



Missouri Free Will Baptist

# GEM Magazine



**BETTER  
TOGETHER**  
ECCLESIASTES 4:9-12



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# Better Together – CHOOSING THE RIGHT KIND OF TOGETHER

For several months, we have been writing about, discussing, and embracing the theme of *being better together* as a state association. Scripture gives us many examples—both positive and negative—that apply directly to our lives today.

God designed us with a built-in need and desire to form alliances, relationships, and bonds with others. These connections can be beneficial and constructive or harmful and destructive, depending on the nature of those involved and the influence they have on one another.

## Joining Together for Evil

After the great flood, God observed that humanity was united—but not for a righteous purpose. *“Behold, the people is one... and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do”* (Genesis 11:6). Korah and his followers joined together in open rebellion against the Lord, with a tragic end (Numbers 26:10). King Rehoboam rejected the counsel of the elders and allied himself with the foolish advice of his peers, bringing chaos to the kingdom (1 Kings 12:8).

In the New Testament, we see evil alliances again—people conspiring to suborn witnesses, stir up riots, and oppose the preaching of the gospel.

Does this happen in the church today? Sadly, yes. Have you ever been invited to a “concern” meeting—without the pastor being informed—about “the direction things are going in the church”? The usual outcome of such gatherings is division, resentment, and the sins of the tongue.

It’s not just laypeople—pastors and leaders are also vulnerable. A leader harboring bitterness, jealousy, or anger can spread that spirit to others, harming both colleagues and congregations. I recently had a personal reminder of this when one of my children pointed out that I was focusing only on the negative in a situation, ignoring the equally obvious positives. My words influenced her perspective. Not long after, my pastor preached on Philippians 4:8—God’s timely reminder to guard our thoughts.

Most of us would never intentionally “join together for evil.” But Jeremiah 17:9 warns, *“The heart is deceitful above*

*all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”* It is possible to unite with the right people but be wrong in our attitudes, words, or actions. That’s why we must prayerfully examine our motives and choose our companions wisely.

## Joining Together for Good

There are many biblical examples of unity for God’s glory:

- Egypt’s Pharaoh aligned with Joseph’s God-given wisdom, saving a nation from famine.
- Naomi and Ruth’s faithfulness to one another blessed generations (Matthew 1).
- In Acts 1, the believers gathered together in prayer, ushering in the Day of Pentecost. Later, *“the saying pleased the whole multitude”* when the church chose its first deacons (Acts 6:5).
- The Antioch church commissioned Paul and Barnabas as missionaries, then later sent financial relief to suffering believers in Jerusalem.
- Paul’s letters were read in multiple churches, showing close fellowship between congregations.

Unity strengthens us: iron sharpens iron; one hand washes the other; one believer admonishes another in love; strong congregations support struggling ones.

Here in Missouri, 135 Free Will Baptist churches cooperating together can send church planters, run a youth camp, host retreats and seminars, and offer counseling to hurting ministers and families.

## The Choice Before Us

Negativity flows naturally, like a current carrying us downstream—it requires no effort and no decision. But being *better together* demands an intentional choice.

We must strive against the current, seeking ways to cooperate, encourage, and support our fellow sojourners who are also paddling upstream.

Let’s be like the builders in Nehemiah 4:6: *“So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.”*

May we join together—for God’s glory.



from the Missions Director, Steve Reeves



## 2025 Spain ETeam

In the early 90's, Missionary to Brazil, Ken Eagleton, asked a simple question. What would it be like to select high school students from the USA, train them, then take them to one of our FWB mission fields for discipleship and ministry? He felt that college wasn't early enough to introduce young people to missions. So, in the summer of 1992, He led the first TEAM to Brazil. More than 30 years later, teams continue to visit mission fields inside and outside the United States each summer. The program is now called ETEAM in honor of Ken Eagleton.

ETEAM is a program run by FWB International Missions. Former Missionary to the Ivory Coast, Neil Guilliland (affectionately known by ETeamers as 'Uncle Neil'), Leslie Nichols (Director of Mobilization at IM), and Lauren and Cody Herren (past ETeamers and future IM missionaries) have led ETEAM for the past several years. Uncle Neil is supposed to be retired, but if he is any indication of what retirement looks like, I think I will just keep working. All IM staff are involved.

In the summer of 2025, 98 students and 22 leaders converged on Welch College in Gallatin, TN, for 5 days of training and discipleship. Then 11 teams spent twelve days serving in California, the Virgin Islands, Cuba, Jamaica, Panama, Ecuador, France, Spain, Southern Spain, Bulgaria, and Japan. On their return to the USA, the teams spent two days debriefing and assessing their experiences.

The success of ETEAM can't be overstated. Of our present IM missionaries, 75% began as ETeamers. It is so exciting and encouraging to watch 98 teenagers worshipping, praying, eating, serving, learning, and growing together. Each team becomes like a family during these 3 weeks. The schedule is physically grueling. Each team easily spends 14 hours per day in service, evangelism, cultural adaptation, and just plain work. They learn from missionaries on the field up close and very personally. It is no exaggeration to say these 3 weeks change these students for the rest of their lives. Two of our students on ETEAM Spain announced God's calling to be missionaries.

This past summer, Missouri was well represented at ETEAM with 8 ETeamers. Trinity Hempen from Calvary

Fellowship in Fenton (Team Ecuador); Alec Bowman from Copper Mines Church, Fredericktown (Team Cuba); Audrey Huebner from Fellowship Church in Park Hills (Team Cuba); William Patton from Leadington Church (Team Ecuador); Macy Garren from Macedonia Church in Purdy (Team Panama); Desmond Pontious (Team Southern Spain), Moriah Duncan (Team Bulgaria) and Caleb Duncan (Team Spain) all from Rejoice Church in Columbia all served well and we are so proud of them. Issac and Madelyn Boyer from Ozark Family Church also served as ETEAM Interns. Linda and I had the privilege of leading ETEAM Spain.

I would encourage any FWB student who is a high school sophomore, junior, or senior to apply to serve on ETEAM. Just go to [IMINC.org](http://IMINC.org) and click on 'serve with us' and follow the links. There is an online application. The application process closes October 15, 2025, for ETEAM 2026. I know it is hard for parents to send their student half-way around the world with someone they might not know very well, but the result will be life-changing (in the best way). As Uncle Neil says, "You won't get the same child back." Even if the student never goes to the mission field, he/she will support missions and have a more global worldview for the rest of his/her life.

Thanks to all the parents who have allowed their child to serve on ETEAM and to all the pastors and churches for supporting their young people in this endeavor.

Linda and I have led three ETEAMs, and it has changed our lives. We love the students we have served with, and it is so exciting to watch them grow and follow Jesus fervently. It is my opinion that ETEAM is the best program that FWBs have, especially when it comes to our young people. If you have questions or need more information, contact IM or just call me. I will be glad to talk with you about this amazing opportunity.





## - STATE -

**Paxton - Grace Fellowship (Cape Girardeau):** Grace Fellowship held several outreach events during the past summer.

**Thebeau/Chapman - Mosaic (Rolla):** Mosaic Church is seeing a steady stream of first-time visitors each week. Please continue to pray as they go through the building process.

**Fleming - Freedom Point (Florissant):** Seven new believers were baptized in July. Freedom Point is quickly running out of space.

**Sanchez - Esperanza (Grandview):** Esperanza Church saw 4 young people accept Christ at Camp Niangua this summer. They will be baptized this fall.

## - NORTH AMERICAN -

**Webster - Connect (Florida):** Four more people were baptized at Connect Church in July.

## - INTERNATIONAL -

**Mercer (University of Missouri):** Bradley and Madison are continuing the "Let's Speak English" outreach. Three students have been saved this summer. Baptisms coming soon.

One LSE student, Charlotte\*, is returning home to Mumbai, India, as a sister in Christ! Another, Ashley\*, a new

sister in Christ as of Easter of this year, testifies about Jesus her "Holy Father" being present in everything. Though her father is a Hindu Brahman, she counts the cost and considers Jesus to be infinitely worth it. And, Bradley was able to lead James\* to the Lord last month at a one on one Bible study in the middle of a local coffee shop. Jarim, excited about his newly found faith in Jesus, is eager to strengthen his daily walk with Jesus.

\* names changed

**Bailey (Japan):** Ken and Judy were busy hosting ETEAM, CMP, and a group from the Waipahu, HI Church this past summer. They were able to have several outreach events.

**Speer (Japan):** 87 students from a local college attended an outreach event led by the Saporro Church and a group of Christian students from South Korea.

**Turnbough (Spain):** In June, the Villalba Church had ETEAM Spain help with the food distribution ministry of the church, as well as helping with some yard work.

**Duncan (Ecuador):** Adam and Carol were in the USA this summer to get their son, Caleb, settled in to begin his college studies at the University of Missouri, Columbia. Pray for Caleb as he begins his freshman year.

**Provow (Bulgaria):** Josh and his new bride, Bea, are now married and busily serving in Shumen. Silas Houser will be joining Team Shumen soon.

## Ozark Family

Ozark Family Church ordained five new deacons on June 22nd.



## O'Fallon First

We celebrated Pastor Rick Dement and wife Jaime ministering at the First Free Will Baptist Church O'Fallon for 40 years on June 22, 2025. Congratulations!



## Jone's Chapel

The church in Stella, MO has celebrated several baptisms this year. Pictures are Ella LaFramboise, TJ Brown, Robert Tiner and Cooper White. Brad White pastors the church.



## DeSoto First

Pastor Tim Hackett baptized Blaine Bennett, Korbin Rogers, and Mike Podorski. Dalton Calahan, Logan Ca-fourek, Maddy Cafourek, McKenzie Feeler, & Trudy Rymer were baptized & became members. Pat, Ed, Sandy, Amanda, Missy, Betty & Terry joined the church. May God be praised for enriching FFWBC of DeSoto with these baptisms and memberships!



## Grace

Lynda Mudd was baptized at Grace FWB in Arnold on July 27 by their pastor Jackson Watts.



## Freedom Point

Pastor Matt Fleming baptized seven on July 13th at the church in Florissant, MO.





# Camp 2025

There's just something special about Camp Niangua in the summertime. Tucked into the hills of the Ozarks, this place has become a sacred space—where week after week, lives are changed, faith is deepened, and students encounter the presence of God. Summer 2025 was no exception.

Over the course of three powerful weeks, nearly 1,000 Free Will Baptists from across Missouri gathered at Camp Niangua. Each session had its own unique flavor—different ages, different energy—but the heart remained the same: unity, anticipation, and a passionate desire to see God move.

**Teen Camp (June 9–13)** launched our season with intensity and purpose. Derek Altom (VIII Ministries and Randall House, TN) brought rich truth from the Word of God, calling us to embrace our role and responsibility in the Kingdom. He challenged students be genuine followers of Christ, craving the things of God and to follow Jesus. Morning discipleship sessions gave youth groups the chance to go deeper—processing and applying the message with their leaders in meaningful, scripture-centered discussions.

**Pre-Teen Camp Session 1 (June 23–27)** continued the momentum. Evangelist Seth Romines (Fellowship FWB, Park Hills, MO) brought a series that focused on the idea of “Better Together.” We looked at the relationships we have with others (both friends and our elders), with your Bible and with your Savior. His messages resonated with truth, clarity, and heart.

**Pre-Teen Camp Session 2 (July 7–11)** wrapped up our season with a return visit from Keenan Moss (Grace Fellowship FWB, Cape Girardeau, MO). Keenan's messages this week were about what God can do if we will listen to Him and allow Him to use us. It centered on the lives of Elijah and Elisha.

Throughout all three weeks, we witnessed the undeniable work of the Holy Spirit. Seventeen students gave their lives to Christ, and many more made decisions to go deeper in their faith. The altars were full. Conversations in the dorms turned into gospel moments. Evening devotions sparked real questions and real commitments. Camp wasn't just fun—it was fruitful.

**Camp Niangua 2025 was a summer of salvation, surrender, and spiritual growth.**

To every church, counselor, leader, and student who made this summer what it was—thank you. Missouri Free Will Baptists, you continue to invest in the next generation, and it's making an eternal difference.

We're already counting down the days to next summer.

Andy Rains	Jacob Jones	Ben Ryan
Ray Paxton	Tim Hodges	





# ACCEPT THE MISSION NAFWB

Downtown Kansas City is hot in the middle of July. In spite of the heat nearly 4000 Free Will Baptists arrived to participate in the 2025 National Association of Free Will Baptists.

On Saturday July 19th, 154 volunteers met to serve three local churches. At Berean FWB Church in Independence, 30 participants visited homes, distributing a thousand gift bags. Berean Pastor Carl Short shared his excitement: *"I have been praying God would take these thousand bags and handful of volunteers and multiply them — just like He did in so many miracles in the Bible."* At Church of Faith, (formerly Beacon church in Raytown) 60 volunteers distributed 500 door hangers and worked on landscaping. *"It was really hot!"* said Ken Akers, IMPACT director. *"But we were able to get a lot done, and the new landscaping looks great. I am always appreciative of the people who give their time to this event."* At Esperanza FWB Church, (formerly Central FWB in Grandview) 64 volunteers assembled 150 school supply backpacks before distributing 500 cards to families in nearby apartment complexes, inviting them to receive the free backpacks during a back-to-school event. This is the 20th year that IMPACT has been a part of our national convention.

The Sunday Morning convention service was a positive change. The youth were present with the adults and participated in leading worship in song. The Sunday School lesson was a tag team effort by young men who were part of Truth and Peace. Following their fine job of teaching Columbia, Mo pastor Aaron Pontious delivered a very challenging sermon.

Inner city Wichita, Kansas pastor Josh Bush delivered a powerful sermon on Sunday evening drawing on the challenges, victories, and joys of a difficult yet vibrantly growing ministry in a difficult place.

Monday evening Calvary Chapel (Buffalo, Mo) Retiree Pastor Doug Earls shared the Word with Tennessee Shiloh Hackett bringing the message on Tuesday evening. Wednesday evening services are always special with hundreds of missionaries entering the building to applause and shouts of praise and recognition. Joel Teague, IM worker to France, delivered a timely mes-

sage with several responding to the invitation. Joel's wife, a native of France, was saved because of FWB mission efforts in her home country.

Rolla, Missouri state missionary Faron Thebeau was elected to serve on the North American Ministries board. Lance Boyer was reelected to the Richland Ave. Board. Jackson Watts was recognized for serving the Theological Commission after having termed out.

Thanks to all the volunteers who served at the Missouri Executive and Mission Booths. Your participation was extremely helpful.

Dozens of attendees commented on how enjoyable the convention was and expressed their appreciation to Missouri and Kansas for hosting what is an historic convention. Never before have two states united to host a national convention. Thank you Missouri Free Will Baptists.

The sentiment of Missouri pastor Robby Colten (Bethel FWB, Marshfield) says a lot. *"I had no idea that FWBs were doing so much and had so many ministries around the world. I was in awe of what I saw and experienced. Everyone should attend."*






# STAND TALL

## NATIONAL

### CTS YOUTH COMPETITION

## MO RESULTS

#### Drawing - Age Category C

2nd Place: Sophia Hodges

#### Mixed Media - Age Category D

2nd Place: Trinity Hempen

#### Single Photo - Age Category A

3rd Place: Kellie Ash

#### Photo Essay - Age Category A

1st Place: Charlie Cogdill

#### Needlework - Age Category D

3rd Place: Kensley Gipson

#### Conceptual Art - Age Category D

1st Place: Allie Garren

#### Short Article - Age Category A

1st Place: Charlie Cogdill

#### Personal Experience Essay - Age Category A

2nd Place: August Cogdill

#### Slideshow Presentation - Age Category C

2nd Place: Molly Banks

#### Individual Bible Memorization

Third Grade - 1st Place: Kaylee Dedmon

Seventh Grade - 1st Place: Grace Brittenham  
2nd Place: Kenzie Pettus

Tenth Grade - 2nd Place: Colton Nisbett

#### Group Bible Memorization

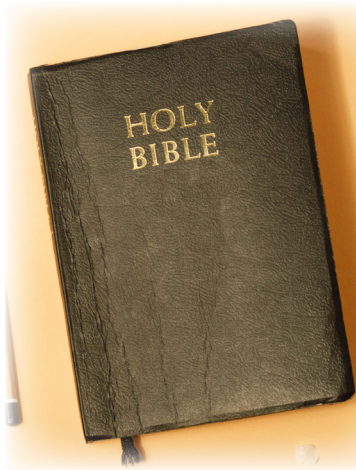
Fourth Grade - 3rd Place: Paislyn & Shay

# CONGRATULATIONS!!!

# From Our Boards

## C.E Board

### The Bible Still Works



There's a quiet confidence that settles in when we remember that something time-tested still holds true. Like a well-worn path that always gets you home, the Bible keeps leading us to truth. In a noisy, rapidly changing world, this ancient text still speaks with divine clarity. The Bible still works.

Many things around us have changed. We learn in digital classrooms. We study on screens. We disciple in a distracted age. But God's Word hasn't lost its power. It's not out of touch. It's not outdated. It's still "living and active" (Hebrews 4:12), and it's still "useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16).

When we share the Bible—whether in Sunday School, small groups, children's ministry, preaching, or talking over coffee—we aren't offering others our own wisdom. We're passing along God's truth. And what a confidence that gives! The same Word that convicted hearts in the early church and encouraged believers under persecution, is the very same Word that we hold today.

But for that Word to work in us, we must open it. Read it. Study it. Teach it. Live it. We must allow the Holy Spirit to shape us with it. In an age of soundbites and scrolling, Christians must lead the way in slow, steady, Scripture-shaped living. People need to see that the Bible still matters, not just because we say so, but because it changes us.

So, keep opening your Bible. Keep teaching from it. Keep trusting it. God still uses His Word to accomplish what He desires (Isaiah 55:11). The Bible still works. It still works in us, and it will work in others too.

~ Joshua Kennon, Christian Education Board

## PALMER LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

September 7th & 21st • October 12th & 19th  
November 2nd & 16th • December 7th

Lebanon First  
280 Van Buren Street  
Lebanon, MO 65536



"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" 2 Timothy 2:15 This verse applies to every believer. The MOFWB is providing THE PALMER INSTITUTE as a means of providing excellent training and instruction for pastors and members of their congregation. Laymen and ladies are encouraged to attend.

#### COURSE TITLES ARE:

1. Renewing the Spiritual Leader
2. Developing a Healthy Church
3. Organizing a Church for Evangelism and Ministry
4. Becoming a Godly Leader and Communicator
5. Understanding and Learning to Deal with Conflict and Change

REGISTER  
HERE



Brother Doug Earls has revised and updated the materials and teaching to bring a fresh approach to these important topics. Registration and dates are on our state website, MOFWB.COM. Also, use the QR Code, or call the State Executive Office.

## Camp Board



## MEET OUR NEW CAMP DIRECTOR



We are excited to introduce and welcome **Chase Spradlin** as the new Camp Director for Camp Niangua! Chase brings with him a deep heritage of faith as a third-generation Free Will Baptist preacher, along with a strong passion for camp ministry. His experience includes serving at both Cumberland Camp in Tennessee and Camp Beaverfork in Arkansas, where he has developed a heart for discipling young people and creating meaningful, Christ-centered camp experiences.



Chase is currently serving as Youth Pastor at Sutton FWB Church in Pocahontas, Arkansas, where he has been actively involved in ministering to the next generation. He and his wife, Claudia, are also preparing for a new adventure of their own, as they are expecting a baby at the end of this year!

The Spradlins will be moving to the Camp in mid-September to begin acclimating to camp life and getting to know Free Will Baptists across the state. We encourage you to pray for them during this transition and to extend a warm welcome as they begin this exciting new chapter. We are thrilled to have Chase and Claudia join our Camp Niangua family and look forward to the ways God will use them to impact lives for His Kingdom.

## Youth Ministry Board



# November 8

United FWB Church, West Plains, MO

Elevate Equip | Encourage

**Missouri Free Will Baptist Youth Board on Facebook**



**Speaker: Matt Fleming, MMB State Missionary at Freedom Point Church in Florissant, MO. Matt and his wife, Justine, have three young boys.**

# In Loving Memory



## **Lisa Boyd**

July 12, 1964 - June 24, 2025  
Wife of Steven Boyd, pastor  
of Liberty FWB Church.

Liberty Association



## **Rev. R.E. Helsley**

Dec. 11, 1932 - July 27, 2025  
Former pastor of Union Grove  
(Caudle), New Home, Wolf Creek,  
and Oak Grove.

Mission Association



To read the full obituaries for these that have gone on, visit our state website at  
[mofwb.com/gem-magazine/gem-links-articles](http://mofwb.com/gem-magazine/gem-links-articles)



## **Missouri Free Will Baptist 2025 State Calendar**

September 19-20	MOFWB Women's Ministry Retreat - West Gate Branson Woods Resort
October 27-29	Retiree Retreat - Lodge of the Ozarks, Branson
November 8	E3 Conference - United FWB Church, West Plains, MO
November 3	General Board Meeting - State Office, Lebanon, MO

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Palmer Leadership Institute - September 7th & 21st,  
October 12th & 19th, November 2nd & 16th, December 7th



**All events & additional information, as it becomes  
available, can be found at [mofwb.com](http://mofwb.com)**



# Ministry Gems

## News Tidbits from Around the State



**At Friendship FWB Church** in Branson, we were blessed to have Dylan, Katie, and Asher Brazil with us for our Sunday evening service recently. They are working under the North American Ministries with two other families in Hilo, Hawaii. They were with us the following Wednesday as well and prepared a common dish from the area they will be ministering in. Everyone really enjoyed the dish and their fellowship.



**Pastor Victor Sanchez & wife Valerie**, Esperanza Church in Grandview had 13 students who attended Camp Niangua this summer. Four of the students were saved. **NOTE:** They are in need of a small bus or van for transporting people for services if your church has one to donate.

### Get Your Church Name Out There!

Do you know that it is reported that 8,100 people search for a church near them every month? If your church does not have a website or Facebook page to promote who & where you are, please consider doing so. This is an excellent way to get your name out there! Also, share that information with our National Executive Office, and they will update your information in our National Directory (anna@nafwb.org). **Please INCLUDE a picture of your church.** And don't forget to post your service times.

GALLATIN, TN - On May 9 **Welch College** conferred degrees on 44 students, including Ellie Simpson daughter of Ken & Jodi Simpson.

**Preachers and Teachers**, would you include a challenge to answer God's call to ministry as part of your sermon or lesson? "We have not because we ask not." "Pray the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth laborers!"

**Think about it.** Churches that support the COOP plan of giving provide 21% of the income for Camp Niangua, 56% for the Retiree ministry, 69% of Youth Ministry, and 89% of the CE board. Think about it. Congregations that support COOP are making it possible for us to be blessed by these ministries. Ask about it. Does your church tithe to the Missouri State COOP fund? If not, now is a good time to begin.

**The National Association Executive Office** provides many resources for churches and pastors. Many of these are free, or at a greatly reduced cost.

### Church Answers Resources

(Pay close attention to the discount codes)



**3 For 30** - Resources to help us Reach, Train, & Give



**Bless App** - A great app to help you know who your neighbors are & to help you pray for them.



**Know Your Community** - Who lives within a 10-15 minute drive of your church? What is the largest age group in your community? What are the social needs in your community? Get all of this information and more with this resource. Well worth the investment.



**The HOPE Initiative** - A simple, though not simplistic approach to reaching your community with the Gospel



**The Shepherding Initiative** - Helping searching pastors and churches find each other as well as assisting churches without a pastor.



**Growing Together** - Miscellaneous valuable helps.

Pastor and church leader, would you please share the resources, events, and training that are being provided with your congregation? Please take this magazine to your pulpit or class & announce what is happening.

### Attention all students 9-12th grade!

**2026 Truth and Peace and YET applications are due October 15! Your references must submit their forms by October 31.**



# Why Meet? A Brief Defense of Religious Meetings

“Not another meeting.” So goes the sentiment of millions of busy Americans every day.

In the wake of COVID-19, “Zoom fatigue” has become a problem responsible companies must guard against. Our weariness with meetings is perhaps rivaled only by our wariness toward meetings. If we are not exhausted by them, we are certainly skeptical of their importance and benefits.

Religious people have good reasons to second-guess their exhaustion or skepticism about meetings. For example, most churches use confessions, constitutions, and/or covenants that express a commitment to gather regularly as the local body of Christ. While this commitment is first to come together for worship, there are other kinds of gatherings.

Most Christians identify other meetings or gatherings as “business meetings,” “members’ meetings,” and/or denominational meetings. Such gatherings are at least implied in their church’s stated commitments. For example, here is an excerpt from the covenant of a historic Baptist church: We will walk together in brotherly love, as becomes the members of a Christian Church, exercise an affectionate care and

watchfulness over each other and faithfully admonish and entreat one another as occasion may require....

We will work together for the continuance of a faithful evangelical ministry in this church, as we sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines. [1]

Consider: Where should this obedience happen? In a church hallway? During an in-home visit? Over the phone or through text thread? Most would say, “All of

the above.” However, what about a special-called meeting? That is to ask, are there times when we need to come together to “care,” “faithfully admonish,” or “work together to sustain our discipline or doctrine”? Can we imagine a pressing question to be answered, a dispute to be resolved, or a crossroads to navigate?

For whatever difficulties accompany meetings with our church family or sister churches, gathering to express our obedience to God and commitment to one another is essential. Wherever we differ on the “how,” the “when,” or the “what,” we should not doubt the “why.”

In the face of our weariness or wariness, I suggest four reasons why we meet as churches and groups of churches. In

naming these reasons, I aim to clarify both the “what” and the “why.”

## (1) Strengthen Ties

It is next-to-impossible to grow together in love if we are never together in the flesh. How often do preachers challenge those attending “online church” to return in person? How often have they privately or publicly questioned absentee members’ commitment to grow and serve? Yet the same could be said of countless Christian leaders and laymen with respect to meetings.

When we frequently neglect meetings, we undermine our ability to strengthen relationships. Relational ties do more than help us to stay informed, as valuable as that is. They help us to grow in understanding, sympathy, concern, and trust.

Sometimes the most surprising opportunity for strengthening these bonds is not even during a meeting itself. Traveling with others to and from meetings provides personal opportunities to get to know one another better. Often as we head home from a meeting, we need help thinking through what we have heard and seen. Sometimes the water cooler conversations during breaks also provide similar opportunities to exchange notes. Whenever or wherever, no one would be coming together were it not for the meeting.

## (2) Discern and Decide

Most organizational documents require that people be physically present to make decisions. Some things cannot simply be mailed in.

Meeting gives constituents, delegates, or members a chance to participate in a public hearing in which a question, problem, or opportunity is presented. The issue can be debated, supported, opposed, or more deeply investigated. The toxicity of online culture does not provide adequate space for such deliberations. We need to be together. The closer the proximity, the less likely words will be twisted, nuance will be abandoned, and vital context will be overlooked.

The alternative is hearing everything second-, third-, or fourth-hand, and expecting to know what really happened and what was really said. Discernment and decision-making require presence. While we may not understand the stakes of every issue in advance, we have no grounds to complain

about decisions made in meetings we chose not to attend. Meetings provide the occasion to execute the will of a group of people—that is to say, the group who show up.

Yet showing up does not automatically convey that we are already entrenched on any one side of the issue. Showing up conveys that we cared enough to show up. Ideally, it shows that we are prepared to be good-faith participants in the discussion and discernment of weighty concerns. We need to meet to discern and decide in wise, transparent, and healthy ways.

### **(3) Clarify and Guard Identity**

Assumed in the meeting of a group of people is that it exists for a specific group of people. Presbyterians do not attend Baptist meetings and vice versa. Democrats do not attend Republican meetings and vice versa. Notwithstanding the handwringing over identity issues in the modern world, we would not have debates, conferences, podcasts, and publications if we did not think that identity was somehow real and observable.

However, identity is not always static. It is dynamic, changing as the individuals who comprise an organization, denomination, or group change. Depending on the type of entity, the group likely has a core document to ground their identity over time. Still, anytime people and circumstances change, perspectives can change. Focus shifts. Priorities migrate. Whether this reality is ideal or desirable is an entirely different question; identity must be clarified, maintained, and even guarded.

How can we clarify and guard our identity if we never gather? If we never gather, how can we say with one voice, “This is where we stand” or “This is where we’re headed”? And if we never gather, then how do we know who “we” even is?

### **(4) Test Ideas and Build Consensus**

Many have opted out of meetings because of the messiness and complexity of so many issues. However, the stakes are not always high or overly ambiguous. Sometimes a meeting agenda is not full of potential landmines. Instead, a regularly scheduled meeting is an opportunity for people to gather to test ideas and potentially build consensus.

Recently I enjoyed Cal Newport’s, *Slow Productivity*. [2] Newport emphasizes the need for those in what is commonly called “knowledge work” to do fewer things and work at a natural pace (as opposed to a frenetic one). This approach to work paves the way for one to focus more on quality, not quantity. He gives numerous examples of some of the greatest and most fruitful breakthroughs happening from a slower, more deliberate process. Meetings provide space for that deliberation.

Unfortunately, people often show up for a meeting that lacks a clear agenda, and they leave frustrated or bored. Other times people do not show up prepared to participate in an honest exchange of ideas about one or two substantive issues. They just want to move through an agenda, get a free meal, and head home. This mindset misses the vital opportunity that meetings provide to test ideas and build consensus around positive directions.

#### **The Problem of Thirds**

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges to meeting is not simply the lack of a clear “why” but the “who.” Three groups exist in any Christian entity, whether a church, denominational body, or parachurch organization.

First, the establishment show up for everything, seldom rock the boat, and often pay the minimal dues (literally or otherwise). If nothing else, they are reliable. But their greatest weakness is to assume that the organization will always be around. They are often asleep when massive problems slowly multiply just below the surface.

Second, the disengaged show up for virtually nothing. They are usually uninformed or misinformed. When asked to participate, they constantly ask aloud or to themselves, “What’s in it for me?” Their greatest weakness is their willingness to benefit directly or indirectly from something they are not committed to, while withholding valuable input, energy, and/or resources.

The final group seems to hold the most promise but may be the most at risk: the leader class. They are involved. They contribute. They labor. They care. But they are tired. They are pulled in too many directions. They are trying to pick up more and more slack when the establishment gradually recedes from participation and the disengaged remain skeptical, cynical, or aloof on the sidelines.

The strengths and contributions of the leader class are clear, but the weaknesses nearly overshadow them: if something does not change, the leader class will become mere establishment, or worse, disengaged. That is where divided focus, frustration, and disappointment eventually lead.

Without a clear understanding of the purpose of meetings, no one will be a healthy, long-term participant at the table.

A commitment to a Christian organization is not only a commitment to God. It is also a commitment to others and generations yet unborn. If we do not steward our ministries wisely now, caring especially about the parts that require patience, organization, vision (i.e., meetings), then we will not leave any ministries for our descendants to steward. We owe our descendants more than that.

~ Jackson Watts, Grace FWB Church  
and MOFWB State Moderator

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[1] “Church Covenant,” Capitol Hill Baptist Church, /[www.capitolhillbaptist.org/about-us/what-we-believe/church-covenant/](http://www.capitolhillbaptist.org/about-us/what-we-believe/church-covenant/), accessed May 30, 2025 (emphasis added). The Capitol Hill Baptist Church’s website notes that their ministry has functioned with a covenant since 1878.

[2] Cal Newport, *Slow Productivity: The Lost Art of Accomplishment Without Burnout* (New York: Portfolio, 2024).

# Financial Report

Please note: The amounts listed are for two months,  
June-July, 2025

## COOP Disbursements

19% MO Missions.....	\$34,338.57
21.5% Gen/Exec.....	\$38,856.80
8.5% Youth Camp.....	\$15,361.99
2% Youth Ministry.....	\$3,614.59
2% Christian Education.....	\$3,614.59
2% Retiree Ministry.....	\$3,614.59
9% State Retirement.....	\$16,265.64
3% Show-Me.....	\$5,421.88
33% Nat'l Ministries.....	\$52,954.95
Randall U (.1121).....	\$6,685.72
<b>Total Disbursed.....</b>	<b>\$180,729.29</b>

## RECEIPTS

### COOP

Alton.....	\$200.00
Amity.....	\$190.24
Aulsbury Chapel.....	\$2,277.70
Bailey.....	\$952.00
Bailey Chapel.....	\$350.50
Belton.....	\$789.37
Bethel- Marshfield.....	\$835.26
Black Oak.....	\$1,559.88
Byrd.....	\$976.00
Calvary Chapel.....	\$9,788.46
Calvary Fellowship.....	\$9,177.46
Christ Chapel.....	\$2,330.00
Clifton Sunday School.....	\$23.60
Copper Mines.....	\$2,627.38
Cornerstone.....	\$1,040.00
Cuba.....	\$1,243.00
De Soto 1st.....	\$3,422.00
Esperanza FWB.....	\$720.97
Faith - Fair Grove.....	\$624.80
Faith Chapel.....	\$1,596.00
Farmington 1st.....	\$7,607.61
Fellowship.....	\$3,480.00
First Day.....	\$1,888.58
Fredericktown 1st.....	\$1,350.00
Freedom Point.....	\$441.94
Freeman Chapel.....	\$1,019.00
Friendship.....	\$362.38
Generations.....	\$1,265.91
Good News.....	\$893.60
Gospel Light.....	\$800.00
Grace.....	\$3,941.47
Grace Fellowship.....	\$929.00
Grace Pointe.....	\$840.00
Grant Avenue.....	\$1,255.27
Hannon.....	\$1,769.00
Hartville.....	\$4,155.00
Hazel Creek.....	\$3,784.48
Hopewell.....	\$1,550.00
Houston 1st.....	\$1,154.47
Hurryville.....	\$867.00
Koshkonong.....	\$1,002.70
Leadington.....	\$3,294.00
Lebanon 1st.....	\$2,498.00
Lebanon Green Hills.....	\$300.00
Liberty - Gatewood.....	\$100.00
Marshfield.....	\$553.98
Mill Creek.....	\$849.84
Mine La Motte.....	\$150.41
Monett 1st.....	\$457.60
Mosaic.....	\$2,392.06
Mountain Grove 1st.....	\$1,938.20
Mt. Pisgah.....	\$1,363.00
Neosho 1st.....	\$1,668.00
Nevada.....	\$1,461.75
New Hope.....	\$660.00
New Life- Licking.....	\$1,278.78
Number One.....	\$50.00

Oak Grove- Mtn. Grove.....	\$775.81
Oak Hill.....	\$756.00
O'Fallon 1st.....	\$4,781.83
One Accord.....	\$1,007.40
Ozark 1st - Heritage.....	\$608.45
Ozark Family Church.....	\$9,538.07
Park Hills 1st.....	\$1,544.40
Parkview.....	\$549.00
Pleasant Home.....	\$407.60
Pleasant Ridge- Urbana.....	\$364.00
Purdy 1st.....	\$2,000.00
Rejoice.....	\$12,720.00
Republic.....	\$752.13
Resolve.....	\$200.00
Rock Chapel.....	\$1,327.60
Safe Harbor.....	\$150.00
Seymour.....	\$2,117.00
Smyrna.....	\$374.00
Springfield 1st.....	\$2,666.00
Stockton.....	\$605.60
Stonebridge.....	\$1,688.00
Thayer.....	\$3,851.00
Trinity.....	\$2,449.20
Twin Oak.....	\$2,296.54
Union Light.....	\$548.30
United.....	\$4,415.59
Unity.....	\$1,460.00
Verdella.....	\$1,470.30
Viburnum.....	\$236.50
Victory- Alton.....	\$3,454.45
Victory- KC.....	\$1,832.50
Waynesville 1st.....	\$2,630.16
West Plains 1st.....	\$3,295.00
Wilderness.....	\$1,137.63
Willow Springs.....	\$1,640.58
Wolf Creek.....	\$4,981.00
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>\$180,729.29</b>

### Show-Me Plan

Alan Kinder.....	\$200.00
Aulsbury Chapel.....	\$180.00
Belton.....	\$350.00
Black Oak.....	\$360.00
Brent Emmerson.....	\$150.00
Byrd.....	\$50.00
Calvary Chapel.....	\$90.00
Cleo Reeder.....	\$90.00
Copper Mines.....	\$300.00
Cuba.....	\$240.80
D6 Family Ministry.....	\$69.74
De Soto 1st.....	\$1,660.00
Esperanza FWB.....	\$60.00
Farmington 1st.....	\$1,030.00
Farmington 1st- WAC.....	\$100.00
Fellowship.....	\$780.00
First Day.....	\$943.99
Frank Webster.....	\$180.00
Fredericktown 1st.....	\$400.00
Freeman Chapel.....	\$1,440.00
Gary Tune.....	\$96.64
Generations.....	\$212.58
Gospel Light.....	\$1,800.00
Grace.....	\$1,054.00
Grace Pointe.....	\$310.00
Grant Avenue.....	\$210.00
Hannon.....	\$1,000.00
Hartville.....	\$350.00
Jerry Rader.....	\$40.00
Joshua Provow.....	\$150.00
Kevin Williford.....	\$40.00
Leadington.....	\$750.00
Lebanon 1st.....	\$260.00
Macedonia - Purdy.....	\$3,000.00
Mill Creek.....	\$140.00
Mine La Motte.....	\$300.00
MOFWB COOP.....	\$5,421.88

Mosaic.....	\$350.00
Mountain Grove 1st.....	\$120.00
Mt. Pisgah.....	\$853.00
Mt. Pisgah Women.....	\$100.00
Neosho 1st.....	\$500.00
New Hope.....	\$400.00
New Life- Licking.....	\$302.00
Number One.....	\$120.00
Oak Grove- Mtn. Grove.....	\$397.00
Oak Hill.....	\$84.00
O'Fallon 1st.....	\$4,714.34
Ozark 1st - Heritage.....	\$500.00
Ozark Family Church.....	\$450.00
Park Hills 1st.....	\$225.50
Pleasant Home.....	\$400.00
Pleasant Ridge- Urbana.....	\$140.00
Purdy 1st.....	\$900.00
Rejoice.....	\$380.00
Republic.....	\$40.00
Resolve.....	\$200.00
Richwoods 1st.....	\$479.57
Rock Chapel.....	\$800.00
Southeast Association.....	\$120.00
Springfield 1st.....	\$900.00
Stockton.....	\$120.00
Stockton Auxiliary.....	\$120.00
Thayer.....	\$1,350.00
The Hasting Trust DTD.....	\$180.00
Trinity.....	\$285.00
Trisa Johnson.....	\$71.37
Twin Oak Auxiliary.....	\$55.00
Union Light.....	\$650.00
United.....	\$950.00
Unity.....	\$490.00
Verdella.....	\$1,470.30
Viburnum.....	\$30.00
Victory- KC.....	\$536.50
Virginia Bunton.....	\$500.00
Waynesville 1st.....	\$1,144.10
West Plains 1st WNAC.....	\$75.00
Willow Springs.....	\$265.00
Wolf Creek.....	\$600.00
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>\$46,177.31</b>

### Missouri Missions

Bailey.....	\$200.00
Calvary Fellowship.....	\$966.66
Cuba.....	\$90.30
D6 Family Ministry.....	\$476.56
De Soto 1st.....	\$120.00
Friendship.....	\$170.00
Grace Fellowship.....	\$2,500.00
Leadington.....	\$150.00
Loretta Minney.....	\$75.00
Mosaic.....	\$9,000.00
Mt. Pisgah Women.....	\$80.00
O'Fallon 1st.....	\$1,500.00
Oliver Adamson.....	\$330.00
Ozark 1st - Heritage.....	\$200.00
Ozark Family Church.....	\$20.00
Pleasant Ridge- Urbana.....	\$50.00
Republic.....	\$50.00
Rock Chapel.....	\$181.00
Ryan Akers.....	\$150.00
Scott Keith.....	\$150.00
Thayer.....	\$60.00
William Moore.....	\$75.00
Youth Camp.....	\$4,000.00
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>\$20,594.52</b>

### North American Ministries

Belton.....	\$251.94
Cuba.....	\$90.30
De Soto 1st.....	\$913.00
Grace.....	\$40.00
Hartville.....	\$100.00

Lebanon 1st.....	\$200.00
Mountain Grove 1st.....	\$70.00
New Hope.....	\$150.00
Park Hills 1st.....	\$100.00
Southeast Association.....	\$50.00
Stockton.....	\$60.00
Trinity.....	\$60.00
Twin Oak Auxiliary.....	\$35.00
Union Light.....	\$50.00
Verdella.....	\$50.00
Waynesville 1st.....	\$145.00
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>\$2,365.24</b>

### International Missions

Alvin Hook.....	\$50.00
Black Oak.....	\$200.00
Christ Chapel.....	\$100.00
Copper Mines.....	\$1,300.00
Cuba.....	\$180.60
De Soto 1st.....	\$884.00
Fellowship.....	\$2,982.58
Fredericktown 1st.....	\$680.00
Freida Hays.....	\$75.00
Generations.....	\$132.58
Gospel Light.....	\$1,490.00
Grace.....	\$762.00
Hannon.....	\$300.00
Hartville.....	\$440.00
Houston 1st.....	\$1,101.14
Jones Chapel.....	\$1,800.00
Leadington.....	\$1,050.00
Lebanon 1st.....	\$225.00
Loretta Minney.....	\$75.00
Mill Creek.....	\$200.00
Mill Creek- YA Class.....	\$50.00
MO FWB Mission Board.....	\$3,550.00
Neosho 1st.....	\$100.00
New Hope.....	\$150.00
Oak Hill.....	\$168.00
O'Fallon 1st.....	\$2,025.00
One Accord.....	\$180.00
Ozark Family Church.....	\$2,000.00
Park Hills 1st.....	\$350.00
Pleasant Ridge- Urbana.....	\$100.00
Rejoice.....	\$6,255.00
Rock Chapel.....	\$50.00
Southeast Association.....	\$100.00
Stockton.....	\$150.00
Thayer.....	\$230.00
Trinity.....	\$60.00
Twin Oak Auxiliary.....	\$15.00
Union Light.....	\$150.00
Verdella.....	\$1,594.06
Victory- KC.....	\$371.62
Waynesville 1st.....	\$490.00
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>\$32,166.58</b>

### ACM

Bailey.....	\$180.00
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>\$180.00</b>

### Berea Ministries

Bailey.....	\$140.00
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>\$140.00</b>

### Ch-TN

Bailey.....	\$700.00
Belton.....	\$20.00
De Soto 1st.....	\$160.00
Derik Frederiksen.....	\$96.64
Grace.....	\$80.00
Hartville.....	\$100.00
Mill Creek.....	\$50.00
Mountain Grove 1st.....	\$125.00
Union Light.....	\$217.50
Unity.....	\$300.00
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>\$1,849.14</b>

**Harvest Childrens Ministry**

Twin Oak Auxiliary ..... \$25.00  
 West Plains 1st..... \$80.00  
**Total ..... \$105.00**

**MO CE**

D6 Family Ministry ..... \$46.49  
**Total ..... \$46.49**

**MO Retiree**

RHP Commission ..... \$46.49  
**Total ..... \$46.49**

**MO Youth Ministry**

RHP Commission ..... \$46.49  
**Total ..... \$46.49**

**Getsemani**

Stockton..... \$30.00  
**Total ..... \$30.00**

**Rainbow Ministries**

Hannon ..... \$50.00  
 Union Light ..... \$300.00  
**Total ..... \$350.00**

**Randall U**

Farmington 1st..... \$100.00  
 Fellowship..... \$60.00  
 Thayer ..... \$200.00  
**Total ..... \$360.00**

**Welch College**

De Soto 1st..... \$120.00  
 Farmington 1st..... \$100.00  
 Thayer ..... \$200.00  
**Total ..... \$420.00**  
**WNAC**

Stockton Auxiliary ..... \$100.00  
 Twin Oak Auxiliary ..... \$10.00  
**Total ..... \$110.00**

**Youth Camp**

Cuba ..... \$100.00  
 D6 Family Ministry ..... \$185.97  
 De Soto 1st..... \$160.00  
 Hartville..... \$100.00  
 Mt. Pisgah..... \$15.00  
 Oak Hill ..... \$84.00  
 Ozark Family Church..... \$20.00  
 Stockton Auxiliary ..... \$30.00  
 Thayer ..... \$200.00  
 Trinity..... \$120.00  
 West Plains 1st..... \$1,155.00  
 Willow Springs..... \$100.00  
**Total ..... \$2,269.97**

**Youth Camp Development**

Carl Short ..... \$1,000.00  
 Lebanon 1st Women ..... \$600.00  
 Mt. Pisgah..... \$1,000.00  
 Waynesville 1st..... \$3,000.00  
**Total ..... \$5,600.00**

**Young Children's Home**

Thayer ..... \$227.00  
**Total ..... \$227.00**

Thank you for  
 supporting these  
 FWB ministries!!

**Available Churches****Cuba FWB**

Cuba, MO

Contact: Pam Weber  
 314-393-9654  
 Ed Fields  
 573-368-0746

**First FWB**

Richwoods, MO

Contact: Kevin Pogue  
 573-678-2318

**Grant Avenue**

Springfield, MO

Contact: Mike Comstock  
 417-350-9543

**Oak Hill**

Union, MO

Contact: Richard Webb  
 636-744-2402  
 Lindell Wood  
 636-210-0941

**Pleasant Home**

Mtn. Grove, MO

Contact: Shirley Reed  
 417-948-2365

**Stonebridge**

Troy, MO

Contact: Milt Nettles  
 636-856-7568

**Available for Fill-In****Cody Alley**

Lebanon, MO

573-664-6945

**Rich Barker**

Park Hills, MO

573-664-6947

**Lynn Beck**

Springfield, MO

417-812-3823

**Jack Brown**

Kansas City, MO

816-267-0550

**J.D. Chadwell**

Mansfield, MO

417-224-5894

**Izaak Davis**

Fordland, MO

417-876-7689

**Jimmy Harrison**

Cuba, MO

573-885-4422

**Jonathan Hoodenpyle**

Aurora, MO

479 236-1488

**Gene Howell**

Ozark, MO

618-926-5000

**Dan Minkler**

St. Robert, MO

559-977-2299

**Lindell Richardson**

Desloge, MO

573-366-1850

**Justin Ruble**

Lebanon, MO

417-718-4539

**Jason Williams**

Ozark, MO

417-260-7078

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**D6 Family Ministry**

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