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Ohio Baptist MESSENGER

THE STATE CONVENTION OF BAPTISTS IN OHIO

**COOPERATIVE
PROGRAM
GIVING IN OHIO
SINCE 2022**



**Celebrating Record-Breaking
Generosity: A Heartfelt Thank
You to Ohio Baptists**

Full story on page 3

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The Ohio Baptist Messenger Staff

Dr. Jeremy Westbrook, editor-in-chief
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AJ Frasure, director of IT

-- 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.

Celebrating Record-Breaking Generosity: A Heartfelt Thank You to Ohio Baptists

Records are meant to be broken.

I am thrilled to share that SCBO churches gave \$4,858,312 through the Cooperative Program in 2025! This achievement is not merely a number; it is a tangible expression of your deep-seated belief in the mission of Christ and the power of working together.

Your sacrificial and sustained giving has yielded a new benchmark for generosity, proving once again that the heart of Ohio Baptists is firmly set on the Great Commission. It's with overwhelming gratitude and a spirit of celebration that we recognize this historic and record-breaking commitment to CP.

The Cooperative Program, the financial fuel for our collective mission, enables us to accomplish far more together than we ever could alone. It enables us to fulfill our shared purpose of making disciples in every corner of our state and around the world. Your funds are not simply dollars on a spreadsheet—they are missionaries sent, pastors trained, new churches planted, and lives transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Your faithfulness directly supports every level of our shared ministry:

In Ohio: Your gifts strengthen existing churches, fuel new church plants, and provide critical resources for evangelism and ministry development across the state. This rise in giving, which has been consistently increasing year by year since 2022, is a remarkable trend that demonstrates sustained passion for the work.

Across North America and the World: A portion of every dollar you give is forwarded to the Southern Baptist Convention, extending the reach of the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth. This investment ensures that missionaries are on the ground, sharing the hope of Christ in North America and overseas. We believe that in giving to the Cooperative Program, we are directly “investing in the next generation” of planters and leaders.

For the Future: Your generosity is a profound statement of conviction. It confirms our belief that the Cooperative Program is vital in helping us accomplish the Great Commission. It is an essential channel for training a new generation of leaders in our seminaries and for providing strategic resources to our churches.

How fitting that, as we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Cooperative Program, Ohio Baptists sent the most to the mission field. This record of giving is a powerful testimony. It highlights a unified and cooperative spirit, demonstrating that Ohio Baptists are committed to

seeing the kingdom of God advance with urgency and vision.

Thank you for your sacrifice, your vision, and your unending commitment to sharing the gospel. Let us continue to lean in, to give generously, and to pray faithfully, confident that the Lord will continue to use the Cooperative Program as a mighty tool for his glory.

Moving Forward,



Dr. Jeremy Westbrook
Executive Director-Treasurer, SCBO



SCBO 
LOGOS 
**Logos Bible
Software Training**

**March 19
10 AM - 1 PM
Columbus, Ohio**

go.scbo.org/logos

Meet New SCBO President: Pastor Dave Welsch

God is doing great things in Ohio! We have been blessed with tremendous leadership from our Executive Director, Dr. Jeremy Westbrook, and our entire state staff.

I was deeply honored to be elected as your SCBO President this past November at our Annual Meeting, and I look forward to partnering with our state staff to serve the churches and pastors in Ohio.

As this is my first article, I simply want to introduce myself and share my heart for our state. My name is Dave Welsch, and I have had the joy of serving as the Lead Pastor at First Baptist Church, Heath, for the past eight years. Our church is passionate about making disciples and deeply committed to the Cooperative Program. I personally have benefited from it, having earned both my M.Div. and D.Min. through Southern Baptist seminaries.

While I love being a pastor, the most important ministry God has given me is at home —serving my wife and our six children. Yes, six! In 2020, God blessed us through the adoption of two boys from our local foster care system. With four teenagers in the house, we welcome all your prayers!

After twenty years in full-time ministry—and fifteen as a Lead Pastor—I’ve learned that ministry can be incredibly hard and lonely. The average church in America has 65 attendees each Sunday, and it’s estimated that 70% of churches in Ohio are revitalizations. Pastoring is hard work, and the kingdom of darkness is working hard to make sure our efforts are stalled, our pastors and their wives are discouraged, and the gospel isn’t proclaimed.

I truly believe one of the most significant things I can do as your president is to encourage, energize, and support our pastors and their wives.

“Therefore, encourage one another and build each other up as you are already doing.” – 1 Thessalonians 5:11

The two things that I am passionate about doing as your SCBO President are:

- 1. Championing the Cooperative Program.** We are better together, and God can use our cooperation to turn the world upside down for his glory.
- 2. Strengthening and encouraging pastors and their wives.** We cannot have healthy churches if we do not have healthy pastors.

If there is any way that I can be an encouragement to you or be praying specifically for you and your church, please don’t hesitate to email me at President@scbo.org.

It has been incredible to see how God has blessed our state over the past five years—and I cannot wait to see what he has in store next.

In Christ,

Dave Welsch

SCBO President



SCBO President Dave Welsch and family.

SCBO Finally Has an App!

By AJ Frasure, director of Information Technology

This week marks my first anniversary as the Director of Information Technology at SCBO. As I stepped into this role, it quickly became clear that SCBO had a major need.

But I also noticed that there were a ton of things we were already doing really well.

Each year, we put on amazing events that help pastors connect with others and learn valuable skills. Our staff gathers tangible tools designed to help boost your ministry. We bring in skilled communicators to encourage you.

We develop resources to train you and your staff. And my personal favorite, we share incredible stories of how God is working throughout the state of Ohio.

So, what was the biggest issue I noticed? Only a handful of pastors knew all these benefits existed. That's when I knew we could do better. I made it my mission to find and implement a solution to this problem.

Years after Apple coined the phrase, "There's an app for that," SCBO finally has an app!

Over the last year, my team and I have carefully considered what would make an app most valuable to you. We've spent countless hours creating new ways for you

to interact with the content you love. This app was created with you in mind, and my hope is that you find the features easy to use and genuinely helpful to your ministry.

In the app, you'll find a range of new resources to equip you and your staff. There is a media tab where you can watch videos and listen to podcasts that will encourage you. We've created a new way for you to find and register for upcoming events.

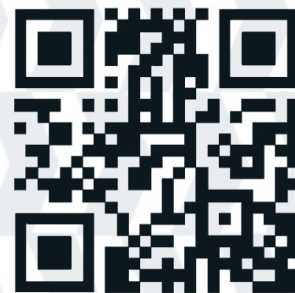
For me, the most exciting part of the app is our new **Mobile Messenger**. It has all the same content as our traditional **Ohio Baptist Messenger**, but it's designed to be read on a mobile device, so you can stay connected wherever you are.

Now, more than ever, it's easier to stay connected with SCBO. The SCBO app is your one-stop shop for all things SCBO. You can download it by searching "**Ohio Baptist Convention**" in your app store or by visiting scbo.org/app.

And don't keep it to yourself! Encourage your staff and ministry partners to download the app as well. Together, we can make Ohio Baptists more connected, encouraged, and equipped to rediscover Gospel Multiplication!

SCBO» NEW PASTORS & STAFF ORIENTATION

March 10, 2026
go.scbo.org/npso
Columbus, Ohio



Join Us to Make a Difference at Serve Tour Toledo in 2026

By Matt Pardi, Northwest Region catalyst

I have great memories of our team heading down to Dayton in 2022 with a group from our church to participate in Serve Tour Dayton.

We did landscaping and cleaned up at a pro-life pregnancy center. The bonding time and opportunity to serve the city were special.

Ohio Baptists have another awesome opportunity to do this in our Northwest Region in 2026, as Toledo will become the center of compassion-driven ministry on September 25–26, when Send Relief brings Serve Tour Toledo to our city.

This two-day outreach effort will unite churches, volunteers, and community partners with one mission — to meet real needs, build lasting relationships, and share the hope of Jesus with our neighbors.

As someone who has watched God move powerfully across our region, I couldn't be more excited. Serve Tour Toledo isn't just another event; it is a catalytic moment. When Send Relief partners with local churches and associations, communities are strengthened, people are encouraged, and the gospel is displayed through tangible love.

The State Convention of Baptists in Ohio (SCBO), Northwest Ohio Baptist Association (NCBA), and local churches will be working closely with Send Relief to coordinate dozens of service projects across our region. We will also partner with the West Coast Association, H2O Network, and churches across our state, and our team effort will accomplish many jobs that tangibly demonstrate God's love.

These jobs may include school revitalization, neighbor-

hood clean-ups, light construction, outreach events, ministry support for bivocational pastors, food distribution, sports camps, and more. I'm looking forward to helping our local ministries like Southside Life Station, Wellspring, and Mosaic. Every project will be designed to meet physical needs while opening the door for spiritual conversations.

What makes the Serve Tour so special is that it equips churches long after the weekend is over. Our hope is to work through and build local churches. Past Serve Tours around the country have helped congregations establish new partnerships, launch ongoing ministries, and re-engage their own members in hands-on mission work. My hope is that Toledo experiences that same long-term impact — that this weekend ignites a renewed passion for serving our city year-round.

We are praying for hundreds of volunteers from across Ohio and neighboring states to join us. Typically, these events bring over 400 volunteers. Additionally, we are blessed that tens of thousands of dollars will be invested in our area from the Cooperative Program.

Whether you've served on mission trips before or this will be your first time, there is a place for you. Families, students, senior adults, and entire church groups can all serve together. Registration for initial church interest is open now. Please register today at <https://www.sendrelief.org/serve-tour>.

Mark your calendar, begin sharing the news, and start praying now for God to move in powerful ways. And I believe God is going to use the Serve Tour Toledo in 2026 to bring hope, unity, and the love of Christ to the people who need it most.

SEND RELIEF
SERVE TOUR
TOLEDO

JOIN US TO
SERVE OUR CITY
September 25-26, 2026

Toledo Ministry Center Meets Physical Needs with the Gospel in Mind

By Stephanie Heading, managing editor

For the last 30 years, Southside Life Station has been a fixture in Toledo, sharing the gospel and providing compassion ministries to those in need.

Pastor Dan Stevenson has been a vital presence at Life Station for half of those 30 years.

Stevenson, who also is the pastor of New Heights Fellowship Baptist Church, Toledo, first volunteered at Life Station at the request of the previous director and developed a passion for the mission, the clients, and the gospel impact of Southside Life Station in Toledo.

Not long after Stevenson's arrival, the director left, and the Northwest Ohio Baptist Association considered closing the ministry.

But Stevenson stepped in.

"I said, 'Well, you know, I feel kind of passionate about this. I think we ought to keep it going,'" he recalled. Talk of closing the ministry ceased, and since then, Life Station has been operating with Stevenson as its director.

"The first month that we went there, we helped maybe six to ten families with emergency food, because rumors had circulated that Life Station was going to close," he recalled.

"As soon as the rumors were quashed, the next month we had 60 families, and it steadily grew from there."

The organization has expanded the services it offers, and currently, approximately 1600 clients are served monthly.

In addition to its largest service, emergency feeding, Life Station added driver delivery service for clients who have specific needs that prohibit them from picking up food at the center. It is the only foodbank in Toledo to offer driver delivery services to its clients, and the program has had a positive impact.

"The drivers are literally showing up on their porches once

a month, praying with them, giving them their groceries, and encouraging them," Stevenson said.

Community members can also take advantage of the Life Station clothing pantry.

"They can get up to two outfits per member of their household," he said. "We have additional supplies that go along – blankets, coats, hats, and gloves. We don't always have those, but usually we do, and they are able to get one per member of the household."

Wraparound services, designed to improve health and wellness, are also available to the community. These programs include an employment program and a three-class nutrition and food-safety training program.

Members in the food and nutrition classes take a quiz at the beginning of the course to assess their knowledge of food safety and nutrition.

"Their scores before the training are just atrocious," Stevenson said. "They don't know the food groups. They don't know how many ounces of food is a serving. They don't know how to clean a counter. They don't understand cross-contamination or how to thaw meat."

Following the first two classes, quiz scores have dramatically improved.

"So we know we're having an impact on people's lifestyle, and the way they house, prepare, and serve their food."

In addition to the employment program and the nutrition and food safety classes, Life Station has an active encouragement program, which includes "encouragement calls" that go out to 1600 people, with another 100+ on the waiting list.

"The encouragement call is based on one or two verses of the Bible, and it's just me saying, 'You're receiving this call because you opted to be encouraged.' Then I talk about the verse, and if there's a few seconds left at the end, I'll encourage them to get in a local church if they're not doing that, or occasionally, I'll share the gospel and ask people to be saved," he said.

Since the encouragement call program started, over 300,000 phone calls have been sent out. Stevenson says the calls have impacted senior adults and those who struggle with anxiety, depression, or mental health concerns.

Life Station also sponsors a texting program, a cell phone app, and a podcast for clients.

Expanded programming requires increased manpower that includes both volunteer and paid workers.

"Life Station actually employs seven full-time employees, and then we have two part-time employees," Stevenson



noted. “We operate with approximately 20-25 volunteers a week.”

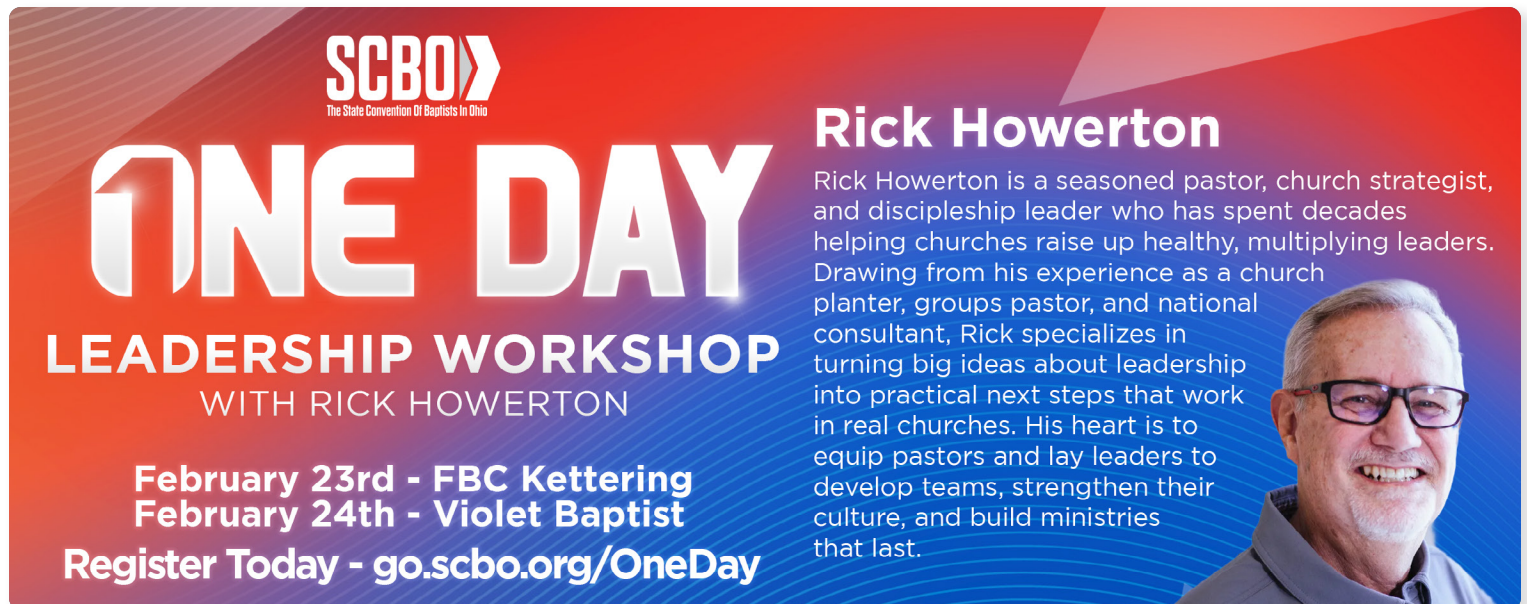
While he feels the staff at Life Station is “spread a little thin,” he shared that all the programs are running consistently despite the workload.

Life Station has a large variety of programs and services to meet physical needs, but the heart of the center is meeting the spiritual needs of the clients.

Every client at Life Station goes through an intake process at the center. During this process, clients are asked questions about spiritual issues, such as the church they attend and their spiritual status.

“We pass those prospects on if they say they’re looking for a new church home, but there are far too many. The number just keeps growing and growing, where there’s no church of like faith and order near them. That’s very painful to me,” Stevenson said.

“I’m passionate about reaching Toledo with the gospel,” he said.

A promotional banner for the SCBO One Day Leadership Workshop. The banner has a red and blue gradient background. On the left, the SCBO logo is at the top, followed by the text "ONE DAY LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP WITH RICK HOWERTON" in large white letters. Below that, the dates "February 23rd - FBC Kettering" and "February 24th - Violet Baptist" are listed, followed by the registration link "Register Today - go.scbo.org/OneDay". On the right, there is a portrait of Rick Howerton, a man with glasses and a grey beard, smiling. To the left of his portrait, his name "Rick Howerton" is written in large white letters, followed by a paragraph of text describing his experience as a pastor, church strategist, and discipler.

SCBO
The State Convention Of Baptists In Ohio

ONE DAY

LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP

WITH RICK HOWERTON

February 23rd - FBC Kettering
February 24th - Violet Baptist
Register Today - go.scbo.org/OneDay

Rick Howerton

Rick Howerton is a seasoned pastor, church strategist, and discipleship leader who has spent decades helping churches raise up healthy, multiplying leaders. Drawing from his experience as a church planter, groups pastor, and national consultant, Rick specializes in turning big ideas about leadership into practical next steps that work in real churches. His heart is to equip pastors and lay leaders to develop teams, strengthen their culture, and build ministries that last.

A New Year Brings New Opportunities for Renewal

By Mark Jones, Revitalization consultant

It is hard to believe that 2025 has come and gone.

Do you remember the dreams you had when you first became the pastor of the congregation you now lead? Did you dream? Did that dream ever become a vision?

A dream encapsulates a creative notion or desire. Vision encapsulates the vibrant mental portrayal of the outcome of the dream, as well as the necessary steps to achieve it. Visions are akin to dreams, but with a deliberate and purposeful strategy. In other words, dreams remain in our minds, while visions move to our hearts and are circulated to our hands and feet, creating movement.

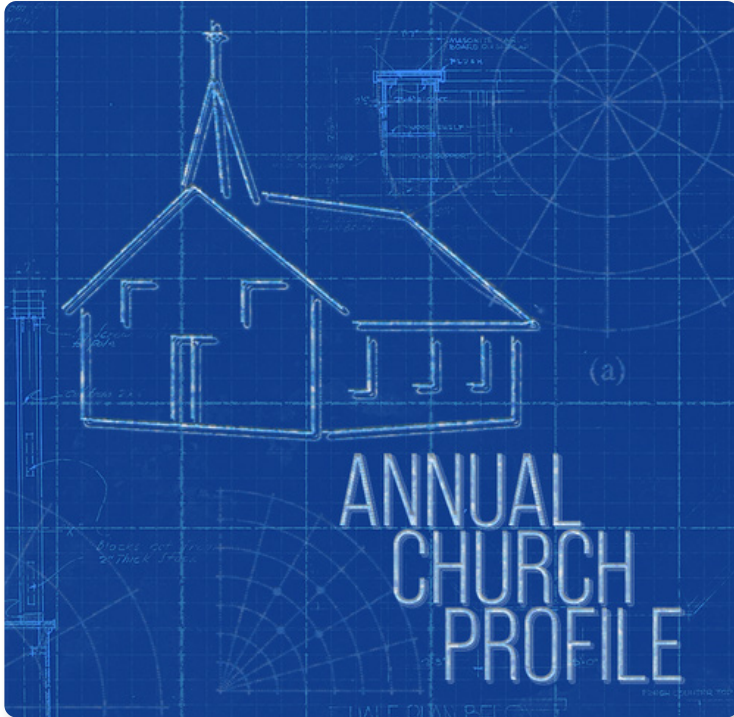
Most of us continue to dream, but never strategize. This keeps us in a state of constantly desiring, but never doing. As a result, our dreams darken, and we burn out.

Why not seek God to cast a vision this year instead of simply dreaming? Let me help you cast and communicate a biblically purposeful strategy. Let's start with a simple question: “What is your congregation’s role in fulfilling Revelation 7:9-12?”

Here is my prayer for you in 2026. May we see what God has in store for our congregations, because we are actually seeking that his will be done and his kingdom come. May we be focused on his kingdom and not fixated on what happens within our own empire. May we see the lostness around us and seek to show/share the gospel of Christ. May we desire to make disciples and not simply hope for converts.

How can we do this? Where can we find help? In 2026, Dr. Ryan Strother and I are planning to host a dinner in your association/region to share how your congregation can become healthier and stronger. However, you don't have to wait until then. Connect with me via email at mjones@scbo.org to discuss new opportunities in this new year. Let's start with a phone conversation, and then check your church's “pulse” to discover what needs to happen next.

Annual Church Profile Connects Ohio Baptist Churches to SCBO



The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) is a fellowship of nearly 47,000 Baptist churches scattered across the United States and its territories.

These 47,000 churches have organized themselves to accomplish a specific set of missions and ministry initiatives for the purpose of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ to all people everywhere.

The Annual Church Profile (ACP) is part of the organization of our SBC churches. It is a short set of questions to record the condition and activity of your church.

In Ohio, it is shared with your association, the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio (SCBO), and SBC entities to identify the condition of our shared work.

“Just as our vital signs indicate our overall physical health, the ACP reveals in many ways our missional health,” said Dr. Jeremy Westbrook, SCBO executive director. “The annual completion of the ACP is critical towards our cooperative efforts to help reach the neighborhoods in Ohio and the nations around the world for Christ.”

Completing the ACP connects Ohio Baptist churches with each other and SCBO in several ways:

Only related congregations are asked to participate

How your congregation became Southern Baptist may be something that many in the congregation were a part of, or it may only be a distant memory. The decision to voluntarily join with other Baptist churches in Great Commission work and fellowship makes your presence important. Your participation confirms that the relationship still exists.

It provides a visual of how we are doing

The statistics collected with the ACP are about relationships. How many people have a relationship with your church (total members)? How many new relationships began this year (total baptisms)? What is the depth of those relationships (worship, Bible study, giving)? These statistics reveal a congregation's relationships as well as those of the local associations, SCBO, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

It shows our willingness to connect

The ACP is for each congregation to personally participate and is about congregations that are investing in relationships with each other locally. Nothing that Southern Baptists want to accomplish can be obtained without first investing in loving one another. This is Jesus' new command and exhortation in John 13:34. When a local leader asks you to participate in the ACP, they are asking if you are willing to connect.

It reveals our relationships

There are numerous opportunities to do things together as Southern Baptists. The ACP captures joint participation in the Cooperative Program and offerings that support international and North American missions. Congregations can share specific names of leaders to help create connections with others doing similar ministry across the SBC.

There's still time for you to connect with other Ohio Baptist churches and SCBO by submitting your 2025 Annual Church Profile.

Please visit SCBO.org/ACP and take 1-2 minutes to complete your church's profile today.

Original article courtesy of Lifeway Research



The Largest Hurricane in Jamaican History

By Dr. John Heading, Ohio Disaster Relief director



Ohio Disaster Relief Director John Heading surveys the damage in the aftermath of Hurricane Melissa in Jamaica.

On October 28, Jamaica experienced the largest hurricane in its history.

Hurricane Melissa hit Jamaica as a Category 5 hurricane with winds of 185 miles per hour. The damage was widespread, but was significantly worse in the northwest part of the island. Destructive winds and torrential rain left thousands without power. The region of Montego Bay received 30 inches of rain.

A Send Relief and Florida DR Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) traveled to Jamaica within just a few days of the storm. Their mission was to assess the damage and determine where we could bring help to people in crisis.

The response was developed alongside SBDR partners and the Jamaican Baptist Union. The plan is to help churches become operational so that they, as the body of Christ, can respond and meet needs in their communities. Florida DR and Tennessee DR are coordinating volunteer efforts.

As a result of our Florida-Ohio Partnership, four members of Ohio Disaster Relief joined four members of Florida Disaster Relief as the second construction team to enter Jamaica. Our Ohio team members included Matt Crum, University BC, Beavercreek; Isaac Hopper, Hill Station BC; and Kevin Harr, FBC, Grove City.

Our mission was to repair and replace the metal roof at Sharon Baptist Church in Santa Cruz, Jamaica. The main building of the church experienced minimal damage, but the destruction to fellowship hall and parsonage was more serious damage. Our Florida-Ohio teams replaced the roof on half of the fellowship hall, which included the kitchen and storage area extension, and replaced the roof on the parsonage.

The working conditions were challenging due to high temperatures and high humidity. The temperatures during the day approached 85-90, but with high humidity and the searing sun, the team had to stop work by two in the afternoon.

During the time we spent in Santa Cruz, we met many Jamaicans who were glad to see the team at work. Church members came out each day to sit in church chairs to watch us work.

We had two highlights during our week in Jamaica.

First, on Sunday, right after we arrived, we joined Sharon Baptist Church for its Sunday service. An SBDR chaplain from the team preached that day, and a twenty-something young man, who had only visited the church twice, gave his life to Christ.

Second, our Florida-Ohio teams finished the work on the Sharon Baptist Church buildings. This was critical since the church facility will soon become a hub for the distribution of supplies to the residents. The day after construction was completed, the ladies of the church began airing out clothes that were wet from the storm.

Thank you, Ohio Baptists, for your faithful giving to the Ray Roberts State Mission Offering. Your giving enabled our Ohio Disaster Relief Team to deploy quickly, allowing one Jamaican church to start helping its community to recover.

In 2026, Ohio Disaster Relief will send teams to Jamaica and Alaska, bringing help, hope, and healing to people in crisis. If you are interested in deploying with Ohio DR in 2026, please sign up for one of the Phase 1 training courses on our website, scbo.org/dr.

MAN MAKER

H2OCHURCH AND SCBO

FEBRUARY 13-14 | XENIA, OH

*A WEEKEND RETREAT TO
DISCOVER HOW TO BE
MEN IN A SOCIETY THAT
IS AGAINST GODLINESS*

REGISTER TODAY!

go.scbo.org/ManMaker



SCBO
The State Convention Of Baptists In Ohio

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 17, 2026

Freedom Hill Community Church

3943 Fishcreek Rd. Stow, OH 44224
8:00 AM - 1:30 PM

Register today!
scbo.org/dr



A Pastor's Story - From Special Forces to Church Planter

By Stephanie Heading, managing editor

Buck Wilford grew up in an Assembly of God church, accepting the Lord at the age of 14. Following his conversion, he sensed a call to ministry.

The road to fulfilling his calling took him around the globe and back – serving our country in the Army as an Airborne Ranger, fighting in Somalia, and becoming a Green Beret.

Today, Wilford serves as pastor of Brunswick Community Church, which he planted in 2012, and also works full-time as a chaplain in a Cleveland-area hospital.

He believes his path in life was part of God's plan, and readily shares how the Lord guided him every step of the way.

Four years after his conversion, Army recruiters visited Wilford's high school. At the time, he wasn't interested in going to school when he graduated, so he decided to visit the recruiting center.

"They said, 'Just go down and check out what it's like. You don't have to sign up,'" Wilford remembered. "But that's where you sign up when you go into that station."

When he entered the recruiting station, he wanted to be a chaplain's assistant or construction worker.

Neither position was available, so Wilford said, "Well, give me infantry then. Give me the best you got. That's how I got the Airborne Ranger contract."

He says he felt sad about his decision until an unexpected encounter with an African pastor in downtown Cleveland changed his focus.

"I saw this guy in his African dress, and he was preaching," Wilford recalled. "He said, 'Sometimes you got to go as far as you can go to go no more, then you know God has something else for you.'"

Wilford realized the military was his "something else," and he committed to it.

"I ended up staying for 20 years. It's good advice from that African guy," he said.

At 19 years old, he and his unit were sent to Somalia, and the experience changed his life.

"If you've ever seen the movie 'Black Hawk Down,' I was part of that firefight," he said. "I was just this young guy right there, just a little over a year in the Army, over there in Africa with some terrible stuff going on."

Wilford reflected on the impact of the 15-hour battle.

"It changes you forever – things like that," he noted. "I think for certain that was part of God's will right there, that's for sure."

After Somalia, Wilford started Ranger School.

"Ranger School is very tough," he said. "You sleep maybe



one hour a night. You have maybe one meal a day. You lose 30 pounds each phase. They really stress you out and try to make it like combat."

During six months in Ranger School, separated from Christian influence, Wilford's faith faltered.

"I backslid for a long time in the Army, and I still went to church, but I knew that I was hypocritical, and coming from an Assemblies of God background, I thought I'd lost my salvation," he said. "I always thought one day I'm going to make myself right with God, but the day wasn't coming."

During years away from the Lord, Wilford became a sergeant in the Special Forces, and he made a critical decision.

"I was going to read my Bible from back to front again, like I did back when I was a young guy in high school," he said. "And I read my Bible, and it put me in that place to submit and humble myself before God, and I totally changed my life back around right there."

He enrolled in seminary at Liberty University and returned to living his Christian life boldly.

"I was really a warrior for Christ in those five years," he said. "So the first couple years, and then the last five years. In the meantime, I wasted some time in there."

During a class assignment for his MDiv, he made a life-changing realization.

"I thought I was saved just recently," he said. "Was I saved long ago? I thought, 'No indeed.'"

But God revealed something different.

"I was saved long ago, because God changed my life when I was a young teenager, totally filled me up," he said. "Instead of trying to be good on the outside, it filled

me up on the inside. It was just me backsliding, and that's what caused me to drift."

Wolford recalled how the Lord was with him during his dangerous assignments in places like Bosnia and Kosovo, where his life was always in danger.

"And now that I look back, I think it was God's grace, every bit of the way, that kept me safe, kept me through it all, and brought me back to the right place," he said.

And Wolford has stayed in the right place ever since, finishing his 20 years of service while taking 31 classes to complete his MDiv in three and a half years. He retired from the Army one month after he graduated from Liberty University.

"I was looking to be a pastor," he said. "I couldn't find anything."

Again, an unexpected encounter with SCBO Revitalization Consultant, Mark Jones, pointed him in the right direction.

"I ran into Mark Jones," Wolford said. "He said the Special Forces way in the church is to be a church planter. And I thought, 'I want to be special forces too in the church.' So I hooked up with him, and I planted the church, and I started it from scratch in 2012."

Looking back, Wilford continues to see God's hand in the story of his life, recognizing how his Special Forces training and experience prepared him for his role as a pastor.

"That time in Special Forces, you see really crazy scenar-

ios, and we run into that in ministry. I am comfortable in those crazy areas. I don't panic. I don't get upset, and I'm able to stay calm," he said.

"I think sometimes people in those scenarios need somebody to be calm, to be guiding, to be comforting, to be listening, to understand them, to pray for them, and to have the base always in Jesus Christ and the gospel. It's a beautiful place. You're able to share the truth with them and help them move forward, get out of the troubles, and see that there's real hope in life. That's something so special."

H2OCHURCH+SCBO

WOMEN'S weekend

FEB 6-7

Athletes in Action Retreat Center
Xenia OH

go.scbo.org/WomensWeekend

**CEDARVILLE UNIVERSITY AND
THE STATE CONVENTION OF BAPTISTS IN OHIO PRESENT**

WORSHIP 4:24 CONFERENCE

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Plan to attend the Worship 4:24 Conference at Cedarville University, co-sponsored by the Cedarville University Department of Music and Worship and the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio, on **JANUARY 30-31**.

The conference is designed to equip and encourage worship leaders, musicians, bands, praise teams, and tech crews to be effective leaders. It will include a worship concert on Friday evening and general sessions and breakouts on both Friday and Saturday.

COST

SUPER EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION	Register by November 4	\$50 per person*
EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION	Register by December 23	\$60 per person*
REGULAR REGISTRATION	Register by January 15	\$69.95 per person*
DAY-OF REGISTRATION	Register January 30-31	\$90 per person*

*Students seventh grade through college are eligible for a 50% off student discount on all registration categories.

REGISTER TODAY AT WORSHIP424.COM

FEATURING

PAUL BALOCHE

Evangelism Grant Stories

A Year of Evangelism Grant Outreach, Broadman Baptist Church, Cuyahoga Falls



Easter Extravaganza

This year was our very first Easter Extravaganza! There are many things that we can work on to make this event even greater for our community of Cuyahoga Falls. However, since this was our first one, having 200-250 people walk through was such a blessing!



Vacation Bible School

VBS is an annual event at Broadman and we had a very steady attendance throughout all five days this year. It was a great time to introduce Jesus to the kids, while helping those who do know him as Savior grow in their faith. Next year, we are excited to announce that we will be calling this event Broadman Bible Camp, and the fifth day will be focused solely on being a community and having a family night for all ages. And, finally, we had two individuals accept Jesus as Savior through VBS this year.



Fall for All

This Broadman annual event is a time for the community to come together and buy some incredible things that people in our community make. Some of the proceeds from this event go towards our Operation Christmas Child mission. We are excited for next year as we will be implementing a craft section for kids.



Trunk n' Treat

Trunk n' Treat at Broadman is always so much fun for the community. Not only do we see great costumes and lots of candy, but we also gave kids and parents a couple of hours to laugh and talk with those in their community. It is hard to tell how many attended, but it was certainly over 100.

– Kyle McQuinn, associate pastor, Broadman Baptist Church



Thanksgiving Outreach, Life Transformation Church, Columbus

God gave us great weather for the Thanksgiving Outreach, and Life Transformation Church showed up in a big way. From young to old, we had more than enough people volunteering. The highlight of the day came when one of our kids discovered that it was the birthday of a lady they had served. The child asked my wife if we could sing "Happy Birthday" to her. So, after she finished eating, we sang "Happy Birthday," and she was in tears and thanked us for being so kind to her when it seemed like the whole world was against her.

We served over 200 people. For a couple of families it was their first time serving with their kids, so the conversations were interesting. We had the children handing out the "Heart of Thanksgiving" gospel tract, and they were inviting kids to come to church because of the good snacks, which made us laugh, and learning about Jesus. We had someone at every table to engage with the people, share the gospel, and pray. We all echoed the same thing at the end, "What a joy it was for us to be here! When is the next one?"

– Pastor David A. Williams, Life Transformation Church



Community Christmas Parade, Hillcrest Baptist Church, Bellefontaine

Here is the last outreach picture from the evangelism grant Hillcrest Baptist Church received! Thank you so much again for helping us impact our community. This picture is from Bellefontaine's Christmas parade in which our church participated.

– Pastor Daniel McCarty, Hillcrest Baptist Church

SCBO»

**TRANSITIONAL
PASTOR
TRAINING**

**SATURDAY,
JANUARY 17, 2026**

**9:30 AM – 12:00 PM
(LUNCH INCLUDED)**

go.scbo.org/Transitional-Pastor

**SCBO OFFICE
9000 ANTARES AVE
COLUMBUS OH 43240**



Job Postings

PART-TIME PASTOR | Bethany Baptist Church, Clarksville

Bethany Baptist Church is a warm, welcoming congregation committed to spiritual growth, community outreach, and Christ-centered worship. We are seeking a compassionate and visionary part-time pastor to shepherd our church family and help us grow in faith and service.

The ideal candidate should be an ordained or licensed minister with theological training; have strong communication and interpersonal skills; have experience in pastoral leadership of at least one to three years; and have a heart for ministry and a commitment to spiritual integrity.

To submit a resume, please send a cover letter and a brief statement of faith to bhounshell23@gmail.com. You can also mail to: Bethany Baptist Church, P.O. Box 59, Clarksville, Ohio 45113. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis until the position is filled.

BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR | Ridgewood Baptist Church, Wadsworth

Ridgewood Baptist Church, Wadsworth (<https://ridgewoodbaptistch.org>), is seeking a bi-vocational pastor. We are a congregation of 40-50 in attendance in a community of approximately 25,000, with fifty percent of the population lost without Christ. We are seeking someone willing to preach from the King James Bible and love and lead us in engaging our community with the gospel. We do not desire someone with a reformed persuasion. If you are interested in becoming our next pastor, please send your resume to: Ridgewood Baptist Church, c/o Search Team, 7891 Ridge Rd., Wadsworth, OH 44281, or email our AMS at summitassociationams@gmail.com.

FULL-TIME SENIOR PASTOR | Milan Baptist Church, Milan

Milan Baptist Church, Milan, is prayerfully seeking a full-time senior pastor. Inquirers can send a resume to milanbaptist5199@gmail.com.

SENIOR PASTOR | Hillcrest Baptist Church, Carlisle

Hillcrest Baptist Church, Carlisle, is looking for a new senior pastor following the retirement of its pastor. Please send a resume, statement of beliefs, and references to hbcadm820@gmail.com.

SENIOR PASTOR | First Baptist Church, West Jefferson

First Baptist Church, West Jefferson, is prayerfully seeking a full-time senior pastor. Please send your resume with references to Lwellsgto10@gmail.com.

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

The Messenger is offering classified ads free of charge for Ohio churches searching for new pastors and staff members.

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

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

