

PROCLAIMER

2022 | VOLUME 24, ISSUE 2

Telling the stories of *Vision Virginia*



**#IWEAR
YELLOW**

Pages 16-17

**Hope in
Appalachia**
Pages 12-13

**Fire & Ice: A Disaster
Relief Reflection**
Pages 18-19



SBCVirginia
You are not alone.

PROCLAIMER

Summer 2022 — Issue 2

**PUBLISHER &
SBC OF VIRGINIA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Dr. Brian Autry

SENIOR EDITOR
Brandon Pickett

EDITOR
Ishmael LaBiosa

COPY EDITOR
Christina Garland

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
Bobby Puffenburger

LEAD DESIGN & PRODUCTION MANAGER
Patti Spencer

SBC OF VIRGINIA

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NOT *Just Another* BAPTIST CHURCH

Twenty years ago, I was blessed to serve as the church planter and pastor of Parkway Baptist Church in Moseley, VA. Our family is still blessed to be a part of this dynamic church, and we rejoice to see how our pastor, team, and church family continue to walk with Jesus and reach neighbors and nations with the Gospel. I remember being asked in new member classes about the church's name. I won't go into the whole background, but I will tell you part of my answer.

I would often say that we thought about naming the church, "Another Baptist Church." However, we did not want to be just another Baptist church! We wanted to see the Gospel of Jesus Christ proclaimed and to reach our neighbors and the nations with His Good News.

This edition of the *Proclaimer* reminds us that you are not just another Baptist church. You are not just another member of a church. Our Lord God is at work through your life to minister to others. The front cover reminds us that we can

serve communities in need of relief ministries. Our current Disaster Relief leaders are asking a new generation to join in with them and wear yellow (#IWearYellow).

SBCV churches are advancing the Gospel of Jesus Christ together as churches plant churches and start ministries to reach the nations that are now our neighbors. For example, 400,000 Ethiopians call Northern Virginia and Metro DC home—and you are part of supporting ministries to share Jesus with them.

SBCV is coming alongside local churches as they invest in students and this new generation as we have Youth Evangelism Conferences and regional DNow events. Just the other week, SBCV students made the front page of the Bristol newspaper because of their ministry through SBCV's Student Fusion Camp mission week.

From the shores of Eastern Virginia to the Appalachian Mountains, from the bustling metro area of Northern Virginia

to the countryside of Southside Virginia, God is working through His Church to reach our neighbors and the nations. We are seeing churches multiply, revitalize, strengthen, and mobilize. "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near" (Hebrews 10:24–25, ESV). Praise the Lord for the blessing of His churches!

Your brother in Christ,

Brian Autry



bautry@sbcv.org



brianautry.com



facebook.com/brian.autry.70



[@brianautry](https://twitter.com/brianautry)

Language

and the Importance of **BEING UNDERSTOOD**

You might be surprised to learn that not everyone from Ethiopia speaks the same language. But why does that matter in Virginia? It matters because approximately 400,000 Ethiopians reside in Metro Washington, DC. This is the largest concentration of Ethiopians anywhere in the world outside of Ethiopia itself. Awareness of this demographic has been the driving force for SBC of Virginia churches planting and supporting Ethiopian churches here. While SBCV includes nine Ethiopian churches, all nine utilize Amharic as their primary worship language. Ethiopians whose heart language is Oromo often don't know Amharic and struggle to integrate into Amharic-speaking churches.

In September 2019, a group of Ethiopians and Eritreans gathered at the SBC of Virginia's Glen Allen Ministry Support Center for evangelism and discipleship training. Much of the training was

conducted in Amharic since most in attendance spoke that language. Present at the training were a few guests who were learning for the first time about partnership with the SBCV. One of those was Pastor Reta Terfa, who pastors an Oromo-speaking church in Washington, DC. Pastor Terfa returned home and shared the training with his entire church. He never forgot the feeling of Gospel partnership within that room.

In the fall of 2021, Terfa reached out to Pastor Fisseha Tesfaye (SBCV Ethiopian cluster leader) and Matt Gregory (SBCV people groups strategist), asking how his church could affiliate with SBCV. Pastor Terfa and his elders carefully read and verified their agreement with the Baptist Faith and Message 2000. They had already witnessed the missional focus within the SBCV family and were excited to join. Only one cultural obstacle remained. While the church was fully in agreement with the Baptist Faith and Message 2000, its name could be misleading to American

churches: Spring of Life *Pentecostal* Oromo Church.

In Ethiopia, the word *pentecostal* is closer to what Americans would consider evangelical and does not necessarily signal a charismatic doctrine. Even so, if an SBCV church were to see this word on an affiliation list, it could cause confusion and potential conflict. After careful consideration of this issue, Terfa and his elders humbly resolved to change the church's name to **Spring of Life Oromo Church**, which better reflects the church's true doctrinal stance and alleviates any concerns the former name could have caused.

Having partnered with the SBC of Virginia, Spring of Life Oromo Church is no longer alone in its mission to spread the Gospel in Washington, DC. SBCV now has a partnering church reaching out to Oromo-speaking Ethiopians! ■





God's Faithfulness

Blessings Bestowed by the Local Church

For over 150 years, **Ramoth Baptist Church** has faithfully preached God's Word, influencing many lives. That teaching, coupled with the Ramoth church family, began to influence Joe Pearson's life early in his childhood. In addition to attending services regularly with his grandmother, he also attended Vacation Bible School. Pearson had heard the Gospel many times, but it wasn't until 1997 in his adulthood, while lying in a hospital bed after a heart attack, that he "responded by faith in the shed blood of Jesus on the cross to wash him clean" from his sin. That summer, he received a new physical heart and a new spiritual heart.

The folks at Ramoth Baptist Church ministered to Pearson by visiting him while he recovered at home. He was baptized as soon as he was able. Since then, Pearson has served several terms as a deacon and enjoys visiting others in the hospital. When he can't visit, he calls them on the phone.

In 2004, during one of his terms as a deacon, Pearson started an encouragement ministry known as the Birthday Ministry. He calls church members on their birthdays and shares at least one Scripture verse with them. These verses most often come from a resource first made available to him through Ramoth.

Most of us have seen the literature racks in church foyers. In 1997 or 1998, Pearson began availing himself of the *Our Daily Bread* devotional booklets offered there—the large print version. By 2015, it became harder for him to read, and by 2017, he could no longer read it.

That hospital stay in 1997 wasn't Pearson's first. At birth, he had 20/400 vision in his left eye and was completely blind in

his right. He has had four corneal transplants and now has glaucoma. Although he still has some light perception, he says, "It's as though I'm looking through shadowy glass."

In the summer of 2020, the leader of Pearson's men's group added him to a list to receive an audio version of *Our Daily Bread* from the Braille Circulating Library in Richmond. He now listens to the devotionals and reads the referenced Scriptures from the braille Bible another deacon helped him obtain. In 2021, he began receiving Braille books to further his study of God's Word.

Pearson calls the Braille Circulating Library and *Our Daily Bread* tremendous blessings. Those blessings came to him by God working through Ramoth Baptist Church and its leaders. His story illustrates God's faithfulness to continue His work in His people. Recognizing this, Pearson refers to Philippians 1:5-7 as "an illustration of how we can be confident when we plant and water Truth."

"I am sure of this, that He who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6, HCSB). ■

RESOURCES:

For more information about the Braille Circulating Library, visit:

 braillecirculatinglibrary.org

There are several ways to receive *Our Daily Bread*. It is available by print (monthly or quarterly), app, Facebook, and email. For information, visit:

 odb.org

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2022

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For Children
Sept. - Oct.
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?

If you happened to die *Today*,
do you know if you will go
to heaven?

God says you must be born again.
The Bible gives us a simple plan of salvation.

Admit that you're a sinner who needs to be saved.
"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."
(Romans 3:23)

Believe that Jesus died for you and rose again. "If you will confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10:9)

Commit to accepting Jesus as your Savior and Lord. "For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Romans 10:13)

Claim His gift of salvation. Believe, and you will be saved. All that's left for you to do is to receive Jesus into your heart as your personal Lord and Savior. If that is your sincere desire, then talk to God from your heart. Contact us today to let us know your decision and any questions you have: info@sbcv.org.



Partnering

to Reach and Disciple Students

“

The weekend was,
in a word, amazing!

For many student ministries, Disciple Now (DNow) weekends are a major component to reaching and discipling students. It takes a tremendous amount of time and energy to plan and implement a DNow weekend, including bathing each event in prayer. This year, several SBC of Virginia churches partnered to run DNow weekends together. Student pastors Luke Southall (**Mount Pleasant Baptist Church**, Colonial Heights) and Roger Jones (**North Main Baptist Church**, Danville) shared their churches' experiences.

Luke Southall, Student Pastor
Mount Pleasant Baptist Church
Colonial Heights

DNow weekends are designed as a discipleship intensive, placing students with stronger believers to help disciple them to follow the Lord. At our church, these

weekends include singing God's praises, instruction in Scripture, discussing how Scriptures apply to our lives, serving and loving our community, and fellowship.

One very special thing God has worked out through these weekends is the partnering of fellow churches. This was especially



true this year. Our church, Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, teamed up with three other SBCV churches: **Ironbridge Baptist Church** (Chesterfield), **Enon Baptist Church** (Chester), and **Swift Creek Baptist Church** (Colonial Heights). The weekend was, in a word, amazing! Seeing youth from different churches come together to worship, serve, learn, and discuss God's truths was an immeasurable blessing.

I was reminded of Jesus' prayer in John 17 "...for a perfect unity among those who will believe in me." This prayer echoes a statement Jesus gave His disciples in John 13:35, "...that by your love for one another, you will be known as my disciples." The

DNow weekend was such a sweet foretaste of what is to come.

There were so many wonderful moments. A group from Ironbridge delivered a week's worth of meals to a homebound widow from our church. The manager of our local pool told us her prayers were answered as students from our four churches cleaned up leaves and debris in preparation for the pool's summer opening. And the relationships we made during the DNow weekend continue. On a recent Sunday, a middle school girl from Swift Creek came to support one of our girls who decided at DNow to follow the Lord's command to be baptized.

Seeing churches worship together and love one another is a God-sized blessing. I would encourage you to pray that God would open doors for you to partner with His people for the Kingdom's sake.

Roger Jones, Student Pastor

North Main Baptist Church, Danville

Our Danville DNow weekend was held the first weekend in March. We had 17 churches represented this year with 375 students and leaders. We were grateful to have 9 first-time decisions and over 20 who reset their lives.

Networking and partnering with area churches has been a powerful tool we have used to grow our Danville DNow. In 2015, North Main Baptist Church partnered with another church for DNow, and this year we have seen 21 different churches partner for a DNow weekend.

DNow was just the beginning. We have partnered with our Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) in Fields of Faith. We've had coffee house events, Dare-to-Share events, 5th Quarter events, and See-You-at-the-Pole rallies.

Partnering with other churches has built trusted relationships, accountability, support, and encouragement. By meeting and praying together, we are reminded that we are not alone.

Our events are more effective because we rely on each other and use the gifts God has given each one of us. Community and networking have allowed us to discover our gifts and talents to bless others. Partnering with area churches has allowed us to encourage one another and share ideas with each other. Our greatest benefit of partnering is reaching the next generation for Christ. We accomplish more in ministry when we work together than when we attempt ministry on our own. Thank you, SBCV, for your support and partnership.

You hear and see the phrase, "You are not alone," throughout SBCV life. It is amazing to see how the Lord has worked and moved through these DNow weekends by Gospel partnership. We pray that more churches and ministries will partner to accomplish additional ministry opportunities like DNow weekends. Let us strive together to raise up the now and next generation to know Christ and make Him known! ■



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PRAY FOR MISSIONARIES

around the globe

"Then Jesus came near and said to them, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'" Matthew 28:18-20 (HCSB)



Jeff & Barbara Singerman

📍 Sub-Saharan Africa

Let's pray for Jeff and Barbara Singerman, two of our missionaries who serve in the African nation of Benin. Their son, Kevin, invited a local teenager to play basketball, and that led to discussions on how to be saved. The teenager, Marc, became a Christian. Now he helps volunteers come minister in Benin to share the Gospel. Let's pray for Jeff and Barbara and their son, Kevin. And let's pray for Marc, who moved from basketball to international missions!



Derick & Kayla Sherfey

📍 Colorado

Let's pray for Derick and Kayla Sherfey. They are two of our North American missionaries planting a new church in Denver, Colorado. We support them through the Cooperative Program. Denver is a beautiful city right beside the Rocky Mountains, but few of the nearly 5 million people there know Jesus. Let's ask God to bless The Oaks Church that Derick and Kayla have planted—and bring many people to faith.

Each missionary highlighted in 52 Sundays is supported by your church's giving through the Cooperative Program. Find more missionaries to pray for by visiting sbcv.org/52sundays.



HOPE IN APPALACHIA REACHING THE VULNERABLE

When we think of reaching vulnerable people, we usually think of traveling to other parts of the world. But what happens when a pastor desires to reach the most vulnerable within the community he serves? First and foremost, he realizes he cannot do it by himself. This is where Pastor Lonnie Brooks of **East Stone Gap Baptist Church** found himself when he wanted to reach the most vulnerable in the community for which his church was named—East Stone Gap, VA. Located only 23 miles from the epicenter of the opioid epidemic, Brooks knew that the most at risk are middle schoolers (ages 10–13).

Pastor Brooks, along with a former East Stone Gap pastor, Dearing Garner, began praying for divine guidance; a Gospel partnership among area pastors; and community support to be able to minister to these at-risk middle schoolers. Although Garner now lives in Texas, his heart is still connected to Southwest Virginia. Garner sought to bring HOPE, a ministry he founded to **Help Oppressed People Everywhere**. This ministry helps bring hope and healing to people in Romania, South Africa, and now in Appalachia.

Brooks and Garner set out to put together a week long sports camp where students could come to receive love, encouragement, and the Good

News of Jesus. When God gives a desire, He requires our faith to trust Him to open and close doors. Just as doors closed to sports-centered ministries, the door to the International Sports Federation (ISF) swung wide open. The ISF ministers in many hard-to-reach countries. They have organized volunteers for the Olympics but have never done any camps in the US. ISF was open to HOPE's invitation to come to Southwest Virginia and reasoned they could offer the same format they do internationally. Their ministry leaders not only were open to coming to share the love of Jesus with the middle schoolers in Big Stone Gap, they were willing to do so at their own expense.

With the event set, they needed community buy-in, and the Lord opened doors yet again. Mountain Empire Older Citizens, Inc. provided the needed transportation for getting the students to and from camp. Local business leaders opened their wallets to help cover the cost, and churches from different denominations joined in to help. Local schools



opened their doors to promote the camp, making sure their students knew about the camp and would be able to attend.

The sports camp provided pickleball, fencing, football, basketball, and archery (among other sports interests) but, most importantly, it offered a safe place, a loving environment, warm meals, a godly influence, and the greatest need—the Gospel message. Of the 65 students who attended, 28 made decisions for Christ! For follow-up, each new believer's contact information was sent to the church closest to where he/she lived.

God is still opening doors for camp this summer with most

of the area churches agreeing to help. The middle school will be busing students to the camp after summer school. Two local government agencies and the town are offering assistance and even the park facilities.

So, what happens when a pastor desires to reach the most vulnerable within the community he serves? When he exercises faith, trusting in God to provide the help needed, partnerships are formed, lives are changed, hope and healing are found and, in short, God is glorified. As President Harry S. Truman said, "It is amazing how much you can accomplish when it doesn't matter who gets the credit." In this case, God gets all the glory! ■





Odilon, his wife Tayde, and a Mixtec family

Alcanzando a Los No Alcanzados

“Puedo ver que Dios ama a los mixtecos”. Esta declaración está resonando en nuestros corazones. Tayde es una mamá joven y valiente, que perdió a su esposo, Odilón Mendoza, por el COVID-19 el año pasado. Odilón, u Odi, fue la principal conexión para llegar a la comunidad mixteca en Richmond. Hace algunos años, el pastor Fernando Mangieri me compartió que estaba tratando de alcanzar a un grupo no alcanzado que vivía justo en el área de Richmond. Los mixtecos son una comunidad indígena de México y se consideran no alcanzados. Hablan el idioma mixteco y también hablan español. Hubo diferentes eventos realizados por iglesias hispanas de SBCV para llegar a ellos, y Odilón estaba listo para comenzar una futura iglesia entre ellos.

El pastor Fernando se mudó a Texas y el pastor Ronaldo Muñoz se convirtió en el pastor de Nueva Esperanza. También estaba apoyando a Odilón en su deseo de llegar a los mixtecos. Kym y Matt Satterwhite, miembros de la Iglesia Bautista Bethany Place, comenzaron a apoyar el alcance en 2017 y ayudarían

a enseñar inglés y llegar a los niños. Y luego, COVID golpeó fuerte cuando Odilón falleció. Parecía que este iba a ser el final de este esfuerzo. Pero Dios no terminó con este grupo, a pesar de que parecen tener muchas probabilidades en su contra, Dios está trabajando.

Raúl Santamaría (Estratega de Plantación de Iglesias, Ministerio Hispano de SBCV) y Sergio Guardia (Director de Ministerios Hispanos de SBCV) se reunieron con el pastor Ronaldo y el equipo de Bethany Place, y se pudo percibir una pasión ferviente por alcanzar a esta comunidad. El pastor Ronaldo es un pastor bivocacional y ya tiene demasiadas responsabilidades. Kym y Matt tienen el deseo de ayudar y llegar a los niños para poder ayudar a los padres, pero ninguno de ellos habla mixteco. Sin embargo, parecía que ni la falta de tiempo ni la capacidad de hablar mixteco iban a apagar el deseo de llegar a esta comunidad. Esa noche, con lágrimas en los ojos, el pastor Ronaldo dijo “¿quién los alcanzará si no lo hacemos nosotros?”. Hablé con Kym, y ella tiene la misma pasión y compasión por esta comunidad, conoce la necesidad

porque ha estado enseñando inglés como una herramienta para llegar a ellos.

Esto no es una coincidencia. Dios salvó a Odilón a través del ministerio del pastor Fernando. Odilón estaba ardiendo por la palabra, y se dio cuenta de que “alguien tenía que enseñarles a los mixtecos sobre la palabra de Dios y su amor por ellos”. Empezó a visitarlos, y luego el pastor Ronaldo lo apoyó y lo acompañó para llegar a ellos. Había gente de Lynchburg que venía a ayudar a Odilón, conduciendo dos horas para ser parte de lo que Dios estaba haciendo. Mientras tanto, Kym se había ido a un viaje misionero y regresó ardiendo en saber lo que Dios quería que hiciera con el resto de sus 51 semanas en ese año. Algunos misioneros de IMB mencionaron al grupo mixteco y la ayudaron a conectarse con Odilón y el pastor Ronaldo. Parecía que iba a terminar cuando Odilón falleciera. Pero los corazones del equipo ya ardían por esta comunidad, y decidieron seguir adelante, contra todo pronóstico, porque confiaban en que Dios los quería allí y quiere llegar a esta comunidad.

Cuando entrevistamos a la viuda de Odilón, Tayde Mendoza, parecía muy tímida hasta que le preguntaron qué pensaba sobre el grupo allí. Parecía que de repente se iluminaba, y hablaba más rápido, con pasión. Habló sobre cómo le está enseñando a una joven, Socorro, a leer en español. Pero, sobre todo, dijo que cuando su pastor anunció que seguirían adelante para llegar a los mixtecos y continuar la obra que comenzó Odilón, expresó con una gran sonrisa: “¡Ahora sé que Dios ama a los mixtecos!”. Sabemos que Dios los ama, pero ¿cómo “oirán sin que alguien predique”? Romanos 10:14b. Estamos muy agradecidos por la asociación entre nuestras iglesias, una iglesia de habla hispana que se asocia con una iglesia de habla inglesa para alcanzar a un grupo no alcanzado que vive en el área de Richmond, creo que Dios definitivamente tiene un plan, ¿te unirías a Dios en lo que Él está haciendo? ■



Reaching the Unreached

"I can see that God loves the Mixtecs." This brave young mom, Tayde Mendoza, lost her husband, Odilon, to COVID-19 last year but still has a passion to reach the people her husband sought to reach. Some years ago, SBCV church planter Fernando Mangieri (of **Iglesia Bautista Nueva Esperanza** near Richmond, VA) shared with the SBCV his desire to reach the Mixtecs living in the Richmond area. The Mixtecs are an indigenous community from Mexico and are considered unreached. They primarily speak the Mixteco language; some also speak Spanish. Odilon (or Oddi) was the main connection to reach the Mixtec community in Richmond. SBCV Hispanic churches hosted outreach events to reach them, and Odilon was set to start a future church plant among them.

Pastor Mangieri ended up moving to Texas, and Pastor Ronaldo Muñoz became the pastor of Nueva Esperanza. Pastor Muñoz also supported Odilon in his desire to reach the Mixtecs. Kym and

Matt Satterwhite, members of **Bethany Place Baptist Church** in Richmond, started supporting the outreach in 2017, ministering to children and helping teach English. When Odilon passed away, it seemed the ministry to the Mixtecs might be over, but God was not finished. Against all odds, He was working.

Raúl Santamaría (SBCV church planting strategist, Hispanic Ministries) and Sergio Guardia (SBCV director of Hispanic Ministries) met with Pastor Muñoz and the team from Bethany Place and saw their passion to reach this people group. As a bi-vocational pastor, Muñoz already had a lot on his plate. The Satterwhites had the desire to help and reach the children so that they could help reach the parents, but neither Kym nor Matt could speak Mixteco. Nevertheless, neither lack of time nor capacity to speak Mixteco would quench their desire to reach this community. That night, with tears in his eyes, Pastor Muñoz said, "Who will reach them if we don't?" Likewise, Kym and Matt

shared the same passion and urgency to reach the Mixtecs with the Gospel.

This was no surprise. Passion and urgency have been part of this outreach since the beginning. Odilon came to faith in Christ through Pastor Mangieri's ministry. Odilon was zealous for the Lord and realized, "Somebody has to teach the Mixtecs about God's Word and His love for them." He started visiting the Mixtecs, and Pastor Muñoz began supporting him and going with him to reach them. There were believers from Lynchburg who came to help Odilon, driving two hours to be part of what God was doing.

Meanwhile, Kym Satterwhite had gone on a mission trip and returned on fire, asking the Lord what He wanted her to do with the remaining 51 weeks of that year. Several IMB missionaries mentioned the Mixtec group and helped Kym connect with Odilon and Pastor Muñoz. Although it seemed the ministry would end after Odilon's death, the team had a heart for this community, and they decided to keep going. They trusted God wanted them to reach the Mixtec community for Jesus.

When Odilon's widow, Tayde, was interviewed, she seemed shy until she was asked about the Mixtec people. Suddenly she lit up and spoke faster and with passion. Tayde shared that she is teaching a young woman, Socorro, to read in Spanish. She said that when her pastor announced they would keep going to reach the Mixtecs and continue the work Odilon started, she expressed with a big smile, "Now I know God loves the Mixtecs!"

God loves the Mixtecs indeed, but "how can they believe without hearing about Him?" (Romans 10:14b, HCSB). SBCV rejoices in the partnership between a Spanish-speaking church and an English-speaking church to tell an unreached group about Jesus!

God has a plan—will you join Him in what He is doing? ■



Billie Thompson
Lake Charles, Louisiana Resident



**#IWEAR
YELLOW**



Ed Faggart
Disaster Relief Volunteer

83-year-old Billie Thompson was left without electricity and with downed trees and destruction around her home for two weeks after Hurricane Laura blew through her Lake Charles, Louisiana community in 2020. "I have prayed and prayed and prayed for help, and they're here. I wanted to cry when you called and told me you were coming. I think they are a God-send. Thank you. Thank you, thank you."

Billie Thompson | Lake Charles, Louisiana Resident

Ed Faggart of Kingsland Baptist Church in Richmond has been serving as a Disaster Relief volunteer for about 20 years. He is one of many who wear yellow shirts and encourages you to join the team. "We get a blessing from just talking to people, praying with people, and trying to help them get through this."

Ed Faggart | Disaster Relief Volunteer

**TO CONTINUE
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FIRE & ICE: A Disaster Relief Reflection

“

While our official task was to sift through ashes and look for [homeowners'] valuables, every volunteer understood our ultimate task—to present eternal hope in the face of a tragic loss of earthly treasures.”



At the end of February, I had the opportunity to go on my first SBC of Virginia Disaster Relief deployment to Louisville, CO [after wildfires there]. In our time there, we faced a lot of agnosticism and indifference to the Gospel. Moreover, we learned there was much political tension between the local and state government and religious organizations, such as churches and SBC Disaster Relief.

The irony of this unfortunate reality is the natural beauty that encircles this community. Located at the foot of the Rocky Mountains, Louisville's surroundings blatantly point to the reality of an all-powerful Creator of the universe. Yet most people there are blind to it. As Romans 1 says, the evidence of God's existence is all around, but the people are darkened in their understanding. However, in my short time in Louisville,

“

...eternal hope in the face of a tragic loss

it was evident how God was using the efforts of SBC Disaster Relief to serve as a light to this blind and disaster-ridden community.

Amidst political tension, agnosticism, and indifference, God was working in many ways. We saw evidence of this on the state, local, and individual levels. While our conversations with homeowners seemed unfruitful, the fact that we were there from Virginia, working in zero-degree temperatures, and without knowing if we would find anything [amidst the ashes] spoke volumes to the homeowners, their neighbors, and the community as a whole. While I do not know what will come of our efforts, I trust the Lord will water the seeds planted during the months of Disaster Relief work in Colorado. The community has many years to go before they will be able to start healing from the wildfires; my prayer is that this healing will include physical and *spiritual* healing.

Because this was my first deployment and it was on the other side of the country, I was not sure what to expect. While I tried to go in with minimal expectations, the training I had completed a few months prior set a

high standard for what to anticipate, specifically in terms of sharing the Gospel. However, the trip exceeded my expectations. The people whom I served alongside were very intentional and excited to share the Gospel with everyone they talked to. While our official task was to sift through ashes and look for [homeowners'] valuables, every volunteer understood our ultimate task—to present eternal hope in the face of a tragic loss of earthly treasures. As such, it was an encouragement to the community but also to me personally.

Additionally, it served as a wake-up call to the Gospel need in my own state and country. Living in the Bible Belt of the United States makes it easy to forget just how much lostness is all around us. Disaster Relief provides a unique opportunity to present the Good News to our neighbors through word and deed. While we do not want to pray for disasters to happen, the fact that they do is the reality of living in a fallen and broken world. As Romans 8:22 says, all of creation groans as a result of the fall. I am excited to be a part of a ministry that is willing and well-equipped to



come alongside people whose lives have been dramatically impacted by such disasters, serving as the hands and feet of Jesus and, most importantly, presenting them with the hope of the Gospel. ■

** Author's name withheld because of ongoing mission work in other countries*

RESOURCE:

For more information on Disaster Relief, visit:



sbcv.org/disasterrelief

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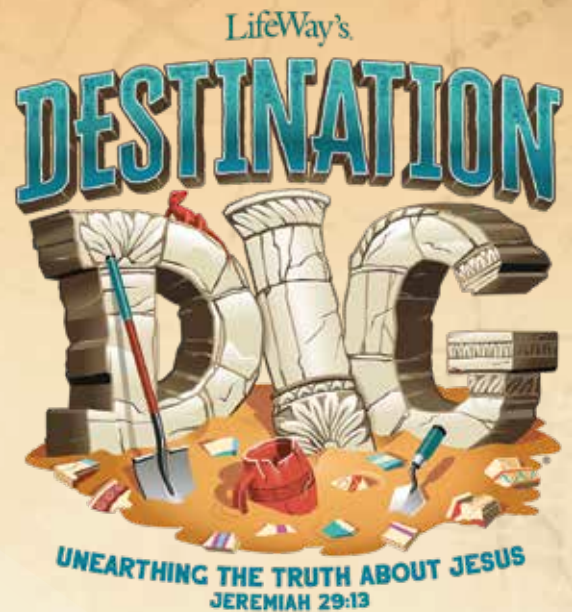
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BLESSINGS: Giving & Receiving

VBS Partnership



Summertime—many churches are in various stages of Vacation Bible School (VBS), the largest outreach event of any church's children's ministry. Some churches are in the throes of the planning phase and are praying for the children who will attend later this summer. Other churches are just finishing and packing up materials, while still others are in full production mode with hundreds of children hearing the Gospel this week.

During the planning phase of VBS, many churches wonder how they will provide the resources needed. Partnering with another church can be a two-fold blessing.

This year, two SBC of Virginia churches began a VBS partnership, committing to give and receive resources every year. It began with **Safe Harbor Baptist Church** in Bedford offering its VBS materials to **Fairmont Baptist Church** in Boones Mill. The year before, Safe Harbor had received materials from **Twin Oaks Baptist Church** in Ferrum.

Natalie Sloan, Safe Harbor's children's director, commented, "It was a blessing

to create a fun environment for our children even though our budget was limited. Twin Oaks blessed our ministry and allowed us to achieve that goal. I felt led to share the decorations with Fairmont Baptist, who is doing last year's theme this upcoming summer. I highly recommend that churches partner because we all have one goal, which is leading kids to Christ."

After Twin Oaks' children's director, Heather Bowling, heard what Safe Harbor was doing, Twin Oaks also offered to partner with Fairmont. "Twin Oaks has been blessed with such wonderfully artistic and creative members who make our themes come to life each year. We feel very fortunate to be able to share these materials with other area churches. It is something so simple that has such a far-reaching and lasting impact. Partnering with other churches has been such a blessing because we have enjoyed getting to know other believers in the area," Bowling commented.

Every summer, VBS materials are being delivered to help spread the Gospel. "I believe it is good stewardship on the


part of both of our churches," Fairmont's children's director, Melanie Nestor, explained. "Partnering with another church to use their past VBS materials allows us to better serve our community and allows the materials a second chance at reaching children for Christ."

SBCV churches are known for their partnership in the Gospel. While there is certainly a blessing in receiving, giving also produces a blessing as churches are unified in the work of the ministry.

Paul admonishes the church to live in unity. "Now may the God who gives endurance and encouragement allow you to live in harmony with one another, according to the command of Christ Jesus, so that you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with a united mind and voice" (Romans 15:5-6, HCSB). As churches are unified in the work of children's ministry, partnerships flourish to reach the next generation for Christ. ■

RESOURCE:

For more information, visit:

 sbcv.org/connectkids



Lives Changed Through Biblical Counseling

With a burden and a vision that the Gospel changes lives, **Spotswood Baptist Church** in Fredericksburg, VA opened the doors of its Biblical Counseling Center on July 2, 2012. For several years prior, the pastoral staff at Spotswood had seen and expressed the need for full-time counselors.

In 2011, Spotswood's senior pastor, Dr. Drew Landry, asked Pastor Gene Willis to transition from minister of music to a new role of service. Willis eagerly agreed to become the pastor counselor and to create a center that could minister to the Spotswood family and the community. Since its inception, the Spotswood Biblical Counseling Center (SBCC) has employed two licensed counselors and three lay biblical counselors. They are all members of the American Association of Christian Counselors.

As the center celebrates its tenth anniversary, Willis marvels at the work God has done. "Over the past 10 years, we have seen over 70 people come to trust Christ as their Lord and Savior. If that would have been the only result of our efforts in this unique ministry, it would have been worth all the labor, but God has done so much more. We are thankful to be used by the Lord in this growing ministry." Willis

credits the faithful support from the pastoral staff and the Spotswood family for enabling the work that God has done through the center.

Pastor Willis received permission to share this story:

A middle-aged woman came to the counseling center. She was abusing alcohol and had been unfaithful to her husband. Her background was Catholicism. We shared the Gospel with her, and she prayed to receive Christ into her life. Two weeks later, she brought her husband to counseling. After some difficult conversations, he also prayed and asked Jesus into his heart. This was about five years ago. Since then, their marriage has been restored, both are free from alcohol, and they are very involved in their church and community evangelical outreach. Hallelujah! (Each year, I receive a text marking their spiritual birthdays!) Others have come with no spiritual background at all and have since become Christ followers.

God has done so much through the SBCC!

- The center has ministered to children, teenagers, and adults weekly with an age range of 3 to 88 years.
- Over 2,200 people have received counseling, for a total of 22,500 individual visits as of May 2022.



From left to right: Gene Willis, Pastoral Counselor and Director; Randy Simpson, Biblical Counselor; Julie Broadway, Licensed Professional Counselor; Meagan Hill, Licensed Professional Counselor; Lois Anderson, Lay Biblical Counselor; and Kim Elkins, Executive Administrative Assistant

- The center reaches the community—65% of the clients come from the local area. Biblical principles are used to counsel clients and provide tools for their individual needs, including stress, abuse, anger, grief, marital issues, family issues, and pre-marital counseling.
- Using Doxy (like Zoom), the center is able to minister to clients who are unable to physically visit the center, including people in Bahrain, Puerto Rico, Amsterdam, New York, and Florida. COVID actually expanded their reach!
- God is using SBCC's counselors to help other churches start their own biblical counseling centers.

Counseling services are rendered at no charge with donations accepted. The center is funded by the church, along with generous donations received. Willis testified, "God is good!" ■

RESOURCE:

For more information about the Spotswood Biblical Counseling Center, visit:

 spotswood.org/sbcc

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Eager for Truth

Women Ready to Gather

SBC of Virginia Women's Ministry is excited to share that this year has brought a significant rise in attendance at events.

In February, **Swift Creek Baptist Church** in Midlothian, VA hosted an SBCV regional Equip conference. Equip events are designed to draw women together to worship, experience biblical instruction, and dig deeper into God's Word. Speaker Nicki Koziarz addressed 400-some women, encouraging them in their identity in Christ.

The same month, the Ministerio de Mujeres (SBCV Hispanic Women's Ministry) held Equipada at **Staples Mill Road Baptist Church** in Glen Allen, where almost 300 women attended and heard from Jeanine Martinez de Urrea. Her teaching focus was "Courageous and Firm in the Faith."

"Our desire with the SBCV Mujeres Team is to train and equip Hispanic women in the correct use of Scripture, to help them grow spiritually, and to impact women in their churches and communities," explained Laura Guardia, SBCV Hispanic Ministry consultant for women and children. "We see women all over the state thirsty to learn how to use the Word of God with confidence and to teach other woman and impact their families. We pray that the Lord will raise up an army of Hispanic women who love God, who have the desire to go deeper into the Word of God, and who want to train and equip other women around them."

In March, **River Oak Church** in Chesapeake hosted author and Bible teacher Lisa Harper. As

registration soared to over 900, one thing was certain—women of Virginia were ready to gather for worship, to study God's Word, and to fellowship with each other.

"It is an incredible sight to see so many women eager to study God's Word and with a craving for connection with others who are doing the same," noted Dawn Spicer, Women's Ministry coordinator at River Oak. "What joy to experience their hunger for Truth when it could be so many other things in this world! God is indeed moving in miraculous ways."

If you've been keeping track, that's nearly 1,600 women who have been reached since March—and that's just the first quarter of 2022! The SBCV Women's Ministry Team has several events planned to offer worship, instruction, and fellowship in the remainder of 2022 and in 2023!



“

It is an incredible sight to see so many women eager to study God's Word...



RESOURCE:

For more information on the SBC of Virginia's Women's Ministry, visit:



sbcv.org/women

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For the Sake of the Gospel

A Fresh Start

South of Roanoke in Boones Mill, VA, Ridgeview Church has seen the providence of God intersect with His transforming grace. And Dr. Michael Palmer has had a front row seat to it all.

Through SBC of Virginia regional strategist Don Cockes, **Boones Mill Baptist Church** connected with Pastor Palmer, and Palmer began serving as the transitional pastor there in November 2020. A long-time pastor, Palmer had completed Transitional Pastors Training through the SBCV and had served at several churches, but Boones Mill was not what he expected.

"I've been trained in how to help a church become a healthier church, but I had never seen anything like what I saw at Boones Mill Baptist Church when I went there," said Palmer. "They didn't trust anybody. They had been so hurt by some situations over time, which led to losing 150 members from their congregation in recent years."

Palmer's emphasis on loving the people and preaching the Bible systematically for a year helped the congregation begin to trust again. Hearing this transitional pastor's prayers for a breakthrough, God opened a door of opportunity.

SBCV church planter Daniel Naff and a group of 31 launch team members had planned to start **Ridgeview Church** in Franklin County (the same county as Boones Mill Baptist Church). Naff was from the area and had sensed God calling him to plant a church to reach people where he grew up. Ridgeview's launch team was sent out from **Petsworth Baptist Church** in Gloucester to relocate to Franklin County for this new work.

When they visited Franklin County for a vision weekend, Pastor Naff met with Pastor Palmer. Palmer recalled, "After Daniel shared his vision with me over a Friday



L to R: James Munson (part of the Ridgeview team), Michael Palmer, and Daniel Naff

Willing to Trust Again

Boones Mill Church, south of Roanoke, had been hurt many times in the past, but through God's providential opening of a door of opportunity, the church began a fresh start and is now advancing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to reach its community.

breakfast, he and his team visited our church for worship that Sunday. They shared that they were going to plant a church in the area, and the folks at our church liked them a lot and wanted to hear more."

A few weeks later, the leadership team of Boones Mill began discussing the new church plant coming to the area. Church member Joel Camp proclaimed his personal desire to help with Naff's plan, regardless of what Boones Mill did.

Camp emphasized, "Having that many people be willing to pick up and move shows a dedication to the Lord that is inspiring. We [have been] in survival mode, not 'outreach mode,' and we should consider whether a 'replant' would work in our case." Pastor Palmer encouraged the leadership team

to pray to see if it might be God's will to partner with the Ridgeview Church team.

"Over a four-month period, from the team's visit in November 2021 to February 2022, I saw the Lord change the attitude of the whole church," said Palmer. "They came to the point where they were willing to yield their rights, buildings, land, and control to join in with Ridgeview to form a new church. They gave up everything in order to have a fresh start for the sake of the Gospel. It was awesome!"

Boones Mill Baptist Church voted to close and join with Ridgeview Church starting in the fall of 2022. The new church will meet in the building once called Boones Mill Baptist Church. God has opened the hearts of the people in an amazing way. Camp expressed with joy, "It's definitely a work of the Lord!"

The contagious vision of a church planter—Daniel Naff—coupled with the wise leadership of a trained transitional pastor—Michael Palmer—has brought new Gospel opportunities to a community that needs the Good News. To God be the glory! ■



Seeking God's Transforming Grace



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CALENDAR 2022

JULY

- 21-24 Family Fusion, Chincoteague Island
- 31-Aug 13 Disaster Relief Rebuild, Beaver Dam, Kentucky

AUGUST

- 5 Church Planter Family Day, Kings Dominion, Doswell
- 5-6 Engage Women's Leadership Forum, Virginia Crossings Hotel and Conference Center, Glen Allen
- 8-9 Transitional Pastors Training, SBC of Virginia Ministry Support Center
- 12-13 Disaster Relief ICS/IMT Training, SBC of Virginia Ministry Support Center
- 13 Disaster Relief Damage Assessment Training, SBC of Virginia Ministry Support Center
- 14-16 Galatians 6:6 Couples Retreat, Virginia Crossings Hotel and Conference Center, Glen Allen
- 18-19 Disaster Relief Chaplain Training (Spiritual & Psychological First Aid), SBC of Virginia Ministry Support Center
- 26 E² KIDS, Euclid Avenue BC, Bristol
- 26-27 Retiro para Lideres (Hispanic Women's Retreat), Williamsburg Christian Retreat Center, Toano
- 27 E² KIDS, Hyland Heights BC, Lynchburg

SEPTEMBER

- 9 E² KIDS, Ramoth BC, Stafford
- 10 E² KIDS, Bethel BC, Yorktown
- 16-17 Conferencia Renovados, The Heights Baptist Church, Colonial Heights
- 17 Disaster Relief Advanced Training
- 18-25 **Vision Virginia Week of Prayer**
- 24 Going Beyond Simulcast with Priscilla Shirer

OCTOBER

- 8 Disaster Relief Advanced Training
- 15 Equip Women's Conference, North Bristol BC, Bristol
- 21-22 Thrive Ministry Wives' Conference, Virginia Crossings Hotel and Conference Center, Glen Allen

NOVEMBER

- 12 Imitate: College Serve Day (A Bless the Valley Event), Roanoke
- 13-15 Annual Homecoming, First BC, Roanoke



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MINISTRY
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who's your 1ONE?

A Testament to Relational Evangelism

Ministry during the COVID-19 pandemic was challenging, to say the least. But even during that challenging season, there were still opportunities to share the Gospel.

In 2019, **London Bridge Baptist Church** in Virginia Beach launched the “Who’s Your One?” campaign. “Who’s Your One?” encourages believers to ask the Lord for the name of one person specifically to pray for and share the Gospel with. Donna Paulk, SBCV’s Women’s Ministry Team leader (who is a member at London Bridge), met a young lady at her local gym whom she chose to be her “one.”

Sometime later, COVID-19 hit, and the local gym closed. To continue contact with her “one,” Paulk suggested they walk together for exercise. They walked several times a week for six months, which allowed them to build a relationship. Paulk’s “one” invited her to family gatherings, birthday celebrations, and holiday parties. During that year and the next, Paulk would have the opportunity to share the Gospel with her many times.

When the gym reopened, Paulk’s “one” had a new job, which cut into her leisure time and limited their time together. Wondering what God might be up to in her life, Paulk continued to pray for friend daily.

More than two years passed with no word from her. So, when Paulk arrived at the Lisa Harper conference at **River Oak Church** in Chesapeake, she was shocked to see her “one” there. Her friend explained, “I just needed some God today because so much has been going on in my life.”

Paulk took comfort in knowing that even though she hadn’t seen or been a part of her friend’s life for a time, God was still at work in her life. The Bible tells us in Luke 1:37 that nothing is impossible with God. Paulk was blessed and encouraged that day to keep praying for her friend and not give up.

If you’ve chosen your “one,” keep praying for him/her. Do not grow weary or despair. Continue to pray and reach out, if possible, because you never know what God may be doing in your “one’s” life.




For more information or to download a prayer guide, visit: whosyourone.com







BRANDON PICKETT

Senior Editor

 bpickett@sbcv.org


 facebook.com/brandon.pickett


 [@brandonpick](https://twitter.com/brandonpick)



ISHMAEL LABIOSA

Editor

 ilabiosa@sbcv.org

 804-665-1448

From the Senior Editor

It is such a joy to serve alongside men and women around Virginia through the SBC of Virginia. Many of these faithful servants also write articles for and help produce this publication. One of those encouraging and talented people is Ishmael LaBiosa. He serves through media and communications to tell the story of what God is doing in and through SBCV churches to share the Gospel with our neighbors and the nations. He also helps with the editing of the Proclaimer.

Ishmael, along with the other members of our communications team, comes alongside the staff and volunteers of so many churches and ministries to consult and help them with their communications. He has a real heart for our relief ministries and earlier this year helped to develop the campaign, #IWearYellow. I thought it would be nice in this issue, dedicated to sharing the stories of Disaster Relief, that you heard from him in this letter from the editor:

From the Editor

Natural disasters know no boundaries. I've witnessed this firsthand in many places through media coverage. I've visited ground zero locations after tornados ripped through neighborhoods in Virginia, hurricanes blew apart communities in the South, and earthquakes broke homes and schools in Nepal.

One thing remains constant in all of these scenarios—God. He is the God of the mountain and the God of the valley. He knew these life-changing events would happen. Yet He is our protector in the storm. He is our sustainer after the storm. And He also knew who would be sent to help.

It is so encouraging to find men and women wearing yellow shirts helping families impacted in these scenarios. SBC of Virginia Disaster Relief

volunteers give their time and resources to cut trees, remove debris, clean out water and mud, and help families rebuild their lives—all in the name of Jesus.

We created the campaign, #IWearYellow, to show appreciation for those who serve as well as to recruit new team members. Many of our faithful volunteers are unable to continue the heavy-lifting, and we need more men and women to get trained so they can serve when we receive the next call for help.

You have the power to make a physical and eternal difference in difficult times. We invite you to be a part of this yellow-shirt family. I look forward to seeing you in action when I show up at the next location with my camera.





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