

FEBRUARY 2026
VOLUME 74 ISSUE 02

Ohio Baptist MESSENGER

THE STATE CONVENTION OF BAPTISTS IN OHIO



New SCBO Tech Options Now
Available for Ohio Baptists

Full story on page 5

Featured This Month

Completing The Annual Church Profile Contributes to Gospel Impact by Dr. Jeremy Westbrook	3
Put Things in Order and Don't Give Up! By Dave Welsch	4
New SCBO Tech Options Now Available for Ohio Baptists	5
SCBO Launches The Pastor Fit Initiative	6
Super Summer 2026 Registration Now Open	6
2026 Collegiate Day of Prayer Set for Thursday, February 26	7
Working to Close the Friendship Gap for Pastors	8
Begin New Partnerships at New Pastor and Staff Orientation	9
Back to the Basics in Revitalization	10
Ted Oatts Joins SCBO as Ohio Baptist Foundation Consultant	11
God at Work Across the Buckeye State	12
Ohio Disaster Relief Team Deploying to Jamaica	13
Restored Marriage is Result of Church Plant's Efforts	14

The Ohio Baptist Messenger Staff

Dr. Jeremy Westbrook, editor-in-chief
Stephanie Heading, managing editor

Seth Wicker, digital communication assistant
AJ Frasure, director of IT

-- Tell us your story --

The Ohio Baptist Messenger is a monthly publication highlighting what the Lord is doing in SCBO churches or ministries, and we need your help! Tell us your story and we could feature it in an upcoming issue of *The Messenger*. Please submit your stories to messenger@scbo.org.

For more information, please contact Stephanie Heading at messenger@scbo.org.

Completing The Annual Church Profile Contributes to Gospel Impact

The Annual Church Profile (ACP) is more than just a bureaucratic requirement; it is a vital act of stewardship that underpins our collective mission here at the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio and in our broader Southern Baptist family.

Just as it's important to go to the doctor annually for a well check to monitor your numbers, it's just as important for the local church to do a well check and monitor its numbers. Completing the ACP ensures your church's data contributes to a unified and accurate picture of gospel impact, allowing us to move forward with an informed and strategic purpose.

Here's why it's so vital for your church, no matter the size, to both know and report your missional impact on an annual basis:

Fueling the Mission through Informed Strategy

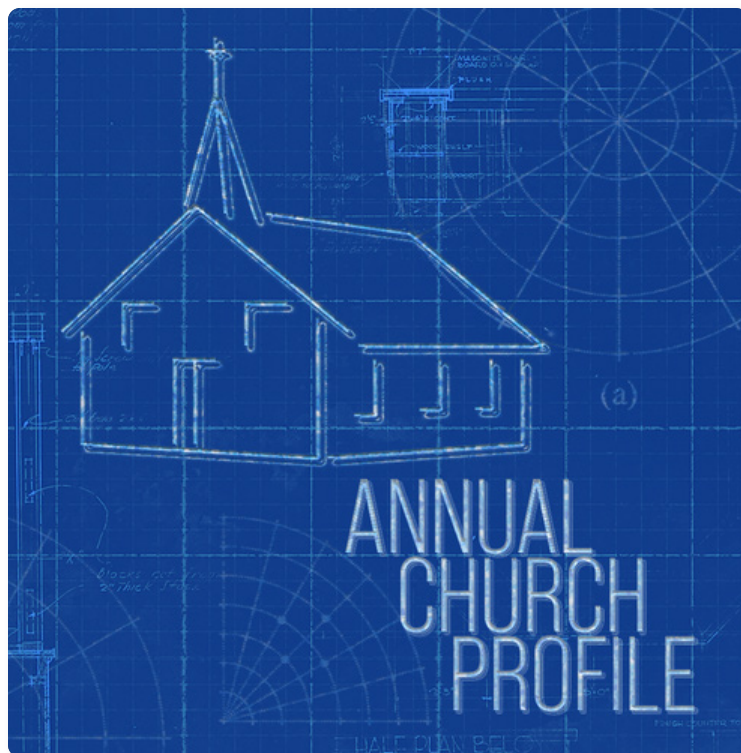
The data collected in the ACP—including baptisms, attendance, giving, and membership—provides critical insights that fuel our shared ministries. For our state convention and local associations, this aggregated information is the foundational resource used for:

- **Strategic Planning:** The numbers reveal trends in growth, plateau, and decline, guiding the allocation of resources to areas and churches with the greatest need.
- **Targeted Support and Training:** By knowing the health and specific needs of the churches, the convention can develop and offer training and resources that directly address gaps in ministry and growth. This ensures support is relevant and effective.
- **Kingdom Impact Measurement:** The ACP allows us to celebrate what God is doing across our state by quantifying the spiritual movement—from the total number of people saved and disciplined to the financial commitment to missions.

Ensuring Connection and Representation

The ACP is the primary mechanism for maintaining a strong and cooperative connection to the larger convention. Completing it is essential for:

- **Convention Eligibility:** The current statistics on membership and giving determine your church's eligibility and number of messengers to the Annual Meeting of the State Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention. This ensures your voice is heard in the decisions and direction of the collective mission.
- **Accurate Reporting:** The profile updates your church's official membership and contact information, ensuring you receive critical communications



and your church is accurately represented in national statistics and reports.

- **Self-Examination and Vision Casting:** On a local level, filling out the ACP is a healthy exercise for your church leadership. It prompts a year-end review of key ministries, allowing your church to assess its own progress and cast a renewed vision for the coming year.

From the smallest rural church to the largest urban congregation, participation in the Annual Church Profile demonstrates your commitment to transparency, cooperation, and the greater work of the gospel. It ensures that every church is counted, supported, and represented as we work together to fulfill the Great Commission. Please visit www.scbo.org/acp to learn more and complete your ACP by February 28.

Moving Forward,

Dr. Jeremy Westbrook
Executive Director-Treasurer, SCBO



President's Pen

Put Things in Order and Don't Give Up!

The job of a pastor is both a privilege and a challenge. In Titus 1:5, Paul writes to Titus, giving him instructions for his ministry in Crete.

*"This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you."*¹

Titus is there to put things into order, to set them straight, to set things right. It implies that something is out of order, broken. Like a broken bone that needs to be reset, Titus is to put the church in order in Crete. This is to be done in love and care for the church.

The church in Crete is just like our churches today. It's not always very interested in being put in order. We are comfortable with the way things are, and many churches would rather be comfortable and have their preferences met than be put in order. The task of the pastor is then a difficult one.

Calling the church to be Christ-centered, gospel-preaching, and submitted to the Lordship of Christ isn't always a popular message. We would expect that this message would be rejected with anger by the world, but far too often it is rejected with anger by church people.

As pastors, we have to decide whether we will be faithful and loving to put in order what needs to be put in order, or whether we will meet the desires of consumeristic churchgoers. Being a pastor is a difficult calling. You will lose friends. You will be called names. You will be slandered, lied about, and maligned.

I know, super encouraging **President's Pen** this month, but here's the encouragement.

If God called Paul and Titus to put things into order, then it must be an important job and one that God is fully behind. So yes, maybe this week has been tough. It feels like your ministry is going backwards, not forwards. But putting things into order is a painful process; don't give up. Don't throw in the towel. Christ loves the church and gave Himself for it, which means He is far more concerned about its health and purity than even you are. His orders are clear, so obey and let him handle the rest. He is our defender, our refuge, and honestly, the only one whose approval really matters. Commit to making him happy, even if that means not everyone else is.



In Christ,

Dave Welsch
SCBO President

¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2025), Tt 1:5.*

New SCBO Tech Options Now Available for Ohio Baptists

By Stephanie Heading, managing editor

2025 was a year of updating our technology at SCBO.

Director of IT AJ Frasure and his team worked tirelessly to design new tech and media platforms – building a new user-friendly website, filming and producing our first video series celebrating the Cooperative Program’s 100th anniversary, shooting videos of events and activities, and increasing our social media presence.

But wait, there’s more!

In late 2025, two new communication tools were launched – the **SCBO App** and the **Forward Together** podcast.

The SCBO App

Connecting with the state convention is now easier with the new SCBO App!

“Over the last year, my team and I have carefully considered what would make an app most valuable to you,” Frasure said. This app was created with you in mind, and I hope that you find the features easy to use and genuinely helpful to your ministry.”

In the app, you’ll find a range of new resources to equip you and your staff. There is a media tab where you can watch videos and listen to podcasts that will encourage you. **The SCBO App** also enables you to find and register for upcoming events.

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

The SCBO App is available at scbo.org/app

The Forward Together Podcast

Forward Together is a ministry podcast that addresses the practical issues facing pastors, staff members, and churches. It is hosted by Buzz Kocher, SCBO director of strategic initiatives,

“We want to have honest conversations,” Kocher said. “We are not trying to skirt around difficult issues.”



Forward Together features the SCBO staff sharing their ministry experiences. Soon, Kocher will interview SCBO pastors in their areas of expertise as the content grows to incorporate topics such as the Cooperative Program, International Mission Board, Church Planting, Disaster Relief, and other areas of SBC life.

“I think the sky is the limit with this because we just have so many people within our state who have really good insights,” Kocher said.

The podcast has a three-fold purpose.

“It’s equipping, encouraging, and connecting,” Kocher said.

You can find **Forward Together** on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and at <https://scbo.org/god-at-work>.

But wait, there’s even more!

The Updated Ohio Baptist Messenger

For almost four years, I have had the privilege of serving as the Managing Editor of the **Ohio Baptist Messenger**. Since day one, my goal has been to provide Ohio Baptist news in a more user-friendly format.

That day has come.

The updated **Messenger** layout is more streamlined than before, but it contains everything that’s in our current design, including articles by Dr. Jeremy Westbrook, SCBO President Dave Welsch, and SCBO catalysts, in addition to stories about Disaster Relief, Revitalization, Prayer, Pastoral Wellness, and many other ministries.

You will still find stories of God’s work in Ohio, and updates from our churches about how evangelism grants are impacting their ministries. We will continue to provide classified ads from churches looking for new pastors and staff, and graphics for upcoming events that will link you directly to the registration pages.

The February issue is available in two versions – our current “**Legacy Messenger**” and the “**Updated Ohio Baptist Messenger**,” which can be found at OhioBaptistMessenger.com

But wait, there’s one last thing!

Please, share our **Forward Together** podcast, **SCBO App**, and updated **Messenger** with others. Encourage your staff and ministry partners to download the app, listen to the podcast, and read the stories of God’s work in Ohio.

Together, we can make Ohio Baptists more connected, encouraged, and equipped to rediscover Gospel Multiplication!

SCBO Launches The Pastor Fit Initiative

By Ryan Strother, director of convention support

In the demanding world of ministry, pastors are often the first to offer care to others while being the last to prioritize their own physical well-being. We preach about the stewardship of our time, talents, and tithes, yet the stewardship of the “earthly tent” (2 Cor. 5:1) often falls by the wayside. In an effort to encourage physical health for pastors, the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio is proud to launch the Pastor Fit Initiative.

The Pastor Fit Initiative is a comprehensive program designed to provide Ohio pastors with the tools, accountability, and community needed to thrive physically. Leading this effort is Austin Mathis, pastor of Grace Church in Harrison and a veteran with eleven years of military service. As a certified personal trainer and CrossFit coach, Austin brings a unique blend of pastoral heart and physical grit to help leaders reclaim their health for the sake of the gospel.

The Pastor Fit Initiative came to mind after seeing the impact of ministry on the physical health of so many pastors. Ministry is often sedentary, high-stress, and food-filled. When Austin was elected as SCBO Second Vice-President in November 2025, I asked him if he would amplify his impact around the state by utilizing his expertise in physical fitness to spearhead this initiative.

The Pastor Fit Initiative is built on two primary pillars:

1. Quarterly Webinars: These sessions serve as an accessible entry point for any pastor looking to sharpen his understanding of health. The first webinar, “Fitness Made Simple,” was held on January 5, 2026, and focused on practical, sustainable habits. These webinars are free and are designed to be high-impact and low-barrier, offering expert insights that can be implemented immediately into a busy ministry schedule. These are led by Mathis or guest fitness and nutritionist experts.

2. Six-Month Cohorts: For those seeking a deeper transformation, the initiative offers dedicated six-month cohorts. These small groups provide a focused environment where pastors can move beyond theory into practice. Participants benefit from a monthly Zoom meeting offering expert coaching, personalized goals, and—perhaps most importantly—the accountability of a community of peers. These cohorts are not about vanity; they are about building the energy and vitality required to lead a congregation faithfully for decades to come. The first cohort begins on February 2, with new cohorts beginning soon.

The goal of Pastor Fit is simple: to ensure that Ohio’s leaders do not flame out due to preventable health crises. As Austin Mathis notes, “Invest in your fitness; invest in your future ministry.”

We invite every SCBO pastor to consider how their physical health impacts their leadership. Whether you are just starting your fitness journey or looking to take it to the next level, there is a place for you here.

Keep an eye out for the next webinar and 6-month cohort. If you have any questions, contact me at rstrother@scbo.org. Let’s get healthier together!

Super Summer 2026 Registration Now Open

Super Summer is a one-of-a-kind program that develops student leaders who are founded in biblical truths in order to make a kingdom impact. Super Summer 2026 is set for June 23-27, at Cedarville University.

There is simply nothing better than Super Summer for developing godly student leaders in Ohio. Please go to <https://scbo.org/supersummerohio> for more info, videos, and registration information.

Key Super Summer Registration Dates:

Early Registration Deadline, March 19, 2026. Register and pay a \$100 deposit of the \$265 total.

Final Registration Deadline, May 4, 2026. Register and pay a \$145 deposit of the \$310 total.

Questions about Super Summer? Please contact Keith Hurt, SCBO next gen director, at khurt@scbo.org.



2026 Collegiate Day of Prayer Set for Thursday, February 26

The concert of prayer movement forever revolutionized the role of prayer in the life of the church. The fruit of the First Great Awakening and the forerunner of the Second Great Awakening, it was a major catalyst to the Great Century of Missions (1792-1910).

One of the places the Second Great Awakening left its deepest mark was on colleges and universities. By 1823, almost every major denomination and university in America had embraced the practice of a concerted day of prayer for colleges. The last Thursday of February was established as a national day of prayer for colleges.

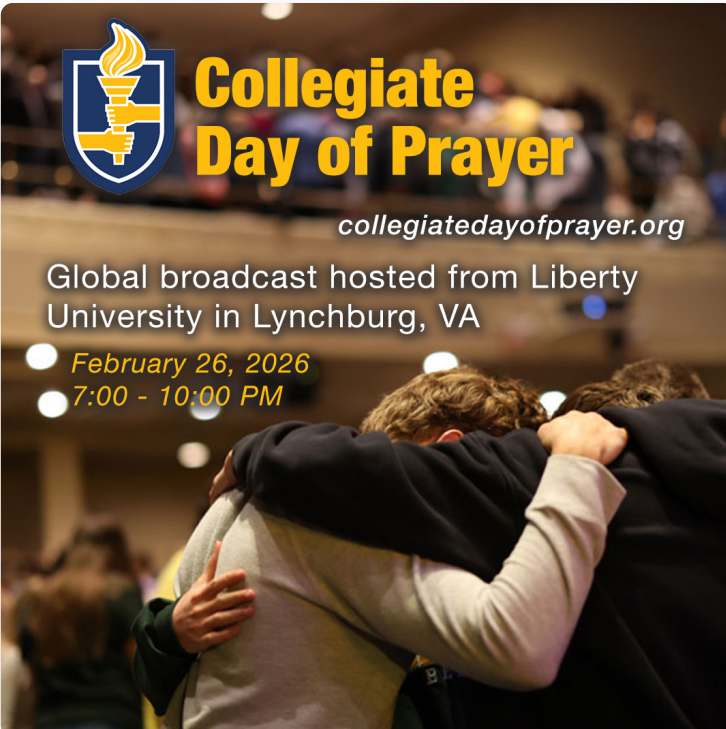
More than 200 years later, the **Collegiate Day of Prayer** remains a powerful invitation. Would you adopt three campuses in prayer?

Pick one that's near your home, one that's near to your heart (alma mater, where your kids go, etc.), and one that's in another nation. Adopting a campus means you're committing to pray for your selected college campuses on February 26. Whether you pray alone, with your family or friends, in your small group, or by hosting a gathering at your church, your prayers make a difference. You can adopt college campuses here: CollegiateDayOfPrayer.org

Matt Pardi, regional catalyst and pastor of H2O Bowling Green, reports a movement of God among students like we haven't seen in years. Students are having a gospel impact on campuses in record numbers.

Join us on **February 26, 2026**, for a global, multi-genera-

tional day of prayer for revival and awakening on college campuses worldwide. The global broadcast will be hosted from Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA. Believers in every nation are invited to join us in praying for 250 million college students worldwide. This is a call to action like never before—because as students go, so go the nations. For prayer guides and a link to the Bible app plans, go to CollegiateDayofPrayer.org.



Collegiate Day of Prayer

collegiatedayofprayer.org

Global broadcast hosted from Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA

- February 26, 2026
- 7:00 - 10:00 PM



SCBO» 2.19.26 10AM-1PM

NEXT GEN LEADERS CONFERENCE

go.scbo.org/NextGen
Grace Point Fellowship

HELPING THE NEXT GENERATION KNOW JESUS NOW

Working to Close the Friendship Gap for Pastors

By Stephen Owens, Northeast Region catalyst

Many of us are planning sermon series, worship services, and small groups now, and we are thinking about how they will affect our congregations and visitors. We hope they will benefit them spiritually, emotionally, and relationally, for we know those three things are connected.

As we grow spiritually, it should affect us emotionally and help us cultivate better relationships. We see this connection in the Great Commandment: “Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matthew 22:36-39, NKJV).

In a recent article by the Barna Group, “Inside the Friendship Gap for Pastors,” we see this connection flourishing among churchgoers, as 85% of churchgoers surveyed said they have flourishing relationships. But we don’t see that correlation among the vast majority of pastors. <https://www.barna.com/trends/pastors-friendship-gap/>

The same study indicated that 67% of pastors feel they have flourishing relationships, but two out of five pastors feel isolated and lonely.

The article indicates, “When the sermon ends and the sanctuary empties, many pastors face a different reality: deep, persistent loneliness.”

The survey goes on to say, “Loneliness isn’t always about being alone. For many pastors, it’s a deeper disconnect

– feeling unseen or unsupported amid constant community.”

This article resonated with me because my desire for 2026 is that Northeast Region pastors have opportunities to fellowship and develop organic friendships. Some pastors feel isolated and disconnected, as the Barna report indicates, and it is my hope we can bridge the gap by having events where pastors can connect, learn, grow, fellowship, and have fun.

This year, we will have multiple fun-oriented outings for pastors and their families. In addition, we will offer pastor-only events where pastors can share ministry challenges and glean wisdom from each other. I believe the words of scripture should ring true among pastors – love one another, John 15:12; encourage one another, 1 Thessalonians 5:11; pray for one another, James 5:16; and carry each other’s burdens, Galatians 6:2.

Pastor, please know I am praying for you, and planning events that I hope will encourage you and spark more fellowship across our region. In the meantime, if I can be of assistance, please reach out. My email address is sowens@scbo.org. God Bless.



MAN MAKER

✦ H2OCHURCH AND SCBO »

FEBRUARY 13-14 | XENIA, OH

REGISTER TODAY!



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

Begin New Partnerships at New Pastor and Staff Orientation

By Stephanie Heading, managing editor

One of the values of the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio is to “prioritize the pastor,” and it starts the day a pastor begins serving in an Ohio church.

On March 10, Dr. Jeremy Westbrook and members of the SCBO staff will welcome all new pastors, church staff members, and church planters at the New Pastor and Staff Orientation (NPSO) at the SCBO Office in Columbus. The event will run from 10 am to 2 pm, and lunch will be served. Spouses are welcome to attend.

The NPSO allows attendees to get acquainted with SCBO and learn about the partnership between SCBO and the local church.

“It’s a time for new pastors and staff to learn about SCBO, what we do, and how we partner with churches,” said Buzz Kocher, SCBO director of strategic initiatives. “And also for them to learn about the wider Southern Baptist Convention – mission boards, seminaries – what we do as a convention as a whole, and how the Cooperative Program works within our state with the 50/50 approach.”

Pastors will also learn about Ohio associations and the relationships between the associations and local churches, as well as SCBO’s regional approach to ministry through regional catalysts who serve as encouragers, helping local pastors in a myriad of ways.

New pastors will also learn that ministry in Ohio isn’t meant to be done alone.

“It’s a lot of partnering. It’s a lot of trusting,” Kocher noted. “We really aren’t a denomination. We are a network, a convention of churches that voluntarily cooperate together for the greater impact of the kingdom.”

In addition to gaining information, the event allows for networking with state staff and other pastors.

“I think NPSO will benefit pastors. Just knowing who we are, what we do, and why we partner gives us a connection,” Kocher said. “We don’t want them just sending their money in, just to send it in. We want to have a connection with them.”

Kocher believes that pastors and staff should know how SCBO uses Cooperative Program funding in its ministries.

“Some of these guys have an SBC background, and they are coming in from different states. But I would say, most of these guys are not coming in with Southern Baptist roots,” he noted. “So, it really just gives us the opportunity to share what the Southern Baptist Convention does as a whole.”

Registration for New Pastor and Staff Orientation is open at go.scbo.org/npsoc.

SCBO NEW PASTORS & STAFF ORIENTATION

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



Back to the Basics in Revitalization

By Mark Jones, revitalization consultant

In 1961, after a tough loss, Coach Vince Lombardi gathered his players and started training camp by holding up a football, saying, “Gentlemen, this is a football!” They then went through the playbook, starting with page one. The Green Bay Packers won five championships in the coming years, and the Lombardi trophy is now the goal of every NFL team.

“What does this have to do with revitalization? Besides the fact that Coach Vince Lombardi took a team and revitalized its strategy, the return to the basics is what strengthened the team. I want to remind Ohio Baptists of the basics and then share the customizable pathway you can take to become a healthier and stronger congregation.

The basics: According to statistics, more than 70% of our SCBO congregations are plateaued or in decline.

However, revitalization is a process of strengthening, and every SCBO congregation can be strengthened.

The first basic for every congregation is a culture of prayer for God’s kingdom and his will on earth as in heaven.

The second basic is obedience to the Great Commandments and the Great Commission. Our basic call as disciples is to make disciples.

The third basic is to cast and communicate a kingdom vision.

The fourth basic is to strategize and implement that vision.

Over the past three years, I have had over one hundred conversations with pastors and church leaders. Of those conversations, only 25% have taken advantage of an assessment to customize a path forward. Of the 25%, less than half have taken steps.

Some congregations have chosen to replant, but many more are seeking ways to strengthen through revitalization. Pastor Austin Mathis shared in a recent devotion to our staff that everyone makes decisions, but few move to the implementation of those decisions.

Decide today to get back to the basics and then list at least three steps to take. Make one step connecting with me, so that I may pray with you and provide assistance where needed.

I would love to have a conversation with you about a path forward. My desire is to see 100% of SCBO congregations living on the mission of multiplication. Check out www.scbo.org/revitalize. Connect with me via email at mjones@scbo.org. We have coaches in four of six regions to help.

Additionally, Dr. Ryan Strother and I are working with associational leaders to host pastor and spouse dinners in associations over the next year to briefly share the resources available to SCBO congregations.

Pastoral health and church health are a priority for the SCBO. You matter, and we want you to know that you are not alone.



ONE DAY

LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP

WITH RICK HOWERTON

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

Rick Howerton

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



Ted Oatts Joins SCBO as Ohio Baptist Foundation Consultant

By Stephanie Heading, managing editor



Ohio Baptist churches, pastors, and church members often need expert advice in areas such as financial issues, estate planning, real estate acquisition or liquidation, insurance, and legal matters.

SCBO has a new resource person to meet these needs.

On January 1, Ted Oatts joined the state convention as the Ohio Baptist Foundation (OBF) Consultant. Oatts is the CEO and Broker/Owner of Worthington Realty and a member of Dublin Baptist Church.

Oatts has years of experience in the public square and with the Ohio Baptist Foundation (OBF) and looks forward to using it to help Ohio Baptists.

“Having been involved with the OBF as a volunteer and as a donor for the last four decades, I have seen the good that comes from the donations of people who care about Ohio churches, pastors, and ministries that lift up the name of Jesus and help others,” Oatts said.

As the OBF consultant, Oatts plans to develop regional groups of experts and partnerships with like-minded organizations to assist pastors and churches, in addition to using social media, videos, and seminars to share information.

“My gifts, skills, and talents include music, administration, problem solving, knowledge, discretion, and wisdom,” he said. “Delivering the message of the OBF that the more you give, the more good we can do to help others is a message I believe I can effectively carry to pastors, churches, and SCBO members around the state.”

Oatts is planning an OBF Summer Seminar in 2026. The seminar, “Leaving a Legacy,” will make stops in Cincinnati in May, Dayton in June, Cleveland in July, and Columbus in August. More information will be released when it becomes available.

As Oatts begins this new position, he also has a personal goal.

“The older I get, the more focused I am on finishing well. It has been my passion to see the OBF grow so that more people become aware of the opportunity to give a gift that leaves a lasting legacy,” Oatts shared.

“My hope is to make the OBF a first thought rather than an afterthought to all who are interested in wise estate planning, financial planning, giving to your loved ones, and to the kingdom. Help yourself, your loved ones, and the kingdom at the same time. For more information, contact Oatts at toatts@ohiobaptistfoundation.org.

SCBO



Logos Bible Software Training

March 19 | 10 AM - 1 PM

Columbus, Ohio

go.scbo.org/logos

God at Work Across the Buckeye State



Christmas Celebration, Ahavah Church, Pataskala

On December 25, approximately 65–70 non-believers attended our gospel and Christmas Celebration. The event featured Nepali music, cultural dances, a sermon, and powerful testimonies. Nepali food was also served to all attendees.

We received a great deal of encouraging feedback and are now following up with attendees for further gospel conversations. We, the Ahavah Church, give thanks to God and to SCBO for their support, care, and prayers.

– Pastor Abraham Diyali, Ahavah Church



Seek & Share Truth Conference, Steel Valley Church, Youngstown

Thanks to the generosity of the SCBO, the Seek & Share Truth Conference 2025 was an incredible few days of rich conversation, thoughtful challenge, and genuine encouragement. Over four days, nearly 200 people came to Steel Valley Church to listen, learn, and engage deeply with the truths of the gospel. One highlight was a live debate between a Christian speaker and a Muslim speaker, which—while spirited at times—modeled respectful dialogue and sharpened everyone listening. Throughout the sessions, workshops, and hallway conversations, believers were equipped with practical tools for evangelism and gained greater confidence in defending their faith. Even more encouraging than the turnout was the sense that people left not only informed but also eager to lovingly share Christ with their unbelieving neighbors. We are already grateful for what God did—and excited for what He will continue to do through those who attended! We love our partnership with the SCBO!

- Pastor Brent Beck, Steel Valley Church



FBC Owensville Pastor Honored for 39 Years of Service

Pastor Richard Wolfram was recognized recently for serving 39 years as the pastor of First Baptist Church, Owensville. Wolfram is now Pastor Emeritus, and James Black is the new pastor. FBC Owensville is a member of the Cincinnati Area Baptist Association where Mark Snowden serves as AMS.

Ohio Disaster Relief Team Deploying to Jamaica

Ohio Disaster Relief is headed back to Jamaica on February 14-21. Our mission is to repair and replace metal roofing on churches and homes damaged by Hurricane Melissa. Our team will be working to repair and replace the roofing on a Jamaican school along with another SBDR team.

Please pray for the team as we travel and interact with the Jamaican people.



 **H2OCHURCH+SCBO**

WOMEN'S *weekend*

FEB 6-7

Athletes in Action Retreat Center
Xenia OH



Register Today!

go.scbo.org/WomensWeekend

Restored Marriage is Result of Church Plant's Efforts

By Erin Roach, Baptist Press writer



Pastor Darryl Baker and his wife Patrice (left) helped Charles and Brandy Fraley restore their marriage through Change City Church in the Columbus, Ohio, area. Photo submitted

PICKERINGTON, Ohio (BP) – Charles Fraley had walked away from God long ago, and he had even moved out of his house and left his wife and 6-year-old son behind when God drew Brandy Fraley to a marriage class at Change City Church in Pickerington, Ohio, near Columbus.

With her marriage all but officially ended, she tearfully told Pastor Darryl Baker and his wife Patrice what was happening.

“I had seen Change City on a Facebook ad,” Brandy told Baptist Press. She had been looking for a new church earlier this year after being out of church for a while, and she desperately needed God’s intervention in her marriage.

Charles, a veteran and the grandson of a pastor, agreed to meet with Baker simply to get Brandy to stop mentioning it. “He listened to my story, and he shared some things about his life with me, which actually made me feel a little better,” Charles said.

Even so, the husband was determined to get out of his marriage. “I was angry. I was confused. I was bitter. I was just lost. I was a ship with no rudder,” he said.

“While this was going on, I just had no peace. One day, I

was in my son’s room looking at his toys and his bed and everything, and I realized something was really wrong with me and I didn’t know how to fix it,” Charles said.

For the first time in years, he prayed. “It was the only thing I knew to do,” he said. Later that day, he heard a voice telling him to go home. Though he didn’t understand and didn’t want to go home, he obeyed.

The couple started going to counseling and to the marriage classes at Change City, and they began to slowly rebuild their relationship, Charles said.

“I have to be completely honest. I can’t give any credit to anyone but God because I know where my mind was,” he said. “There was nothing that no man could say to me or do to me to change my course.”

Since then, they’ve had bad days where memories resurface, but their response is to pray, Charles said. “Even if it’s 30 seconds, I’ll pray and just ask for peace and grace and mercy, and everything ends up OK.”

Brandy is grateful for the role Baker and his wife played in their story.

“When they say, ‘Changing hearts, changing homes, changing cities,’ they mean it,” she said of the church’s mission statement. “They are invested in people, not

even just their members. We weren't members. We weren't paying tithes. We weren't attending consistently at the time, but they still invested in us."

The marriage classes helped the couple learn to have healthy arguments and how to bring everything back to God, she said. Though they had premarital counseling and had a church background before, they "still didn't understand what God's calling for us as husband and wife was until we took that marriage class and learned it."

"When I finally stopped being stubborn and being rebellious and I truly had a conversation with God, I know that things really started to turn," Charles said. "It was foolish of me to take God out of my life."

Baker sees the change in Charles and Brandy and says their lives have made a 180-degree turn from when he met them only a few months ago. "It's like a totally different couple, and they both serve in the church now."

Change City is a 10-month-old church plant drawing as many as 135 people on Sundays. People are building relationships with one another, the pastor said, and "we're seeing homes totally be changed, not just individuals."

"We believe that if we can get strong marriages, it will build strong families, strong churches and strong communities," Baker told BP. "We're going back to the basic building block of what God did in Genesis – Adam and Eve."

"We have the answers right there. I tell our congregation it's an open book test, and the answers are right there in the book. Get back to the book. Let's focus on getting people biblically literate because we live in a biblically illiterate generation."

"If people can learn what God's Word says, they can apply it to marriage, parenting, finances, and other areas of life that present challenges," Baker said.

"When I think about it," Charles said, "I really just can't believe that we're here because if you had asked me months ago, I would have bet my house that I would not be in this place."

If he had gone to God when his marriage got rocky, "maybe I would have saved myself from years of torment and anguish, but I wasn't speaking to God at the time," Charles said.

Going into Christmas as a restored family, Brandy said, "When you feel you have absolutely nothing, you do have something. You have God. I had to learn again that I'm not alone in this world and read His Word and see what it says."



PRAYER
AT THE STATEHOUSE

**Wednesday,
March 11
10:00 am**

JOIN US
for a special prayer and worship experience
featuring Jeremy Westbrook

ccv.org/pray



SCBO 

**REGIONAL
WORSHIP
EVENTS**

**SOUTHWEST
REGION**

**FEBRUARY 17, 2026
6:00 PM - 7:00 PM**

The Village Church
6944 Main Street
Newtown, OH 45244

Job Postings

BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR | Hamersville Baptist Church, Hamersville

Hamersville Baptist Church is a rural congregation located about thirty miles east of Cincinnati on State Route 125. The church is seeking a bi-vocational pastor who lives within a reasonable driving distance of Hamersville and is active in an area Southern Baptist Church. The candidate should agree with the Baptist Faith and Message and meet the biblical requirements for a pastor. The congregation appreciates expository preaching, and most of the congregation uses the KJV Bible. We desire a pastor who believes in evangelism and can lead our church in reaching the lost and unchurched in our community. Please send a brief cover letter and a 1-2 page resume to: Pulpit Committee, Hamersville Baptist Church, PO Box 78, Hamersville, OH 45130. For any questions call or message David Coppedge, Interim Pastor at 513-505-2570

SENIOR PASTOR | First Baptist Church, West Jefferson

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

BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR | Ridgewood Baptist Church, Wadsworth

Ridgewood Baptist Church, Wadsworth (<https://ridgewoodbaptistch.org>) is seeking a bi-vocational pastor with hopes to move fully vocational in the future. We are seeking a man of God to love and lead us after the loss of our previous pastor to cancer. We are a congregation of 40-50 in average attendance in a community of approximately 25,000, with fifty percent of the population lost without Christ.

We are seeking someone preferably willing to preach from the King James Bible. We are seeking someone to love and lead us to engage our community with the gospel of Jesus Christ. We do not desire someone with a reformed persuasion. We believe scripture teaches the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. We desire a pastor who believes evangelism is important and part of the discipleship process.

If you are interested in becoming our next pastor, please send your resume to: Ridgewood Baptist Church, c/o Search Team, 7891 Ridge Rd., Wadsworth, OH 44281, or email our AMS at summitassociationams@gmail.com.



SEND RELIEF
SERVE TOUR
TOLEDO

**JOIN US TO
SERVE OUR CITY**

**September 25-26,
2026**



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

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

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

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

SCBO
The State Convention Of Baptists In Ohio