefore, we want our missionaries sent from Ohio to be as diverse as the kingdom of heaven," said Dr. Jeremy Westbrook, SCBO executive director. "My prayer is that this moment will lead to a movement of Ohio churches creating and implementing a diversity of pipelines to send missionaries across the street and around the world."

The historic Ohio team included Reginald Hayes, SCBO senior staff and pastor, United Faith International, Columbus; Karlie Hale, One Love Community Church, Cleveland; Bruce McLaurin, FBC, South Euclid; Kevin Crum, New Hope BC, Youngstown; Ivan Stewart, Kingdom Models Community, Columbus; Gregory Draper, Greater Abyssinia Church, Columbus; and Makendi Matamba, Sinai Mountain Church, Columbus.

Additional members included Quintell Hill, IMB African American church mobilization and strategist; Charles Grant, SBC Executive Committee executive director of African American relations and mobilization, as well as pastors from Texas and Mississippi.

The pastors worked with IMB missionaries George and Geraldine Smith, who have served for 21 years in Uganda.

The team's two-week mission assignment was in metro Jinja, population 247,000, as well as in the villages of Bulangira Jadama, Kabweri, and Pallisa. The team also served on Ssesse and Buvuma islands on Lake Victoria where most of the residents live on the islands from cradle to grave.

Each day Ohio pastors trained Ugandan pastors on how to adequately teach the Bible, preached to congregations, and participated in daily street evangelism in every community they visited.

As a result, 55 Ugandans accepted Jesus Christ during the trip.

Pastors not only saw the spiritual needs of the Ugandan people but also witnessed their physical needs.

A state-of-the-art medical facility that could provide



Eight members of the historic Ohio African American mission team to Uganda.

life-saving medical services to residents currently sits idle on one of the islands. Unfortunately, the medical clinic is closed because there aren't any missionary nurses and doctors to operate it. The government won't step in because the facility isn't theirs and they claim they can't operate it.

Pastor Karlie Hale was overwhelmed with emotions at the amount of help the African people needed.

"Clearly, there is a tremendous need for Africa's indigenous people to be evangelized with the gospel of Jesus Christ and to have their physical needs met. We, the pastors in urban communities, must be on the front line of building missionary pipelines in our churches," Hale stated.

Of the more than 3,500 IMB missionaries currently serving around the world, only 24 are African American.

"The bottom line is more African American pastors and their laypeople have to be participating alongside our African brothers and sisters to see more salvations on the African continent and in other parts of the world," Pastor Bruce McLaurin said. "A clarion call needs to resonate with our members - it is a fertile, fruitful season, and empowerment is provided through Christ Jesus. I have tasted and seen that he is good!"

Quintell Hill added, "I am hopeful more state conventions, like Ohio, will partner with IMB to create mission pipelines in African American churches to prepare more African Americans to become short and long-term missionaries until all nations have heard the gospel."

Scott Ray, IMB senior director of field personnel deployment, says many people don't realize how their skills and

Story continues on the next page...

current careers can be effective mission tools overseas. Multiple skill sets are in high demand on the mission field including logistics services consultants, doctors, occupational therapists, accountants, counselors, and others.

“There are a lot of people right now in the church who have the idea that they can’t be missionaries because they don’t see themselves as a church planter,” Ray said. We want them to know they can take that with them to the mission field and use it for the furthering of the kingdom and for addressing lostness.”

As a member of the historic mission team, Pastor Reggie Hayes is championing the movement to see international pipelines in African American churches in Ohio.

“Around the world, the populations of people of color are growing exponentially. Going to all the world making disciples, baptizing them, and teaching them to observe all that God has commanded is vital,” Hayes said. “More international missionary pipelines in SCBO African American churches will enable people to continually hear the importance of international mission work, hear God’s call, respond, and go to the uttermost parts of the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

To learn more about international pipelines, contact Reginald Hayes at rhayes@scbo.org

Behind the Disaster Relief Logo

By Dr. John Heading, OHDR State Director

Ever watch a duck gliding across a pond? It looks so calm and graceful. But if you look under the water you would see the duck’s feet paddling like crazy. Keep the duck in mind as we look behind the scenes at Ohio Disaster Relief.

It’s a Thursday morning and a strong storm swept across Ohio overnight bringing straight-line winds known as a derecho. The 70 mph winds have knocked out power and downed trees.

The phone rings and it’s a county emergency manager asking for Ohio Disaster Relief to send a chainsaw team to clear trees next week. Of course, we say yes. This is when the DR director’s feet start to paddle.

Step 1 is to locate an SBC church in the affected area that can handle the mission. The church must have sleeping space and restrooms for 25-40 people, an outside electric outlet and water hose hookup for the Quick Response Feeding Unit, and another outside electric outlet and water connection for the shower unit.

After a location is acquired, Step 2 is to recruit volunteers to serve on our teams. An off-site coordinator sends out a request for volunteers.

Multiple teams are necessary to stand up a location in Ohio. These include chaplains, damage assessors, Incident Management Team, chainsaw teams, and feeding team.

If needed, Ohio Disaster Relief will also deploy a communications team to set up a mobile satellite system if the cell or internet service is out, heavy equipment to lift logs and debris, and finally the shower unit which must be delivered, set up, and ready to use.

A deployment that looks like it should only involve an 8-person chainsaw team ultimately requires about 25

people. This number of people has to be secured every week until the mission closes.

So, what’s the plan if we can’t recruit enough people from Ohio to make the mission happen? Then we call other state disaster relief directors and see if they can send teams to assist. The worst outcome is if we can’t field the teams needed and we have to tell people that we can’t help.

There are so many more pieces to the puzzle than most people never see. They include coordinating with local, state, and federal disaster agencies, coordinating with local partners, arranging the purchase of food, propane, and supplies, and organizing all the units and people that deploy from all over Ohio to one location.

It takes teams working together to allow Ohio DR to share the gospel of Jesus Christ through compassion ministry. If you are ready to get involved in helping people in crisis, then go to www.scbo.org/dr and get started. You don’t have to wait for the next training date – you can get started now.



SAVE THE DATE FOR THESE
**UPCOMING
EVENTS!**

8/28-30

Arabic Church Training
Gathering for pastors,
planters, and potential
planters

9/13

Annual SCBO
Women's Event

9/13

Disaster Relief
training in
Beavercreek, Ohio

9/15

Ohio Baptist
Foundation Invitational
Golf Tournament

9/19-20

Refresh & Renewal
Sessions with Mark
Clifton

9/25

Southwest Ohio
Leaders Conference



www.scbo.org/events

New Career Opportunity

Event Planner

SCBO is looking for a talented person to join our team as a part-time event planner. For more info, email kumphrey@scbo.org



Sharing Salt and Light with Inner City Columbus Teens

By Stephanie Heading, managing editor

For over five years, Joshua Ashwill has been ministering to residents of inner city Columbus through Salt and Light Church, a Send Network Ohio church plant.

Salt and Light meets at Stowe Mission, a community resource center on Parsons Avenue in Columbus.

“Lots goes on from an outreach perspective here at Stowe, and we get to come alongside as a local church, to be involved in a lot of those things, but then also hopefully see folks get plugged into the local church.”

Two and a half years ago, the Lord gave Joshua Ashwill a burden for 13-18 year olds in inner-city Columbus.

As the pastor of Salt and Light Church, he has become familiar with the challenges urban teens face daily and his desire is to see a teen ministry begin and thrive in the church.

“South High School is just a quarter mile down the road,” Ashwill said. “There’s really not too much going on for their students and just kids in that age group at large. So I think the Lord has really shown that to me and given me a desire to begin something like this.”

So, at the end of 2024, Ashwill applied for an evangelism grant from SCBO which helped kick-off Salt and Light’s first Teen Outreach in May.

The event took place at Stowe Mission and drew teens into the facility for an evening of fun and outreach.

“The Lord did abundantly more than I could have ever asked or thought regarding this evening,” Ashwill said. “I had personally been praying for 2.5 years for the Lord to allow us to begin this type of work in our community, but have patiently been waiting on the Lord’s timing.”

His prayer was that as the outreach began the Lord would provide at least 20 students that the church could begin relationships with and minister to.

“Twenty-three came!” he said.

In a testimony, Ashwill shared his excitement about the new teen ministry:

“We prayed that it would be an atmosphere where everyone regardless of who they were or where they came from could have fun. The follow-up surveys and the testimonies of teens from that evening were that this was the best thing they have ever been a part of.

I prayed that God would provide laborers to be involved in this outreach. We had 11 members of Salt and Light Church that are committed to these teens. We also have partner youth groups around the city that will be serving alongside us for all three of our planned summer outreaches, including a group that served with us that evening!

Every student that was here had the opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel of Jesus Christ. I had many follow-up conversations about students wanting to know more about the God who created them and loves them. Many of our members at Salt and Light got to have similar conversations around the dinner table with these students as well.

All of this was made possible because of the generosity of SCBO and the evangelism grants!”

Following the event, Ashwill realized that a monthly meeting wasn’t going to be enough for teens who are hungry for more.

“Once a month is just not enough to really build these relationships and to see the fruit and the discipleship,” he said. “We’re going to start a Bible study every two weeks. It’s going to be games, food, but then just walking through scripture together.”

According to Ashwill, the fellowships and Bible study are stepping stones to his final goal for the ministry.

“The end goal is not just to have a fun teen night. It’s not just to have a Bible study, but really to see these kids getting plugged into the local church, the body of Christ, where they’re not just around their peers, but the greater body of every generation.”

Ashwill also believes that these teens are the future leaders of Salt and Light Church.

“I think through the discipleship intentionality of raising up these kids, the seeds that were just started on May 1, will grow and seven, ten, fifteen years from now many of the students that are involved will be leading the church and involved in it for the long term. That’s the long-term hope.”



Twenty-three inner city Columbus teens attend the first teen outreach night at Salt and Light Church.

Learn How to Create a Culture of Prayer at Prayer Summit Ohio

By Steve Hopkins, Associational and Prayer Consultant

What's the state of prayer for pastors and the church? The church in Acts determined to "devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word."

A 2025 research survey of 2,178 pastors suggests we're not doing so well in creating a culture of prayer. Two out of three pastors responding to the survey did not describe prayer as "important to the core of their ministry."

Fifty-four percent of churches do not gather at least once a year to pray, even when they say they have a heart-level conviction around gathering to pray (65%). Two-thirds of pastors have never been disciplined in how to pray, and one-third describe their primary prayer experience as an add-on to their jobs. Over 50% of pastors never plan to work on creating a culture of prayer in their churches.

What can we do? The 6:4 Fellowship is committed to supporting pastors and churches in creating a culture of prayer. When coached in the 6:4 material, 93% of pastors feel equipped and confident in leading prayer gatherings, more than three times the national average.

Ninety-six percent of pastors in coaching have an active prayer life, again three times the average. When asked, 76% of 6:4 pastors allot at least seven minutes to prayer during the morning worship service, and 94% have corporate prayer meetings at least once a month. This sta-

tistic is vital: 85% of 6:4 pastors have noticed prayer is a primary factor in moving their people toward increasingly bold evangelism, five times the average.

Church culture matches the prayer life of its pastor. Interested in learning more about the prayer ministry of 6:4?

Join us Saturday, June 28, in Lancaster, as we seek God's face in scripture-fed, Spirit-led, worship-based prayer. The Prayer Summit is a time of refreshment, encouragement, edification, and purification, perfect for every heart longing to know God more intimately. Pastor Scott Gibson, The Bridge Ministries, and Jeff Sivyler, 6:4 Fellowship, Great Lakes Regional director, will facilitate the day. It is open to pastors and church leaders.

"A few years ago after attending my first ever Prayer Summit at Violet Baptist, I realized that our church was only skimming the surface as it relates to prayer, both individually and corporately," Gibson said. "The tools and resources that I received that day have redefined our church's prayer life like nothing I had encountered before. It was truly a life-changing experience."

Registration for the Prayer Summit at The Bridge Ministries, Lancaster, is now open at strategicrenewal.com/event/prayer-summit-ohio-lancaster. The cost is \$25, which includes materials and lunch.

Experience the Strategic Renewal PRAYER SUMMIT

Come taste and see
Scripture-fed, Spirit-led, Worship-based Prayer!



STRATEGIC RENEWAL

Church Planting on Easter in Southwest Ohio

By Reagan Wagoner, Southwest Region catalyst

On Easter, the church I pastor, Grace Point Fellowship, Franklin, planted its second campus, Grace Point Hunter.

The new campus is led by Teaching Pastor and Church Planter Devin Delgrosso and is located in the Hunter/Middletown area. Two hundred eighty-five people attended the Grand Opening service.

The umbrella of Grace Point Fellowship now includes Grace Point Franklin, Grace Point Hunter, and Grace Point Espanol. It also includes Grace Point Preschool, which launched last fall, and the Grace Point Network of churches, which is a localized avenue for partnership and support for new churches in the Cincinnati/Dayton area.

Grace Point itself was planted less than ten years ago and was started in my home. My wife Heather serves as Women's and Worship Minister for Grace Point, and she just received her Master's Degree from Gateway Seminary in Ontario, CA.

On Easter Sunday, five people made professions of faith at Grace Point – two at the new Hunter campus, and three at the Franklin campus. We also got to baptize at the Franklin campus on Easter as well as the week after.

Our campuses used a staggered worship schedule with the Franklin campus holding services at 9 am and 11 am and the Hunter campus and Grace Point Espanol worshipping at 10 am.

Instead of one large Easter Egg Hunt, Grace Point decided to do 3 smaller Easter Egg Hunts after each service, offering fellowship (and of course candy!) for families and kids who came for worship.



Children enjoy one of three Easter Egg Hunts at Grace Point.



Reese Wagoner leads worship on Easter at Grace Point Fellowship.

Our Hispanic congregation is led by Pastor Adrian Cespedes who immigrated to the United States from Bolivia, got his degree from the Rio Grande Bible College in Texas, and served in residency at Lakota Hills Church before coming to Grace Point.

Grace Point is so grateful to Lakota Hills Church for helping us start ESL classes. We now partner with a bakery, a Mexican restaurant as well as others to teach their employees English, and we have people coming to church not only from Central and South America, but from Tanzania, China, Angola, India, and Bangladesh.

The other day I was walking through our building and there was a group of people meeting for ESL classes which include care, prayer and Bible study in addition to teaching English.

In that group alone, we had people from six different countries. One lady who recently gave her life to Jesus through our church was from the city in China where I went on a mission trip over 20 years ago. She was part of the unreached all over the world, and now she is sitting on a couch in our church learning English! God is bringing the nations to us right here in Franklin and Middletown.

Please pray for Grace Point as we continue to reach the lost, raise leaders, and start new "Grace Points" that God would receive the glory, and He would allow us to care for people well through our church and our new campus.

Easter Egg Hunts Impact Families Across Ohio

First Baptist Church of Newtown, Easter Egg Hunt-Community Outreach



We had a fantastic crowd of people from the community and church! We had a bounce house, pictures, eggs, and lots of giveaways. We also had designated people talking and sharing the gospel with others. This was a wonderful event with a huge impact on the community!

—Pastor James Trascritti, First Baptist Church of Newtown

Refuge Community Church, Cleveland, Easter Outreach Service and Kids Event



With the assistance of the SCBO evangelism grant we connected with four new families on paper, three more off paper, and had countless conversations. Here's one, in particular, I will share:

"Wow, this is awesome! You can expect to see us on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays, and maybe even Mondays. This is just what we've been looking for :)"

Thank you, SCBO, for supporting the local church!

—Edward Sallow, Missions Support Strategist, Refuge Community Church

Fellowship Baptist Church, Maineville, Easter Egg Hunt



Our Easter Egg Hunt was a huge success this year. We had about 700 children and adults attend. We were able to meet many people from our community, and hopefully, make them feel welcome at Fellowship. We have had families get connected to our church because of community events like these, so we know that they make a difference. We were able to give each child a treat bag and feed all of the families that came through. We are praying that the people in our community will know they are loved by our church and that they are welcome with us. There was fun to be had by all, and we are thankful to Jesus, the giver of all good gifts, including Easter Egg Hunts, inflatables, face paint, candy, but most importantly himself!

—Darcy Land, Children's Minister, Fellowship Baptist Church, Maineville

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The Messenger is read by churches and individuals in Ohio and across the country.

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