

# PROCLAIMER

2024 | VOLUME 26, ISSUE 2 • Telling the stories of Vision Virginia



**Impacting the  
Entire Family**

*Pages 8-9*

**VBS  
Stage Sets**

*Pages 10-11*

**A New Degree  
of Urgency**

*Pages 24-25*



**SBCVirginia**

*You are not alone.*



# PROCLAIMER

Summer 2024 — Issue 2

PUBLISHER &  
SBC OF VIRGINIA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
Dr. Brian Autry

SENIOR EDITOR  
Brandon Pickett

EDITOR  
Ishmael LaBiosa

PROJECT COORDINATOR  
Mindy McCord

DESIGNER  
Patti Spencer

## SBC OF VIRGINIA

The SBC of Virginia is a fellowship of Southern Baptist Convention churches cooperating to assist local congregations in their task of fulfilling the Great Commission as commanded by our Lord Jesus Christ.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Proclaimer tells of the amazing things God is doing through His Church in Virginia and around the world. It is provided free of charge due to your generous contributions made through the Cooperative Program.

## ADVERTISING

Advertising is accepted on an individual basis and does not imply editorial endorsement. For more information, contact Brandon Pickett, [bpickett@sbcv.org](mailto:bpickett@sbcv.org) or 804-270-1848.

## CREATIVE DESIGN

The Proclaimer is created exclusively for the SBC of Virginia by Innovative Faith Resources.

[innovativefaith.org](http://innovativefaith.org)

**INNOVATIVE  
FAITH RESOURCES**  
*Financial & Media Services*

*Your prayers and gifts through the Cooperative Program and Vision Virginia State Missions Offering enable and empower ministries around Virginia and beyond.*

[sbcv.org/visionvirginia](http://sbcv.org/visionvirginia)

**visionvirginia**

# INSIDE THIS ISSUE



# Summer 2024

## COVER STORIES

---

### 8 | Impacting the Entire Family

The Student Pastor & Family Retreat provides community, experiences, and resources. It's an investment in student pastors and their families.

### 10 | VBS Stage Sets

In the spirit of community and collaboration, SBCV churches share VBS stage sets and supplies.

### 24 | A New Degree of Urgency

First responders' needs were met when a local church made a last-minute decision to pivot from its regular Wednesday night church activities to prepare 100 on-the-go meals.

## IN EVERY ISSUE

---

### 4 | From the Executive Director

### 5 | 52 Sundays: *Prayer for Missionaries*

### 17 | Inspire: *The Soul that Worships God*

### 37 | Editor's Letter

### 39 | SBC of Virginia Calendar

## FEATURES

---

### 6 | Mentoring Future Next Gen Leaders

Men and women have answered God's call to use the talents and gifts He has given them to teach the Next Generation.

### 12 | The Blessed Girl

Young women are taught the power of community and encouraged to remember that God has a purpose for them.

### 14 | Leaving a Legacy

Jerry's Kids, a Lynchburg-based adoption foundation, assists Christian couples in their adoption journey.

### 18 | Relief and Hope to Lahaina

SBCV Disaster Relief volunteers answered the call for help from the Hawaii Pacific Baptist Convention by extending a compassionate hand to survivors of the Maui wildfires.

### 22 | Restoration in Wytheville

God answered prayer for a church plant in Wytheville, a community of over 9,000 residents in southwest Virginia.

### 23 | Sowing for the Future

Remarkable progress is being made as more churches in Virginia embrace the mobilization pathway.

### 27 | Uniting in Faith

Prayer is the key to effect change in the hearts and minds of individuals and policymakers.

### 28 | Light in the Valley

Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana de Roanoke, along with the social connection ministry El Faro, is a shining light of hope for people.

### 30 | 11 Years Apart

Nearly 70 local church members joined the celebration at Dulles Airport as Samnas Alemu, his wife, and his children were reunited after 11 years.



### 32 | Not Alone in Highland County

Highland Baptist Church was led to seek an SBCV partnership that more closely aligned with their convictions.

### 33 | Laboring Together

Revival in Greensville County saw many receive Christ as their Lord and Savior.

### 34 | Teaching Life Skills & Eternal Lessons

The KOZ ministry engages young men by teaching them life skills but also eternal lessons from God's Word.

### 36 | Press On

When discouraged in the midst of a challenging ministry season, remember you are not alone.



# Investing in the Next Generation

## Now

### The next generation matters NOW!

Thank you to all the youth ministry leaders, children's ministry leaders, and the countless volunteers who help with summer camps, mission trips, and serve with Vacation Bible Schools. I am thankful that churches invest substantial time, money, and energy in the next generation NOW. We sometimes refer to our children and youth as the next generation. I understand that phraseology—but I also think the next generation is the NOW generation! Here are seven encouragements for investing in the next generation now:

1. God is at work in the next generation now.
2. God loves our families and wants them to experience Him more than we can imagine.
3. God calls us to invest in reaching and discipling our children and youth.
4. God is raising up our future leaders as we build up our younger generation in the faith.

5. God is pleased you are serving Him by investing your time and energy in the next generation.
6. God gets the attention of those around us as they see our heart for their families.
7. God blesses us by inviting us to be a part of seeing Him work in this next generation now.

This is personal for me. I look back at my own life and see the impact of next generation ministries. I look back, and I see the impact that people had on my life then and what would become of my life now. One of my first memories of church is Vacation Bible School as a third grader. I recall Mr. and Mrs. Smeltzer welcoming me to Sunday School. I still remember Mrs. Gentry challenging us to memorize the order of the books of the Bible. My youth pastor, Doug Jones, invested his time and energy in mentoring me. It was on a youth mission trip that I began to sense



[BAUTRY@SBCV.ORG](mailto:BAUTRY@SBCV.ORG)  
[BRIANAUTRY.COM](http://BRIANAUTRY.COM)  
[FACEBOOK.COM/BRIAN.AUTRY.70](https://www.facebook.com/BRIAN.AUTRY.70)

the Lord's call to pastoral ministry. As a father, I've seen my own children greatly blessed by the investment of many others in their lives.

Again, thank you!

Keep pressing on as you proclaim the timeless teaching of God's Word, "that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children" (Psalm 78:6).

Thank you for investing in the next generation now!

Your brother in Christ,

Brian Autry





# 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)



**Emmanuel & Ioana Grozea**

📍 New York

Let's pray for the Grozeas who are leading a Romanian church, Maranatha Baptist Church, in New York City. It's reaching people from Nepal, Poland, Egypt, Italy, Turkey, Armenia, and Spanish-speaking countries. All the nations worship together on Sunday morning, but they study the Bible by language group. Let's pray the Lord will keep them safe so they can bring many to Christ.



**Jason & Robin Ebeyer**

📍 Thailand

What do you do when you stop for a coffee? E-mail? Our missionaries, Jason and Robin in Thailand, drink coffee & share the Gospel! That's how they reached Tia, the first Christian in town. She's reached seven more for Christ! Let's pray for Jason and Robin and their wide-awake Gospel sharing! Oh, and why not give Jesus with that next latte?

**52**  
SUNDAYS

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](https://sbcv.org/52sundays).

# Mentoring

## Future Next Gen Leaders

In churches across the Commonwealth, men and women have answered God's call to use the talents and gifts He has given them to reach and teach the Next Generation. Psalm 78:4 says, "We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done"(ESV). But there is another side of this calling that needs to be awakened.

### *Investing in the next generation*

Next Gen leaders are responsible for investing in the next generation of leaders: mentoring, coaching, and raising up passionate and eager young adults who desire to lead.

1 Peter 4:10 and Philippians 1:25 speak to the role of believers as being good stewards of the gifts God has given. Therefore, Next Gen leaders must enhance their education, experiences, and growth opportunities through conferences, books, and seminars. In this way, these leaders speak of the Lord's good deeds to the next generation of kids and future leaders who will further their influence and impact on future generations.

Jayne Hoare, elementary director at **Thomas Road Baptist Church**, shares, "Being so close to Liberty University, students come in and out of our doors every year, and likewise, my staff over the years has changed many times. This was very frustrating to me until I realized the opportunity I had to steward my position and where God had placed me. I began to seek out young leaders to develop and mentor, who would become apprentices and come alongside me and my staff to learn and grow. I am so fulfilled as a veteran leader to watch them develop their leadership abilities. And as they take with them a wealth of knowledge and a coach they can call on, they also take with them confidence as a leader."

### *Mentoring young leaders*

Joshua had Moses, Apollos had Aquilla and Priscilla, Samuel had Eli, and Timothy had Paul. These are examples from scripture of great leaders investing in and developing the next generation of leaders. We, too, should pass on lessons learned from failures along the way, from resources we've read, practical knowledge, and stories of reaping seeds that have been sown.

Emma Hensley (now on staff with Hoare) commented, "Someone

once asked me what Bible figure I most related to, and without hesitation, I answered Timothy. God has placed incredible ministry leaders in my life who were willing to spend their time, energy, and resources pouring into me. I would not be half the leader I am today without their impact."

Erin Mannix, children's director at **Hickory Ridge Community Church** in Chesapeake, says, "1 Timothy 4:12 has been one of my favorite verses since I was a teenager doing summer ministry, and still is today. One of my mentors, Jayne Hoare, has embodied this verse and inspired me because she not only encouraged me in my faith as a child but also turned around and treated me with respect and love as an adult working alongside her in ministry. It has truly made me realize how important discipling the next generation is, even as they begin working beside you."

Paul encouraged believers in Philippi with these words, "What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you." (ESV)

Next Gen leaders, honor the Lord with all He has given you but also remember to pass it on to the future leaders coming after you. ■







# IMPACTING the Entire Family

Student ministry is a vital part of the local church. Pastors and leaders serve tirelessly to reach, disciple, and mobilize this significant generation with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. At the SBCV, we understand the importance of student pastors taking a break, being encouraged, and connecting with others in the same ministry. Every other year the SBCV holds a special retreat for student ministry leaders and their families. Roger Jones, student pastor at **North Main Baptist Church** in Danville, VA, mentioned, "Student Pastor and Family Retreat is an event my wife and I look forward to attending. My wife enjoys the dedicated time away and is blessed by connecting with other youth pastor wives."

## *Impacting*

This year, the Student Pastor and Family Retreat took place on February 2-3 at Great Wolf Lodge in Williamsburg, VA. This retreat offered student pastors



and their families a chance to rest, refresh, and be encouraged in their calling. Ethan Meadows, student pastor at **The Heights Baptist Church** in Colonial Heights, VA, expressed, "Having a retreat for me AND my family was a game changer! It gave us an opportunity to have fun and worship together. When someone at church asked my daughter to share one of her favorite memories, she answered, 'Great Wolf with my family!' This retreat made a great impact on our whole family."

### **Encouraging**

Pastor Jonathan Couch, student pastor at **GraceLife Church** in Christiansburg, VA, led worship. Pastor Brian Jennings and his wife, Emily, from **Salem Baptist Church** in Apex, NC, shared encouragement from the Word with the student pastors and their wives. One participant shared, "I am thankful for Pastor Brian Jennings, who challenged us to fight for our rest and health by reminding us that we can find rest in Jesus on our worst days and on our best days. Often, student pastors feel as if they are on an island, feeling as if their student ministry is the only one going through a valley. I am always encouraged and inspired to have the opportunity to network and fellowship with other student pastors, knowing we are not alone in those valleys. The special breakout for student pastor wives with Brian's wife was also impactful, and worship with Jonathan Couch was sweet."

The families had the chance to enjoy the numerous amenities at Great Wolf Lodge, including a family late-night session where they played various games for prizes. It was truly a blessed time for these pastors and their families. Ethan, another participant, remarked, "It was awesome! Being able to hang out and meet other student pastors encouraged me significantly. We prayed with each other, encouraged one another, and shared how God was working in our lives. I picked up a few ideas and resources along the way that I have already implemented in my ministry."

### **Engaging**

Meadows and Jones encouraged other student pastors to join in on the next retreat in 2026.

Meadows said, "Seeing other student pastors interact with their families was a convicting reminder that we can't afford to neglect our first ministry, our family. I've heard it said before that if we don't lead our families, the world will. This

retreat allowed me to engage my family in a way that brought us refreshment, encouragement, and some craziness, too! We got to experience firsthand how an investment like this can bring a family together. Don't miss the next one. You can't afford NOT to be there!"

Jones shared, "Personal investment is crucial. I truly believe it takes intentionality to personally invite a student pastor and his family to join you and your family at the next retreat. Our Student Pastor and Family Retreat provides community, sharing time, experiences, resources, and more. We appreciate SBCV's investment in student pastors and their families." ■





# VBS Stage Sets: Their Surprising Journeys

**A**s summer approached, Pastor Tinney Parrish wanted **Central Baptist Church** in Norfolk, VA, to host a Vacation Bible School (VBS). Too many summers had passed since their last VBS and Pastor Tinney was determined to have one again. Central Baptist's VBS Director set a date along with a kick-off meeting to recruit some volunteers. But this was only the beginning of what God had in store.

Pastor Tinney's VBS Director and Assistant Director contacted a few local churches, asking if they had extra supplies they could borrow. He knew many churches had closets full of VBS supplies from past years and

thought someone might donate them to get VBS going again.

A few weeks later, a Central Baptist Church member met with a Great Bridge Baptist Church volunteer and was given an entire stage set that this generous volunteer had constructed. It was an amazing gift and "felt like a miracle!"

Megan Perry, director of the children's ministry at **Great Bridge Baptist Church** in Chesapeake, VA, pointed out that God had placed some volunteers at the church who worked diligently to create set designs that were beautiful and functional. She explained, "I have to give full credit to one of our church members, Colin Castelow. Colin worked in theater as a pro-



professional set designer and builder and now builds our sets 'for fun' each year. One of the things he is very cognizant of is how the set pieces can be put up and taken down for transporting, which greatly helps. He works for months to create beautiful pieces for us, and it is hard (and sad!) to get rid of everything after a week of use. We were all so excited when Central Baptist contacted us about passing some things along. It felt like the true spirit of what Vacation Bible School should be!"

Last summer, Central Baptist Church hosted Vacation Bible School and had 20 children attend. The joy and fulfillment that this event brought to the children and families were immeasurable. Additionally, they incorporated the children into the following Sunday service and saw multiple families attend.

You might think that the story ends there, but God was only beginning to use that Vacation Bible School stage set. When Pastor Tinney's VBS team was contacting churches for help, several shared that they could also benefit from the supplies. So Central Baptist asked Great Bridge Church if they could pass on the set to other churches. Not only did they support the idea, but Great Bridge was also thrilled to hear that several other churches would benefit from their efforts. This was a true testament to the spirit of community and collaboration among the SBCV churches. In total, six churches utilized that stage setup. Six Vacation Bible Schools and six groups of children all benefited from this interaction between the two SBCV churches.

Megan Perry reflects, "Sets and decoration pieces aren't the main event of VBS—sharing the Gospel is THE focus for all of us—but creating a fun atmosphere helps kids and volunteers feel excited each year. Decorating and transforming our Worship Center helps our kids understand how special VBS is and how much our church family values this important outreach event. I'm thankful we could pass on that joy to others!" ■

## Take Away

As your church prepares for VBS this summer, how might God use your church to help another local church (or local churches) and multiply the impact?



# The Blessed Girl

*a conference for young women*

“

Where God  
guides, He  
provides. ”



**T**he comforting message of Isaiah 58:11 has always rung clear to those who try to live according to God's will. But in 2014, Jeri Harris' life turned into a testimony to how true this verse can be.

As believers, we are not called to live within our comfort zones. More often than not, God works just outside our comfort zones, calling us to venture into the world of His majesty.

When we are insistent on staying in our comfort zones, we neglect potential opportunities, blessings, and growth because we can't see past our insecurities and shortcomings and into God's all-encompassing power and provision.

However, this was not the case for Jeri Harris.

## Equipping

Jeri knew she was called to youth ministry from a young age.

Jeri's family opened their doors and hearts to foster children while she was growing up. God equipped Jeri for a life filled with love and experience with children in need from the beginning. After earning two degrees, Jeri entered the workforce, ready to spread the Gospel to all who would listen.

Working in a group home for girls, Jeri began a life-long career helping teens in need. Over the years, she continued to serve youth as a Family



Life Counselor, director of the Baptist Community in Roanoke, and as a qualified mental health professional for Dominion Services. She currently works at Straight Street in Roanoke, a ministry for middle and high school students serving the underprivileged.

While balancing an already packed calendar, Jeri also serves as a youth leader at **Villa Heights Baptist Church** in Roanoke, Virginia. Her husband, Rick, is the youth pastor, and together they have worked in ministry for over 35 years, serving churches in Salem, Roanoke, Ohio, and Kentucky.

## Calling

In 2014, Jeri began looking for a conference for teenage girls in her





youth program. She knew the power and impact these conferences could have on students, but there was nothing within a six-and-a-half-hour drive.

Discouraged but not disheartened, Jeri searched for a solution. She knew the Lord had placed the idea of a conference in her heart. But why? Jeri knew He was leading her to create a conference where women who loved Jesus and had a powerful voice could share the Gospel. Once she had a vision, it was time for the execution.

## Providing

Jeri turned to her daughter, Jennifer, who was connected with several

women in Lynchburg, including Rachel Travis, Mrs. Virginia 2011. Jeri knew that she would be the perfect first speaker for her vision.

Once Travis was booked, The Blessed Girl Conference could begin.

From the beginning, this conference was created to encourage and remind young ladies of God's care and purpose for them. There is a different verse and theme each year and features a main speaker, worship leader, and emcee. The young women who attend the conference can also attend breakout sessions.

But the conference isn't just about learning; Jeri wants to emphasize the power of community among young ladies. Every room of Villa Heights Baptist Church was filled with activities like nail painting, crafts, selfie stations, prayer spaces, games, henna, and face painting.

The girls also enjoyed dinner and dessert in the evening, allowing a time to digest the messages they heard and to further connect.

## Impacting

Jeri never expected the youth program she created out of necessity to become as large as it has become. As of this year, The Blessed Girl Conference has hosted groups from over 20 churches. While it is impossible to list every work or movement God has made through



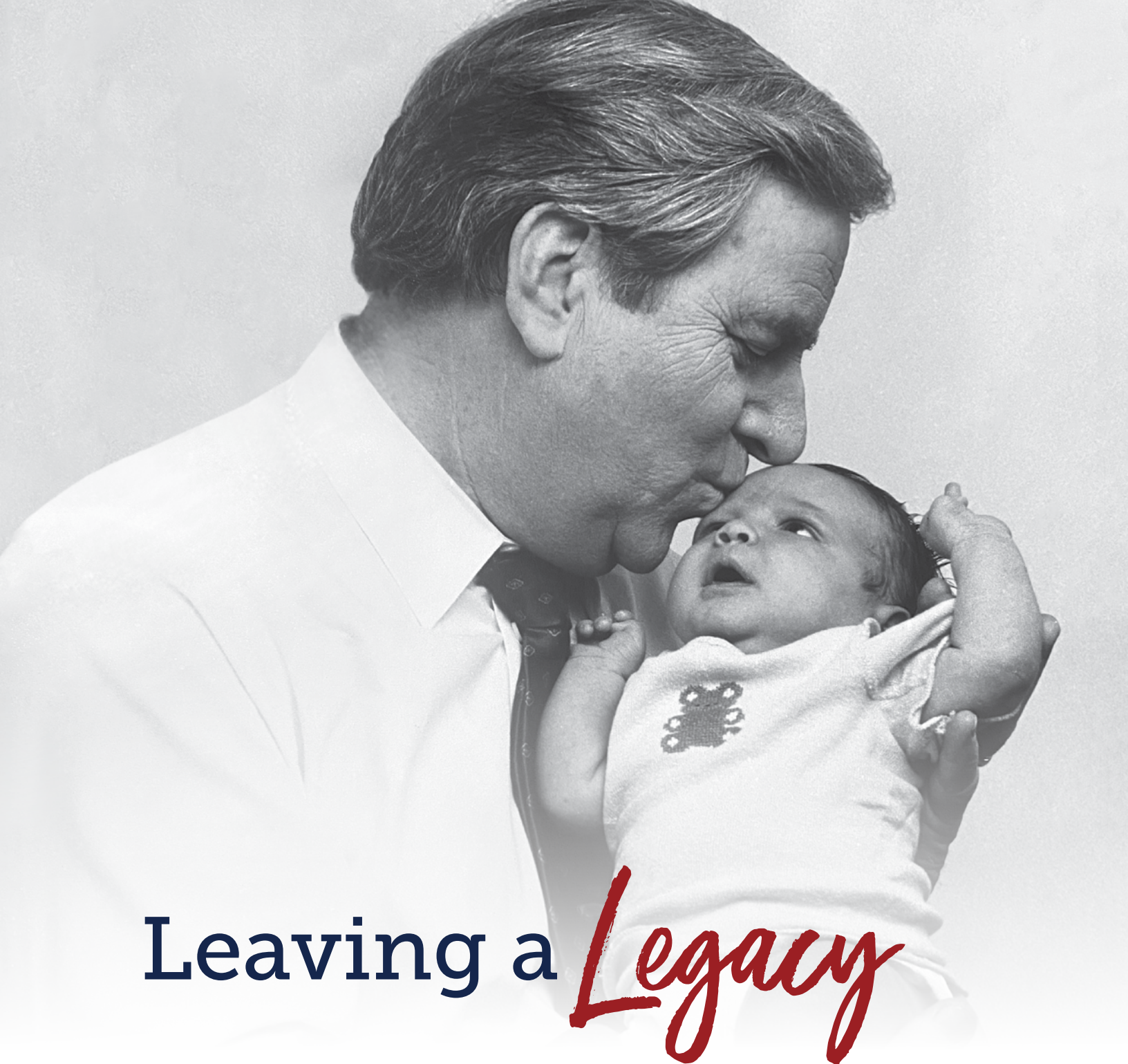
the conference in the past ten years, Jeri has seen hundreds of success stories.

One church was so moved by the powerful message created specifically for young ladies that, as their church group grew, they created a Sunday School class just for teenage girls.

Two years ago, one of the young ladies who attended The Blessed Girl Conference heard the Gospel, accepted Jesus, and was baptized. She still attends church and is growing in her faith today. At this year's conference, Jeri saw at least 20 young ladies make professions of faith.

Jeri is considering a new conference, but as of now, she is in awe of the work of the Lord and the impact His calling can make. Without a doubt, she knows that where God guides, He will certainly provide. ■





# Leaving a *Legacy*

**J**erry's Kids, a Lynchburg-based adoption foundation started by Callie and Kendra Penn, seeks to financially assist Christian couples in their adoption journey and honor the legacy of their late pastor, Dr. Jerry Falwell, Sr.

The Penns, who have two adopted children themselves, are members of **Thomas Road Baptist Church** and graduates of Liberty University. The couple helped launch Jerry's Kids on Mother's Day in 2023.

Since its launch last year, Jerry's Kids has financially assisted three couples with their adoptions. Callie Penn, who serves as senior life





coordinator at Thomas Road, said being an adoptive father himself makes the ministry even more meaningful.

"I know what these couples are going through and how happy and elated they are," Penn said. "That's the joy that I get from it."

The name, Jerry's Kids, is meant to honor Falwell, the couple's late pastor and founder of Thomas Road Baptist Church and Liberty University.

Penn explained that Liberty students and young people who were part of Thomas Road and its affiliated ministries were often called "Jerry's Kids." Falwell even helped found the Liberty Godparent home, where young pregnant mothers receive care and counseling in making parenting and adoption plans.

The Penns spent much time with Falwell while he was ministering at different events during the

late 1990s. At the time, Callie worked at Thomas Road as a travel logistics coordinator, while Kendra was a staff soloist for Falwell's ministries.

After getting married, the couple realized they could not have children naturally. As a way to do ministry together, they began offering free childcare to Thomas Road members.

The couple was soon notified by the director of the Liberty Godparent home that someone had made it financially possible for them to adopt.

The Penns would go on to adopt their first son, Graham, in 2001 and their second son, Jackson, in 2007. Falwell would dedicate both babies to the Lord at Thomas Road.

Falwell dedicated Jackson on May 13, 2007, two days before passing away at the age of 73. Jackson was the last baby he dedicated to the Lord.

For many years, the Penns never knew the identity of the person who made it possible for them to adopt. Just a few years ago, Penn was told by a Thomas Road co-worker that the person was, in fact, Dr. Falwell.

At that moment, the inspiration to start Jerry's Kids was born.

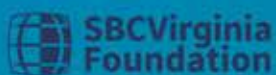
"When we learned that it was Dr. Falwell who made it possible, I wanted to do something in honor of him and his kindness and generosity to us," Penn said.

"It's one of the most rewarding things I've ever done. I just said yes to God to do what I felt He was calling me to do. I think God orchestrated all this, and I'm excited to see where He takes it in the future." ■

**RESOURCE:**

*For more information about Jerry's Kids, visit the website:*

 [jerryskids.us](mailto:jerryskids.us)



# GROW MINISTRY FUNDS

Great returns that multiply resources  
and maximize Kingdom impact.

OPEN AN ACCOUNT TODAY:  
[sbcv.org/foundation](http://sbcv.org/foundation)  
804.270.1848

Rates starting at

# 5.15% APR

One-Year Term Investment

Not available to individual investors. Additional  
rate options available. Rates subject to change.

?

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](mailto:info@sbcv.org).



## Ready to go. Ready to help.

Be the hands and feet of Jesus by loving those  
in life-altering situations. Disasters open doors  
to share the Gospel with and minister  
to the hurting.

**#IWEARYELLOW**

Find out more at [sbcv.org/dr](http://sbcv.org/dr)



# Inspire

A word of hope, support, and encouragement

“

*God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*  
John 4:24 (NASB)

## The Soul that Worships God

When the fragrance of true spiritual worship pierces the presence of God, there is an unusual, unrehearsed response of worship from our spirit. The consuming fire of the Holy Spirit affirms that an encounter between our soul and the Spirit of the Lord God Almighty is happening! There will never be words adequate to express or define the encounter—but you will know. This unique encounter with the Holy Spirit is beyond words but unmistakable.

When we place God at the center of our faith, He naturally becomes the center of our worship. Complete dependency on God in every area of life glorifies Him, and the sacrificial aroma of “dying to self” is translated as genuine praise towards Him! When God is the center of our faith, He will also be the center of our worship. True worship happens when God reveals and establishes His truth in us; it becomes the substance of our worship and pleases Him (Hebrews 11:6).

God designed us to be exclusive in our love and worship of Him (Exodus 20:3). Unfortunately, not all aspects of what we call “worship” today please God. It must break His heart when our hearts reveal an empty shell of worship, and

we hide behind “fig leaves” of mere feel-good entertainment. Listen to the Prophet Isaiah, “Because this people draw near with their words and honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from Me, and their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote ...” (Isaiah 29:13).

When we worship God, it must be with our whole heart; a heart fed and nourished on the truth of God’s words so that when expressed in worship, it is not “strange fire” to Him (Numbers 26:61).

It is essential to know that worship is taught by the Word of God and manifested by the Holy Spirit as we live out the Word of God. Therefore, let us make our worship pure before Him today! ■

Love you all!



**Milton Harding**

Prayer and Care Minister

✉ [mharding@sbcv.org](mailto:mharding@sbcv.org)



# *Relief* and *Hope* to LAHAINA

**On August 4th, 2023, Lahaina, Maui, was ravaged by intense wildfires fueled by dry conditions and fierce winds.**

More than 2,000 buildings, the vast majority of which were mostly residential, were destroyed. Survivors were left devastated with indescribable grief. This Pacific paradise became a paradise lost in less than a day.

Four months later, seven SBCV Disaster Relief volunteers answered the call for help from the Hawaii Pacific Baptist Convention. They didn't just assist homeowners; these volunteers extended a compassionate hand to those who were finally being allowed back into their neighborhoods to search for belongings among the remnants of their homes.

One such homeowner was a Tunisian jeweler. "We became friends. He brought us donuts," recalls Ron Steele. As they worked together to find items, a few gems were located along with a replica "Hawaii 5-0" badge his son used to play with.

Throughout the week the team offered help to several homeowners and even helped one person break into a safe that she recovered. The lock was destroyed by the intense heat, so the team broke into it with a hammer and cutting tools. Sadly, all the contents inside were burnt. But there was something different about this particular person. "You could tell right away that she took things in stride. She was full of joy," Steele observed. The team soon learned that she was a Christ follower and was blessed by the hope that seemed to emanate from her smile to all her neighbors.

When the Disaster Relief volunteers show up to help, they never know exactly what they will find, except that there will always be individuals created in the image of God and, as such, imbued with dignity regardless of situation or status. They minister help, healing, and hope in every situation to the best of their abilities. ■









# Advancing the *Gospel* Together



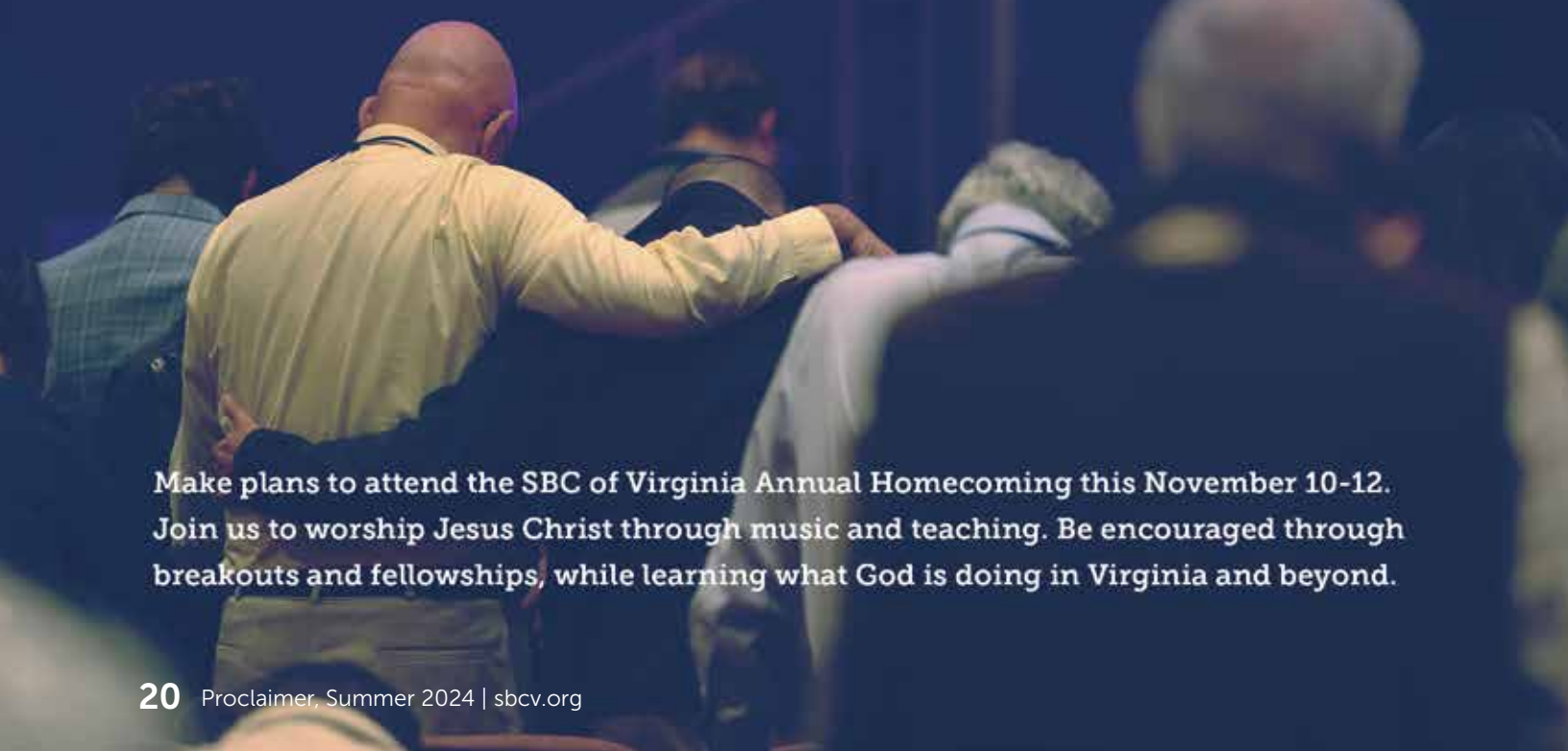
**Sunday,  
November 10**  
5:15PM - 8:30PM

**Monday,  
November 11**  
8:30AM - 8:45PM

**Tuesday,  
November 12**  
8:30AM - 12:30PM



**London Bridge Baptist Church, Virginia Beach**



Make plans to attend the SBC of Virginia Annual Homecoming this November 10-12. Join us to worship Jesus Christ through music and teaching. Be encouraged through breakouts and fellowships, while learning what God is doing in Virginia and beyond.



# 2024 ANNUAL HOMECOMING



## Featured Speakers



**Dondi  
Costin**

Liberty University



**Jamie  
Dew**

New Orleans  
Baptist Theological  
Seminary



**Gordon  
Fort**

International  
Mission Board



**H.B.  
Charles**

Shiloh Church  
Jacksonville



**Rob  
Pochek**

First Baptist  
Church  
Charlottesville

*Find out more at*  
**[sbcv.org/homecoming](https://sbcv.org/homecoming)**



**SBCVirginia**  
*You are not alone.*

# Restoration

## IN WYTHEVILLE

**In** the summer of 2018, nearly a dozen ministers gathered at Withers Park in Wytheville with one purpose: to specifically pray that God would plant a new church in the community of over 9,000 residents. Despite several previous attempts at church planting in the southwest Virginia community, it remained one of the largest localities in Virginia without a SBC of Virginia church.

Among those present at this prayer meeting were Wythe County residents Jeremy and Allison Farley. They were currently ministering at a small country church in a neighboring county but felt God leading them to launch a

call to plant a church in Wytheville.

"I firmly believe that churches should plant churches, so it was important to me to have the blessing and support of other congregations before our launch," said Farley. The ministry received financial support and prayers from four separate churches leading up to their kickoff service in March 2019.

Choosing a name for the church involved significant consideration. Farley explained,

"Naming anything is difficult, and when it came to naming the church, we struggled greatly. As we neared our launch, I drove past an old

**“We simply do our best to love people, especially broken people, and point them to a Savior who desires to see them changed.”**

church in their own community for many years. At the time, neither had any previous knowledge of the SBCV or experience with Southern Baptists.

Jeremy Farley shared, "When we met that day in the park, my wife and I were blown away by the sincerity of so many who had gathered to pray for our community. It left a lasting impact on both of us."

The prayer meeting touched Farley so deeply that a few weeks later, he resigned from his pastorate and began preparing to answer God's

call to plant a church in Wytheville. house that had been falling apart and saw that someone was restoring it. I immediately remembered how Jesus was a carpenter and that he desired to see lives restored. From this experience, our name, **Restoration Church**, was born."

Since its launch in 2019, the church has grown from a mere vision and prayer of the Farley family to a congregation that averages roughly 100 attendees each week.

"What I appreciate most about the growth we've seen is that it's been



*Jeremy and Allison Farley with their daughters*

slow and steady. We didn't explode overnight, but each year, we've witnessed three or four new families surrender their lives to Christ, get baptized, and begin serving in the ministry," stated Pastor Farley. Large churches have abundant resources; we simply do our best to love people, especially broken people, and point them to a Savior who desires to see them changed ... and God is truly honoring this."

Although initially launched as an independent work, Restoration Church joined with the SBC of Virginia in January 2023. Farley credits SBCV regional strategist Travis Ingle for leading the church in that direction, highlighting Ingle's friendship and support for the ministry from its inception.

Restoration Church is an accurate picture of Gospel partnership. It began in prayer, was conceived through obedience, strengthened by partnership, and is growing for the glory of God to reach their neighbors and the nations with the Good News of Jesus. ■





# Sowing for the Future

**SEND Network** in Virginia is proud to collaborate with a dynamic team of state leaders who firmly believe in the power of churches planting churches. There has been remarkable progress as more and more churches in Virginia are embracing the Mobilization Pathway. This proven pathway guides them from their current state to where God wants them to be.

Sowing for the future includes training leaders and taking responsibility for church planting in Virginia. In February, over 30 lead pastors, mission pastors, and senior pastors from churches across the state gathered in Washington, D.C., for a Residency Retreat to collaborate on how to best train future leaders and learn from each other. The pastors at the retreat represent churches with established residencies which have one or more residents. Eventually, this will lead to more church plants.

The day after the Residency Retreat, over 100 people gathered at **Centreville Baptist Church** in Centreville, VA, to celebrate, collaborate, and communicate all God is doing across the Commonwealth. This year's summit was strategically moved to Northern Virginia, where 37% of the state's population resides within an hour of Washington, D.C. Attendees heard from a wide range of church planters that are planting across the northern region of Virginia and Washington, D.C.

Attendees at this year's summit were challenged to take responsibility for planting at least one church in Virginia and strategically pray about starting new churches in Northern Virginia.

Summit participants were also encouraged to join a Sending Church Pastors Cohort that began in April and will meet monthly for the next year. This cohort will discuss all the things involved in starting a residency in our churches. Over 15 pastors


have signed up to be a part of this cohort and have committed to identifying, training, and sending church planters from their churches.

The goal of the cohort is to develop and send out a well-equipped church planter from every local church in partnership with SEND Network Virginia within the next two years. This movement among existing churches will ensure a pipeline that may last years. 2 Corinthians 9:6 states, "The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." (ESV)

We anticipate a great church planting movement as SBCV churches begin to sow into future leaders. ■

## RESOURCE:

*For information on SEND Network in Virginia, Sending Church Pastors Cohort, or how your church can become a residency church, contact:*

 [jturner@sbcv.org](mailto:jturner@sbcv.org)

# a NEW DEGREE of *Urgency*



## **INSTANT READINESS** demonstrated by the local church

**D**an Ellis, senior pastor at **Rileyville Baptist Church**, in Rileyville, VA, began to see smoke and feel 50 MPH gusts of wind. Immediately, he checked to find the location of the fire and found there was a major issue in the county. Ellis stated, "Severe winds had rekindled a recent prescribed burn, and arcing from downed power lines had started nearly a dozen forest fires throughout Page County."

Pastor Ellis quickly learned that the volunteer fire department was being stretched to the max and was quickly going through all their resources. The need for the moment was on-the-go meals.

Ellis, along with the Rileyville mission and outreach team, made a last-minute decision to pivot from their regular Wednesday evening Bible study to lead the church to make 100 on-the-go meals to feed the first responders. Ellis commented, "It was beautiful to see



“

I knew we needed to demonstrate Christ's love ... ”

the church body changing plans to join God in what He was doing. This sort of readiness should also be demonstrated by our churches in our local context; however, I have felt that pull to stay the course and do what we have always done. I'm glad we didn't on March 20th. Our study on hell that evening was abbreviated, but the prayer time at the end had a new degree of urgency for the lost."

Despite the ongoing forest fires, Rileyville was prepared to continue meeting the needs of the community. The Rileyville mission team learned that the first responders' fuel budget was running low and that the volunteers were struggling to cover the cost of fuel to run their equipment. In partnership with the SBCV, Rileyville purchased twenty \$100 gas cards for the volunteer firefighters. The cards were delivered with notes saying they were praying for them.

On Friday evening, the need was for hot meals. The Rileyville hospitality team, with financial support from the SBCV, promptly responded by cooking for and ministering to 125 firefighters. Rileyville was determined that even though they couldn't minister face-to-face with first responders, they would do everything in their power to show the love of Christ to their community.

Rileyville life groups showed the value of "doing life together" by coming together to protect one of



*In collaboration with the SBCV, Rileyville Baptist Church purchased 20 \$100 gas gift cards to cover the cost of the fuel to run the volunteer firefighters' equipment. Pastor Ellis displays the cards.*

the member's homes that the fire had surrounded. Thankfully, God brought rain on Saturday to quench the fire and end the threat.

Rileyville is still meeting with area families who lost everything, sharing the hope of the Gospel with them, and seeking how God would call them to serve these hurting families. Please pray that God will open doors for Gospel conversations with those in need.

Pastor Ellis stated, "I certainly didn't know everything God was doing then, but I knew we needed to demonstrate Christ's love somehow. We needed to be the hands and feet of Christ

because we are His body. All this happened a week before Easter. On Resurrection Sunday, we had nearly two times our regular attendance, and many people walked forward to indicate that they had given their lives to Christ. As we were preparing for Easter Sunday, I believe God was preparing hearts throughout our county to see that life is short, our homes are temporary, and we all need to make sure we have a forever home in Heaven. We are thankful for the prayers and support of the SBCV during this time. We are not alone." ■



*The church made a last-minute decision to pivot from their regular Wednesday evening Bible study to making 100 on-the-go meals to feed the first responders.*

Give the gift of the  
**GOSPEL**  
*This Christmas!*

Churches, families, and small groups are invited to prepare ministry backpacks this fall in preparation for statewide outreaches this Christmas.



## CHRISTMAS BACKPACKS

*A mission project for your church*

Get involved by visiting

[sbcv.org/backpacks](https://sbcv.org/backpacks)



WOMEN'S  
MINISTRY

## WOMEN'S MINISTRY LEADERSHIP ROUNDTABLE

Sharing, Learning, and Growing  
as Women's Ministry Leaders

July 27, 2024 • 8:30AM - 2:30PM  
Staples Mill Road Baptist Church,  
Glen Allen

[sbcv.org/wmroundtable](https://sbcv.org/wmroundtable)

## CONFERENCIA RENOVADOS **2024**



**September 20-21**



### SPEAKER

#### ROBERTO SANCHEZ

*Dean of Students,  
Spanish Education  
& Assistant Professor of  
Pastoral Ministries*

*The Master's Seminary*

The time will feature breakout sessions for men, women, youth and a special day for children.

Lunch will be provided.

[SBCV.ORG/RENOVADOS](https://SBCV.ORG/RENOVADOS)

# E<sup>2</sup>kids

Encouraging and equipping  
leaders to reach and teach children.

**Connect with leaders in your area!**

### Bristol

August 23 | 7-9 PM

### Salem

August 24 | 1-3 PM

### Richmond

September 6 | 7-9 PM

### Suffolk

September 7 | 1-3 PM

Register today at

[sbcv.org/e2kids](https://sbcv.org/e2kids)

PROVIDED BY

SBCV **kids**





# Uniting in Faith

By Michael Morisi

In the tumultuous landscape of contemporary politics, the voice of the church remains a beacon of moral guidance. As elections loom and critical issues such as abortion and the sanctity of human life and marriage are on the line, it becomes imperative for Christians to unite, not just in prayer but also in exercising their civic privilege by voting in alignment with their values.

The essence of democracy lies in the power of the people. For Christians, this poses a unique opportunity. The Bible underscores the importance of seeking justice, defending the oppressed, not being silent, and upholding the sanctity of life. In a nation where we have the opportunity to direct its course, we must use our votes to speak up for the oppressed and the voiceless.

In the upcoming elections, the issue of abortion looms, particularly in Virginia, where there are proposals for an amendment to Virginia's constitution that would legalize unlimited and unrestricted abortions until the moment of birth. For the church, this is not merely a matter of partisan politics but a biblical and moral imperative. Every life is precious and deserving of protection from conception to natural death. By voting our biblical values, Christians can actively foster a culture of life and compassion.

Similarly, the sanctity of marriage faces unprecedented challenges. Currently, there are proposals to codify marriage regardless of sex, gender, or even age. The institution of marriage

is not merely a societal construct but a divine covenant ordained by God. It serves as the bedrock of stable families and flourishing communities. Thus, the church must unequivocally oppose any attempts to dilute or redefine this sacred institution. By voting to preserve the traditional covenant of marriage, Christians help uphold and underpin family unity and moral integrity.

But we also know that the church's involvement must extend beyond the ballot box. Prayer is the key to effect change in the hearts and minds of individuals and policymakers alike. Friends, the church must stand united in both action and prayer as it navigates the complex terrain of politics. As the guardians of faith and conscience, the church must remain a formidable force for righteousness and justice in a misguided and broken world. ■

---

*Michael Morisi leads the Church Ambassador Network, an initiative of The Family Foundation. His mission is to bring the Shepherds of God's Church together with the Shepherds of God's government to seek the Lord and speak truth to those God has called them to lead.*



# Light in the Valley



Photo: Wikipedia, Ben Schumin - own work, CC By-SA 3.0

*Serve one another humbly in love.* Galatians 5:13b

The “Roanoke Star,” constructed in 1949, was intended to be an attraction and decoration for the Christmas season. Throughout its history, this beautiful star has become a symbol of this region and one of Virginia’s most attractive and representative icons.

Something else that makes Roanoke City very unique is that it is one of many sister cities, all of which are spread out in countries such as Russia, Kenya, Poland, France, Brazil, China, and South Korea.

In recent decades, Roanoke has received thousands of immigrants looking for a better future for their families in this land of opportunity. According to the 2020 census, there are 12,000 Hispanic immigrants, not including other ethnic groups and languages.

All of these people, many of whom had never left their homeland before, face

challenges coming here: learning a new culture, adapting to complex laws, learning an entirely new language, and adjusting to a new way of life.

Four years ago, Pastor Pedro Alvarado started to plant **Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana de Roanoke**. Pastor Alvarado brought a wealth of experience with him as a missionary to his homeland of Costa Rica and other countries. He has also worked as an assessor in evaluating new Hispanic churches planted by the SBC of Virginia. Seeing the need to support the community through Christian love and

service, Pastor Alvarado and his team have responded to the urgent call of evangelism guided by principles of discipleship and kindness.

God has blessed his work, his team, and his family in this long journey. Thanks to the Gospel partnership of **First Baptist Church of Roanoke**, the SBC of Virginia, and North American Mission Board, the church is growing and serving faithfully and enthusiastically within the community.

In the early days of Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana de Roanoke, there was a need to begin a ministry dedicated





to social connection. It was at this moment that El Faro, meaning the Lighthouse, was born. It has been a shining light to give help and direction to many immigrants coming to a new land. Lucy and Eduardo Tamez, long-time members of the original **First Baptist Hispanic Church of Roanoke**, took the initiative for this ministry in social connections. With Lucy Tamez as the director and with support from all the members, El Faro began its mission in January 2022.

Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana de Roanoke is the first Hispanic church in the state to dedicate itself permanently and intentionally to the immigrant community, serving all ethnic and language backgrounds. This recent church plant has an average of a hundred attendees in its Sunday service; many participate as volunteers from Thursday to Sunday to help the community and see lives change through evangelism, no matter their origin. The church offers ESL classes, literacy classes for kids and adults, document translations, and advice on immigration situations, finances,

and general health.

Apart from that, they also provide workshops for job improvement as well as meetings with the Roanoke authorities to prevent interfamilial violence and support women who have suffered from domestic violence. They also help locate housing and other resources for refugees along with other organizations in the valley. Throughout every process, workshop, or opportunity to assist, the priority of the priority of Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana de Roanoke is always to share

Christ and His Word with every child and adult they meet.

The Roanoke Star shines bright every night, acting as a landmark of the city. But the Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana de Roanoke, along with the social connection ministry El Faro, is a shining light of hope for people through its preaching of the Gospel and support to those most in need, thereby offering help and a firm foundation to build their new life upon. ■

## INTERESTED IN FINDING OUT MORE?

If you would like to support this ministry as a volunteer or financially, contact Pastor Pedro Alvarado or Lucy Tamez:



Pastor Pedro Alvarado: 276-233-0719



Lucy Tamez, Director, El Faro Connection Center:  
540-315-6887



lucy\_tamez1977@yahoo.com

More information is also available on:



El Faro Connection Center | Roanoke, VA



# 11 Years *Apart*



On a regular basis, veteran church planters listen as another planter shares during their review meeting. Usually, there is time to celebrate ministry victories and retool strategy for the next year.

But sometimes... everything needs to be paused for a time to share something deeper.

One day, church planter Samnas Alemu started to weep as he shared an overwhelming heartache: He had not seen his wife, Tenaye, son, Tinsae, and daughter, Mistre, since he left Ethiopia in 2013.

When Alemu originally left Ethiopia, an extended separation from his family was never a part of his plan. He left Ethiopia due to persecution in his country and quickly began the process of applying for political asylum after arriving in America.

The process of gaining asylum proved to be much more lengthy, complicated, and challenging than anticipated.

After his initial interview in October 2013, his case was transferred to immigration court.

Unfortunately, Alemu's case hearing was rescheduled multiple times over many years. The process began to take a toll on Alemu, who expected his family to be able to quickly join him in the States.

"That was the hardest time in my life because I didn't expect to be apart from my family for more than six





months or a year," Alemu said. "It was very disappointing. It was very stretching and very hard."

While going through the immigration process, Alemu began another complicated endeavor, planting a church.

After an online search for church planting, he began conversations with NAMB representatives, who introduced him to the SBCV. This began a relationship that would become like family.

NAMB and the SBCV not only helped Alemu plant **Image of Christ Church** in Boyds, MD, but also advocated on his behalf in his immigration case.

SBCV staff members sent letters to the Department of Justice, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service, and several U.S. congressmen. Alemu's case was eventually heard, and he was finally granted asylum in December 2019.

In January 2020, Alemu began the process of bringing his family to the States, only for the COVID-19 pandemic to completely change America's immigration landscape just weeks later.

While in another waiting period, Alemu explained his SBCV family did much more than write letters.

"I'm very happy because I'm not alone always," Alemu

said. "They email me, they call me, they pray for me. When people meet me, they know about my case. I feel safe because I'm among many brothers. Even though I miss my family, I have a lot of family here in the SBCV.

"It helped me a lot. If they are not with me, maybe I'm not here today. I praise God for the SBCV family."

Finally—a breakthrough. A miracle. After 11 long years of waiting and praying, Samnas' family was at last granted a visa hearing. Little explanation was ever given as to why things had been delayed so long.

His wife and two children were granted a visa, and the sweet reunion happened on March 23, 2024. Nearly 70 local church members joined the celebration at Dulles Airport. As Samnas, his wife, and his children experienced their first hug in over 11 years, African cheering ("Ululating") reverberated through the terminal, causing others to ask about the meaning of the celebration.

"It was a very exciting day," Alemu said. "It was hard and long waiting for 11 years."

"We always say you are Not Alone," Alemu said. "I always remember that I am not alone. It is real. I felt like I am Not Alone." ■



## WOULD YOU LIKE TO *join in* THE REJOICING FOR SAMNAS ALEMU'S FAMILY?

Send a card to Samnas Alemu and let them know they are not alone in their rejoicing.

Samnas Alemu & Family  
c/o SBC of Virginia  
4956 Dominion Blvd  
Glen Allen, VA 23060

# Not Alone in Highland County

**It** might be easy to feel isolated as the only Southern Baptist church in the least populated county in Virginia. Still, one church has learned that they are not alone because of the SBC of Virginia network.

**Highland Baptist Church** is nestled in the heart of Highland County, which is located on the West Virginia border and a one-hour drive west of Staunton. According to the most recent census, Highland County is the least populated county, with a population of 2,232. It's a place of natural beauty, earning the nickname "Virginia's Little Switzerland" because it is one of the highest average elevations east of the Mississippi River.

Although Highland Baptist is the lone SBC church in the county, it no longer feels alone. Pastor James Oliff shared, "Not being alone allows us to work together with like-minded churches to further the goal of the Southern Baptist Convention. The SBCV supports all the mission boards of the SBC, which is great, and the transparency of the spending is outstanding for churches like ours to see our contributions at work."

Highland Baptist chose to apply for SBCV partnership because it values SBCV's unifying connection. They applied after receiving a letter from its state network explaining "Who we are ...," which clarified for Highland's leadership and members that their historic state convention partnership no longer reflected their views. This led them to seek an SBCV partnership that more closely aligned with their convictions. Deacon Harley Gardner stated, "We as a church wanted to join the SBCV because of its theologically conservative viewpoint. The SBCV is supportive of its churches, which we had not experienced, especially since care for the pastor's well-being is apparent. Also, the SBCV has opportunities for training through several events throughout the year."

Pastor Oliff suggests to all pastors and churches in Virginia that the SBCV is a fellowship of churches worthy of consideration. He wrote, "If you are a Bible-believing church searching for a conservative network that will care about you and help, I would recommend you do your research and see the facts about the group you are with, and if they do not align with biblical values such as the SBCV has, I would suggest you investigate

the SBCV as a wise choice for conservative churches."

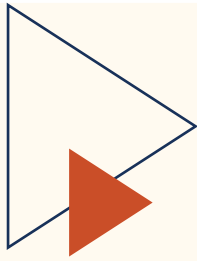
The SBCV has already made an impact at Highland Baptist Church. Deacon Harley Gardner wrote, "the SBCV has made a difference because of the increased communication and outreach of the regional strategist and the excellent website. If you are looking for a helpful network of churches, the SBCV should be a strong consideration." ■

## If you are interested in small-town festivals,

including local cuisine and pure maple syrup, Highland County should be included in your travel plans. The county contains numerous farms and mountains, and many maple growers and syrup makers are in the area. Their Highland County Maple Festival, established in 1959, welcomes thousands in attendance. If you plan to attend next year's festival on March 8-9 and March 15-16, 2025, be sure to visit Highland Baptist while you are there!







# LABORING Together

*By Rick and Cindy Ragan. Rick is the pastor of Forest Hill Baptist Church in Skippers*

**F**orest Hill Baptist Church of Skippers, VA, invited Evangelist Tim Lee to hold a revival meeting in Greenville County. Dr. Lee led the four-day revival on March 10-13. Forest Hill chose to underwrite the expense of renting the Meherrin Performing Arts Center, a neutral location in Emporia.

Area churches were not requested to make a monetary investment. Instead, the pastors were asked to advertise the meeting and encourage attendance. Social media and one-on-one contacts proved successful. Over 500 flyers and posters were distributed, and 6,000 postcards were mailed.

Individual churches prepared

dinner for the revival team. The church located closest to the venue allowed its facility to be used for all the meals. Other churches supplied breakfast and lunch to the team.

Volunteers from four churches sponsored the children's ministry; and volunteers from various churches patrolled the parking lot, took up offerings, and greeted visitors. All the offerings received went to Tim Lee Ministries.

Mark Ivey from Jacksonville, FL, led the worship team, which also included students from Liberty University.

Before the revival, Forest Hill devoted Wednesdays to prayer. Churches committed to a continual prayer chain for 18 hours a day. One day was also scheduled for corporate fasting and prayer, and before each revival service, pastors and leaders were invited to a community prayer meeting.

**Before the revival, Forest Hill devoted Wednesdays to prayer.** ☺☺



Dr. Lee was invited to speak locally to the Junior ROTC of Greenville County High School. Students participated in Monday night's patriotic theme when Dr. Lee shared his personal story.

The cooperation and attendance of fifteen churches in the county worked together for the proclamation of Christ. The goal of the revival was to save the lost and strengthen believers' spiritual commitment.

By personal testimonies, many received Christ or received assurance of their salvation. Forest Hill has baptized new believers on three different Sundays since the revival. Participating churches have also reported baptisms. It is inspiring to see local pastors sharing the burden of evangelism as a unified body of Christ. ■



# Teaching Life Skills & Eternal Lessons

David Williams felt God's calling to invest time in reading the Bible. It was in this same season that David was also leading his wife and two daughters to find a new church home. **Matoaca Baptist Church** in South Chesterfield was one of those they visited.

Pastor Marco Smith greeted their family and learned that Williams enjoys the outdoors. Pastor Smith encouraged Williams to check out the Kids Outdoor Zone (KOZ) ministry in their church. KOZ provides men with training and curriculum to reach the fatherless and fathered boys.

"David wanted to get plugged in and get these boys out on his boat and help them mature in Christ," said Smith.

Although Williams does not have a son, he was still led to use his gifts and knowledge for God through KOZ. Williams has been pouring into the young men who attend and says this has been fulfilling and a blessing. The guys really enjoy the activities, which creates the perfect opportunity to teach them more about Christ.

"I think it's important for the younger ones to see strong leaders in Christ so that they have an example to look to; I think it is important to just be there," said Williams.

Williams invited his teenage nephew, Russell Hamby, to the KOZ gatherings. Hamby was very engaged in the lessons, and that led to Williams discipling him until Hamby made the faithful decision to follow Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. Pastor Smith then led Hamby through believer's baptism.

"The relationships I've been able to make with the adults and children that attend KOZ have brought me closer to them and the church," said Hamby.

Matoaca Baptist Church members say the KOZ ministry has been a great addition. God has used the ministry to engage this new believer and other young men by teaching not only life skills but also eternal lessons from God's Word. ■







**RESOURCE:**

To learn more about Kids Outdoor Zone, visit:



[kidsoutdoorzone.com](https://kidsoutdoorzone.com)

# Press On

By Steve Chromy, Pastor, Mount Hermon Baptist Church, Danville

**“Elijah needed to be reminded of the mission that God had for him, and that he was not alone.”**

***I love sports.*** I have played, coached, or been an official most of my life. There is something about being part of a team with the same goals and mission and willing to give their all when the odds seem stacked against them. In my mind, it really is what makes March Madness the greatest sports event every year. There is always an upset. There is always a team that has the fans crying. And, it always seems that at some point, when fans are heading out of the arena, a play suddenly happens, momentum turns, and the unimaginable happens. Yes, I am thinking of the 2019 National Champions. Go Hoos! In every close game, there is a time when each team can decide to keep fighting or throw in the towel and quit.

## ***Similarities***

I believe there are many similarities between ministry and sports (so did the Apostle Paul).

Recently, I have been researching pastoral burnout and the number of pastors quitting the ministry. The numbers are staggering and can, at times, be depressing. But friends, we are not alone.

Elijah in I Kings 19 is an excellent

example of dealing with the hardships of ministry. Though Elijah had seen some incredible works of God, he was tired and ready to quit. But God wasn't done with Elijah. It wasn't time to quit. Elijah got some sleep, and God gave him food and drink to refresh him. God then spoke to Elijah twice, and His discussions start with "Go."

God also revealed to Elijah that he wasn't alone; there were 7,000 followers of God in Israel. God would provide Elisha for Elijah to disciple in ministry. Elijah needed to be reminded of the mission that God had for him and that he was not alone.

## ***Be encouraged because you are not alone***

The more I talk with people who are struggling in ministry, the more I am thankful for the SBC of Virginia. The SBCV constantly reminds us that we are not alone, not just in a motto but in how we care for one another. I had a pastor ask me why someone should join the SBCV and what the benefits would be for him and his church. I began to talk about the many partnerships, but I stopped and mentioned that it isn't just the ministry partner-

ships. I shared that I have dear friends in the SBCV I call when ministry is exciting and going well. I can call or text those same friends when I am discouraged and struggling. It helps me continue to serve, continue to obey, and continue to wait for God to work.

If you find yourself in the midst of a challenging season in your ministry, I would urge you to prioritize three things:

- 1 find time for refreshment
- 2 spend quality time with God
- 3 seek out someone who can provide you with the encouragement you need.

And in the words of the late Jimmy Valvano, "Don't give up. Don't ever give up." Remember, my friend, you are not alone in this journey. ■

---

*Pastor Chromy also serves as the Chairman of the SBC of Virginia Executive Board*





BRANDON PICKETT

✉ [bpickett@sbcv.org](mailto:bpickett@sbcv.org)

📘 [facebook.com/brandon.pickett](https://facebook.com/brandon.pickett)

# Don't Crop Out the MEANING

This is the season for Vacation Bible School. My wife, Wendy, recently remembered a story from a VBS about 15 years ago when we lived in Georgia. Our daughter, Raechel, had saved her money for the mission offering that week. On the day she brought it, she sat in one of the main sessions beside her friend. That friend asked Raechel if she could hold the coins. Just then, the offering bag came around, and the friend put in the coins... herself. Raechel couldn't believe what she was seeing!

At that exact moment, a photographer from the local paper snapped a picture. Not knowing the back story, the paper described the picture

as the other girl's offering. And it truly looks like Raechel is amazed at her "friend's offering." It is understandable when you look at the picture why that is the first impression. But when you zoom out and know the backstory—the truth is much different, isn't it?

In trying to track down that newspaper photo, I talked with Jim, one of their photojournalists who has worked at the paper for a long time. When I shared with him the backstory of the picture, he said it reminded him of what he learned in college years ago. His professor taught the class to make sure to "never crop out the meaning of the picture," look at the big picture, and find the true meaning behind what you think you see.

So many times, when God is working in our lives, our families, or even in our ministries, we only catch a glimpse of what He is doing.

We are either too zoomed in while trying so hard to interpret what's going on, or trying to

think ahead and plan for what may happen. Or, we aren't aware enough and even totally oblivious to major things God is doing around us—and in us.

My dad recently said something that stuck with me. He said he was praying for spiritual hearing aids and glasses—so he wouldn't miss something God was saying to him or doing around him.

I love the verses from Isaiah 55:8-9, which read, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways."

It says in Romans 11:32-33, "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! Oh, how great are God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways!"

No one knew that truth more than Job. In Job 11:7, his friend, Zophar, says something Job probably already knew, "Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty?" Job sure learned that lesson, didn't he?

It's good to remind ourselves that when God works, we may not understand or even see what He is doing. Rather than getting so hyper-focused on ourselves and only on what we can see and feel, we may need to zoom out and realize that while we may not understand it all right now, God not only has a plan, but He is working out that plan right now for our good.

Things aren't always as they appear with our limited vision and perspective. We need to be careful not to jump to conclusions or zoom in too close and "crop out the meaning."

And then, remember the words of the wisest man who ever lived when he wrote in Proverbs 3:5-6,

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." ■



Watch stories, event highlights, or listen to keynote speakers share their messages in the SBCV library.



Scan the QR code to find the video library.



[sbcv.org/videos](https://sbcv.org/videos)

## Susíbete a **PROCLAMANDO** EN ESPAÑOL




y accede inmediatamente a tu ejemplar digital donde te podrás enterar de las obras maravillosas que Dios está haciendo a través de Su Iglesia en Virginia y alrededor del mundo.

Suscripción Aquí:

[www.sbcv.org/proclamando](http://www.sbcv.org/proclamando)

Conéctate desde cualquier dispositivo, en cualquier lugar y disfruta de tu revista digital **PROCLAMANDO** completamente gratis.

 SBCVirginia

 Send Network

## CHURCH PLANTER FAMILY DAY

Join other SBCV and SEND Virginia church planters and their families for a day of fun at Kings Dominion.



**AUGUST 2  
2024**



**KINGS DOMINION  
DOSWELL**

REGISTER TODAY AT [sbcv.org/familyday](https://sbcv.org/familyday)

## Ministry Wives RETREAT

Join us for a rejuvenating retreat designed for ministry wives, offering a nurturing space to **REST**, **REFLECT**, and **REPLENISH** your soul.



**October  
18-19**



**Camp Eagle  
Fincastle, VA**

Register today at [sbcv.org/wivesretreat](https://sbcv.org/wivesretreat)



Special Guest/Featuring: *Jani Ortland*  
Executive Vice President, Renewal Ministries



# 2024

## MINISTRY & EVENTS

# You are not alone.

### JULY

18-20

Family Fusion Mission Camp, *Buckroe Beach, Hampton*

27

Women's Ministry Leadership Roundtable with Kelly King, *Staples Mill Road BC, Glen Allen*

### AUGUST

2

Church Planter Family Day, *Kings Dominion, Doswell*

13

Small Town/Rural Pastors & Leaders Workshop, *Liberty BC, Appomattox*

15-16

DR Chaplain Training—Emotional and Spiritual Care in Disasters, *Ministry Support Center, Glen Allen*

23

E2Kids, *Euclid Ave BC, Bristol*

24

E2Kids, *Fellowship Community, Salem*

25

Global Hunger Sunday

### SEPTEMBER

6

E2Kids, *Grace Community BC, Henrico*

7

E2Kids, *Nansemond River BC, Suffolk*

13

Southeast Worship Leader Network Meeting, *Nansemond River BC, Suffolk*

14

DR Basic, Advanced and Chaplain Training, *Wayne Hills BC, Waynesboro*

20-21

Conferencia Renovados, *Swift Creek BC, Midlothian*

20-22

Young Adults Retreat, *Watermarks Camp, Scottsville*

### OCTOBER

1

Executive Board Meeting, *Glen Allen*

2

Leadership Summit with Chuck Lawless, *Glen Allen*

12

Equip Women's Conference, *Rosedale BC, Abingdon*

12

DR Basic, Advanced and Chaplain Training, *Fincastle BC, Fincastle*

18-19

Ministry Wives Retreat, *Camp Eagle, Fincastle*

### NOVEMBER

4-7

Catch the Vision Tour, *Puerto Rico*

10-12

Annual Homecoming, *London Bridge BC, Virginia Beach*

28

Thanksgiving Day

### DECEMBER

1-8

Week of Prayer for International Missions & Lottie Moon Christmas Offering

25

Christmas Day



## SBCVirginia

You are not alone.

[sbcv.org](http://sbcv.org) • 804-270-1848

4956 Dominion Blvd, Glen Allen, VA 23060



Stay up to date by using the online calendar on our website!

To see details and updates on these events and more, scan this QR code or visit [sbcv.org/calendar](http://sbcv.org/calendar).



@sbcvirginia



# SBCVirginia

*You are not alone.*

## PROCLAIMER

4956 Dominion Blvd  
Glen Allen, VA 23060

[sbcv.org](http://sbcv.org)

804-270-1848

[proclaimer@sbcv.org](mailto:proclaimer@sbcv.org)

Lives are  
*Transformed*  
by the Gospel,  
thanks to  
your gifts.

THE Lord's CUPBOARD  
Hyland Heights Baptist Church  
434-821-6906

SBCV GOAL: \$425,000

**visionvirginia**  
STATE MISSIONS OFFERING & WEEK OF PRAYER

STORIES, RESOURCES, GIVING, AND MORE AT

[SBCV.ORG/VISIONVIRGINIA](http://SBCV.ORG/VISIONVIRGINIA)