

# The Messenger

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Holston Baptist Association

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February, 2025

**FROM THE DESK OF THE AMS**

**by Troy Rust**

## Baptism: Measure of Success?

*Patterns of Dysfunction, Part 4*

You may be wondering why baptism is included in an article on worldly alternatives to a gospel focus. "Baptism isn't worldly!" you may protest. Correct, but when wrongly understood it reflects the world's desire for bottom line production numbers instead of biblical conversions. To be fair, much of the last century of Southern Baptist culture has encouraged this model. As a result, many of us have been raised to believe the more people a church baptizes the healthier and more fruitful it is. If they have been done properly this notion should be accurate. Sadly, when baptism becomes your goal your standards may weaken to produce more baptisms.

### **The Real Goal**

It may surprise you to hear that baptism is not our ultimate goal. What is it then? Consider these words from Jesus to His disciples:

*You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.*

- John 15:1

*Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.*

- Matthew 7:2

*continued on p2*



### **Tell the Next Generation**

by Anna Huggins

"We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done." Psalm 78:4 (NIV). This verse emphasizes God's desire for all mankind to know him, and he has given the task to us.

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## Baptism

*continued*

Jesus' ultimate goal for us is to become disciples that bear lasting fruit, which brings glory to God. He warned that true Christians are identified by their obedience to God, not merely by their professions of faith. While we cannot know with absolute certainty that everyone who claims Christ is a true believer, there are a few things we can do to clarify Christian discipleship.

### ***Baptism Rightly Understood***

According to David Bennett, the altar call became commonplace in evangelical churches by the 1820s. Before that era, believer's baptism was the moment a Christian publicly professed faith in Christ. While I'm not against a proper gospel invitation, the modern separation of profession and baptism has led often to the downplaying of baptism as a box to be checked. It appears that Baptists have been so afraid of being identified with groups who believe that baptism saves you, that they have created a sizeable gap between profession and baptism. In reality, baptism is a BIG DEAL! According to Acts 2:38 it is your first step of obedience as a Christian.

It says to the church and the watching world 1) the old me has died and been buried with Christ, 2) I have been raised to live a new life, 3) I am now committing myself to follow Jesus in word and deed, and 4) you are a family of witnesses who can walk with me and hold me accountable.

### ***Proper Distinctives***

A couple of metaphors can help us better understand the place of baptism. When compared to a marathon, baptism is the starting line, not the finish line. Again, baptism doesn't save you, but it's the first act of obedience you display. We should never lead people to Christ and then turn them out on their own. When compared to having children, baptism signifies a baby has been born. Babies need lots of attention and personal care. We must never treat the newly baptized like graduates who are ready to leave home.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the two church ordinances we observe. Baptism is the initiating ordinance that physically identifies us as part of the body.

*continued on p5*



As his children, we can rejoice in the Lord's blessings and gift of salvation. Why keep it to ourselves? We need to be obedient and faithful to tell others the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Our ministry at the Johnson City Baptist Center gives the opportunity to reach many who need Jesus in their lives. The last few months our youth have been studying in the book of Acts. We have just read of Peter's vision from the Lord, in Acts 10, that whatever God has made clean, we should not call unclean. In a brief passage, Peter is led by the Holy Spirit to tell the truth about Jesus and his saving grace. What a truth for us to understand and share, that salvation is for everyone.

As the youth and children are learning about God's love and plan for their lives, we ask that you walk with us. Whether that is to pray, share by giving donations, or coming to teach the Bible, all these ways are important in being obedient to tell the next generation.

This summer provides a great opportunity for you and your church to reach many in the community of the Baptist Center. We need churches to sign up for VBS or Backyard Bible Club. Please consider joining us in following the Lord's commands. Connect with me through phone or email to reserve a time in June or July.

We are laborers together with God.  
Blessings,

*Anna Huggins*

Director of Ministries Johnson City Baptist Center

# In Christ Conferences



This month, we will be hosting a Bible Conference at Southwestern Baptist Church intended to ground your church members and neighbors *In Christ*.

The desire to host a conference at this scale is rooted in two needs. The first was a request for a trustworthy and cost-effective men's event that churches could send a men's ministry to attend. We ended up being able to include a women's event as well!

A second need driving this conference is the reality that Christians lose sight of the real purpose for their faith. Believers are constantly at risk of drifting away from their true identity in Christ due to the pressures of the world, the desires of the flesh, and the lies of the Devil.

We can easily look for quick-fix solutions while forgetting the foundational repair we can only find *In Christ*.

**Call us or visit online at [holstonba.org/conference](http://holstonba.org/conference) to reserve your spot!**

## In Christ Conferences for Men & Women

- Location: Southwestern Baptist Church, Johnson City, TN
- Dates
  - Friday, February 21, 6:00-9:00 p
  - Saturday, February 22, 8:00a-12:00p

### Meals Included

- Dinner Friday night 6:00p
- Breakfast Saturday morning 8:00a

### Keynote Speakers

- Dr. Hershael York (Men)
- Tanya York (Women)

### Worship Leaders

- Matthew Powell (Men)
- Hannah Sauls (Women)

### Breakouts

- ***Faithful to the Finish Line:***  
Honoring Christ in Life and Death with Pete Tackett, Greg Burton, and Craig Ponder
- ***Raising & Sending Arrows:***  
Parenting in Christ through Life with Mike & Anna Huggins
- ***Sex, Gender & Technology:***  
Remaining In Christ in a Changing Culture with Jonathan Chapman



# Baptism

*continued*

People sometimes ask whether we are baptized into the Body of Christ or into the local church, and the answer is both. Baptism identifies us with all true believers in Christ, but there has to be a point of connection with the Body. There is no place in the New Testament for free agency, or what I often call “tumbleweed Christianity.” Consequently, we baptize people into the fellowship of a local church where they can receive fellowship, strength, and accountability as they worship, work, and witness in Jesus’ name. To refuse to unite with the local representation of Christ’s Body is an act of rebellion that says His bride is unattractive, and which calls the truthfulness of one’s profession into question. The Lord’s Supper is the fellowship ordinance shared by believers walking in fellowship with Christ and His Church. How many of the people you see observing the initiating ordinance of baptism are regularly observing the fellowship ordinance of the Lord’s Supper? The answer should cause us to take greater pains with how we approach baptism.

## ***Whom should we baptize?***

The only baptism I want to discourage is an unbiblical one. New Testament baptism is observed by people who show clear signs of conversion: 1) they understand the finished work of Christ, 2) they display signs of new life in Christ, and 3) they are willing to count the cost and lay down their lives in service to Jesus. That means we don’t baptize people just because they want to be baptized. People wrongly seek baptism for reasons ranging from fire insurance to getting the preacher off their back. If we baptize them while they remain unconverted, we have actually pushed them further from Christ as they think they are now ok and are unwilling to be challenged by a clear gospel presentation. Only a biblical conversion and baptism leads to the production of lasting spiritual fruit to the glory of God. Anything less is hypocrisy.

## ***Where do we start?***

*concluded on p6*



# Baptism

*concluded*

*Where do we start?*

Start by sharing the gospel regularly. Don't be discouraged if you are witnessing to people who have not yet come to Christ. Remember, God is doing the saving, we are just doing the telling. When a person is truly converted fruit will come. That fruit is not as easy to measure numerically as are baptisms, but we know it when we see it. The Spirit brings love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithful, gentleness, and self-control. That fruit strengthens a church; mere numbers may speak against us more than they speak for us.

Let's go and make disciples!

with hands to the plow, *Troy Rust*



# Classifieds: Job Board

## **Cherokee Baptist Church Bi-Vocational Senior Pastor**

Jonesborough, Tennessee

**Part-Time**

Please send resume, references and cover letter (experience and vision) to Cherokee Baptist Church, 143 Mayberry Rd. Jonesborough, TN 37659. ATTN: Pastor Search Committee or via email: [cherokeepastorsearch@gmail.com](mailto:cherokeepastorsearch@gmail.com).

## **Doe River Baptist Church**

**Music Director**

Elizabethton, TN

**Part-Time**

Doe River Baptist Church (Elizabethton, TN) is seeking someone who is eager to share their gift of music as a part-time Music Director.

## **Oak Grove Baptist Church**

**Music & Worship Leader**

Gray, TN

**Part-Time**

We are looking for someone with experience and preferably Music Education to help us develop a blended style worship service.

## **Towering Oaks Baptist Church**

**Facilities Manager**

Greeneville, TN

**Full-Time**

Towering Oaks Baptist Church is seeking a hands-on Facilities Manager.



Feb 7	Feb 13	Feb 21	Feb 25
Willie Lunsford	Randall Morton & Paul Garritt	Mark Newman	Bart Richardson



*Mark your Calendar*

**Associational Bible Drill**  
**April 8th, 2025**  
**6:00 pm**  
 (Southwestern-Johnson City)

Are you thinking about starting Bible Drill? Make plans to attend the Associational Drill and contact the Bible Drill team for more information.

**State/Regional Drill:**  
 April 26th  
 Wallace Memorial  
 Knoxville, TN



Questions? Call Susan Schiwitz (423-794-8182) or Anna Huggins (423-767-0578)

**ALL WOMEN, YOUNG ADULT WOMEN & YOUTH GIRLS ARE CORDIALLY INVITED**

March 01, 2025 9am to 12 noon

**'SHARE THE GOSPEL!'**

**WOMEN'S Conference**

**SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKERS**  
**LINDSEY BIRT, KIM CRUSE**  
**ANNA HUGGINS**

Online registration at  
<https://holstonba.org/bbc-wom/>  
 Opens 2/1/25, Closes 2/16/25  
 \$10.00 registration fee

*"Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well." 1 Thess. 2:8*

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## Pray for Churches Without Pastors

- Blountville First Baptist
- Boone Trail
- Cherokee, Jonesborough
- Colonial Heights
- Clifton View
- Friendship Chapel
- Muddy Creek
- Piney Flats First Baptist
- Tennessee Avenue





# SAVE THE DATE

Clark Street Baptist Church  
Invites all women to a Ladies  
Tea

Saturday, April 12, 2025  
9:00-11:30am



HBA  
Student  
Conference  
March  
21-23, 2025

A silver anchor graphic with a white banner wrapped around it that says "HOLD FAST".

I PRESS ON TO TAKE HOLD OF THAT FOR WHICH  
CHRIST JESUS TOOK HOLD OF ME. PHIL. 3:12

BREAK-

{ Creating a New Scorecard  
for Group Ministry Success }

THROUGH

MINISTRY COHORT  
SPRING 2025

MISSIONS GET-TOGETHER

what **JOY**

The word "JOY" is written in large, white, bold letters. The letter "O" is filled with a pattern of colorful flowers in shades of red, orange, yellow, and blue. The letters "J" and "Y" are also decorated with floral patterns. The word "what" is written in a cursive font to the left of "JOY".

APRIL 4-5 \* FIRST BAPTIST DICKSON  
DICKSON, TN

The logo for TennesseeWMU, featuring a stylized 'W' and 'M' inside a circle.

Visit [TNWMU.ORG](http://TNWMU.ORG) for Event Schedule, Breakout Sessions, Lodging  
Recommendations and more!



2ND ANNUAL  
**children's  
 ministry  
 directors**  
 APPRECIATION  
 BRUNCH  
 SATURDAY  
**APRIL 5TH AT 10 AM**  
 TRINITY-JONESBOROUGH

**2025  
 SPRING  
 MEETING**

6:30 p.m. April 17  
 Arrowhead Church  
 Greeneville, TN

**MONDAY  
 MANNA**  
 FEBRUARY 24  
 10:30 - 12:30

**IN CHRIST**  
*The True Identity of the Believer*

**FEB 21-22 2025**  
 Conferences for Men & Women

with *Hershael & Tanya York*  
 Gathering in Johnson City, TN

**\$25**  
 per person

**LEARN MORE**  
[holstonba.org/conference](http://holstonba.org/conference)