

The Messenger

Holston Baptist Association

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FROM THE DESK OF THE AMS

Surviving, Not Thriving

by Troy Rust

When asked how he was doing, my dad had several creative responses. One of his favorites was, "Well, I'm still kickin'!" He would then laugh and begin what was usually a jovial conversation. Despite his lighthearted response, he was certainly looking for more in life than survival.

While most churches would equate vitality with conversion, baptism, discipleship, new members, thriving ministry, etc., some have settled for survival. This mindset is worded in a variety of ways ranging from "keeping the doors open" and "paying the bills" to attributing the church's ill health to the fact that "people just don't want to go to church anymore." If we compared this malady to one's physical health, these churches could be likened to a bedridden man who is no longer in touch with the world.

Bob used to work hard every day. After several decades of work, he retired in hopes of taking it easy and travelling with his wife. Unfortunately, his health began to fail. He couldn't do the things he planned because his body wouldn't let him. One day he drove to the grocery store and forgot how to get home.

After the doctor diagnosed him with Alzheimer's, he stayed close to home and someone else drove him when he had to travel. Then one day he tripped and fell, breaking his hip. He recovered from the pneumonia that set in after the fall, but he was never the same again. He sleeps most of the time now. The home health nurse makes sure he is bathed regularly and that his vitals are steady. His wife, though a bit feeble herself, feeds him the meager amounts he eats and tries to help him if she can. Every once in a while, his mind clears and he recalls the joys of days gone by. A few minutes later he drifts off to sleep, a mere shell of the strong man he once was.

Although the story above is fictional, you've probably seen a similar scenario in living color. If someone asked how Bob was doing, you wouldn't smile and say, "Well, he's still alive!" You'd likely acknowledge with your eyes and the tone of your voice how hard it is to see him in such a state of decline. Without miraculous intervention, Bob's days will be difficult and probably few.

Jesus didn't die so that your church could merely exist. Furthermore, He didn't save you just so you could go to heaven when you die. Yes, heaven will be glorious when we get there, but we're not home yet. In the meantime, we don't want to spend our days with a waiting room mentality merely talking about how great the destination is going to be.

Churches decline and die because of sin. No, it probably isn't moral failure or embezzlement or anything else that would make the headlines.

continued on p2

In this Edition

- p1 -- Article, From the Desk of the AMS: "Surviving, Not Thriving" By Dr. Troy Rust
- p2 -- Ministry Update: 2025 HBA Student Conference Summary, from Jimmy Jordan
- p3 -- 2025 Spring Meeting
- p4 -- Job Board & HBA Summer Internship Announcement
- p5 -- Announcements and Upcoming Events

Surviving, Not Thriving (Cont.)

Selfishness and apathy are usually the unseen elephants in the room.

Churches usually start with a burden for the lost, so they focus their energy and resources on reaching the lost and discipling new converts. Sadly, this zeal often shifts in a few years to maintaining the church and satisfying the members. Making disciples (which begins with reaching the lost) becomes a lower priority. Once the key influencers become power brokers they work to defeat any ideas or leaders they don't like as they enshrine the good old days as the model for all fruitful ministry. As the power struggles continue, pastoral tenures shorten, most spiritually mature people get tired of fighting and leave for

spiritually mature people get tired of fighting and leave for greener pastures, and disciple making becomes a forgotten priority. The members who remain typically just want "a few young people" to start attending and get the church back on its feet. They're not looking for robust worship and intentional discipleship; just give them enough people to make them feel "successful." But they're not successful. They may not even qualify as a New Testament church any longer ... but they're still open.

If the cause is sin, then the cure is repentance. They need to repent of the pride and idolatry that has brought them to death's door, and strive once again to be a gospel-centered church. Instead of praising the past and

over programming the saints, they need to go find the lost and bring them to Jesus.

"Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place —unless you repent."

Revelation 2:5

When Jesus rose from the dead, His followers couldn't help but tell others. Let us change our churches by going and telling our neighbors that we serve a risen Savior!

With hands to the plow,

Dr. Troy Rust

HBA Associational
Missions Strategist

MINISTRY UPDATE

2025 HBA Student Conference

from Jimmy Jordan

This year's student conference took place March 21-23 at Ridgecrest Conference Center near Black Mountain, NC. It was a celebration of 40 years, with the conference having started back in 1985. Throughout the years this conference has been a highlight for many church youth groups and benefits so many churches, both in our association and some outside. Those in attendance were over 730 with some 36 churches represented, coming from areas as far as Byrdstown and Cleveland (TN).

The theme for this year's conference was Hold Fast and came from Philippians 3:12, "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me."

During the course of the weekend students were encouraged in various ways. First, students were presented with considering what Jesus had done for them and then urged to respond to the free

gift of salvation, if they had not already. Secondly, they were admonished to hold on to Jesus wholeheartedly, knowing he would faithfully carry each one of them throughout their lives. Lastly, students were challenged to press on in their walk with the Lord, understanding there was still work to be done in finishing God's purpose and will, until he would return.

The youth ministry team asks that you continue in prayer for

continued on p3

2025 HBA Student Conference (Cont.)

students as results from the weekend continue to pour in. Feedback received so far shows dozens of decisions that were made during the course of the weekend and including: salvations, rededications, and even students that have surrendered to a call to ministry.

We look forward to ongoing efforts to reach, teach and encourage our youth to live bold transformed lives for the glory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

If your church or youth leader would like to be more involved in youth ministry work in and around the Holston Baptist Association, please reach out to the Association's office (email hba@holstonba.org or call (423)929-1196) or Jimmy Jordan (jimmyj@fbcgreeneville.com).

Update From

Jimmy Jordan

HBA Student Ministries

HOLSTON BAPTIST 2025 SPRING MEETING

**CREATING A CULTURE OF
MULTIPLICATION**

APRIL 24, 2025
DINNER AT 5:00PM
MEETING AT 6:30PM

ARROWHEAD
CHURCH, GREENVILLE
1703 W MAIN STREET,
GREENVILLE, TN 37743

RSVP Messengers to the HBA
Office at hba@holstonba.org

April Birthdays

April 6th -- Greg Burton
April 11th -- John Shanks
April 17th -- Robbi Carty
April 18th -- Steve Pate

April 24th-- David Rouse
April 25th-- Charles Morgan
April 27th-- Luka Temaj



HBA Job Board

Holston Baptist Association

Summer Intern

Johnson City, TN | Part-Time

This summer internship will last from June 2nd to July 26th and exists to provide short term discipleship and training in ministry to a small group of 18-25 year-olds who are pursuing a call to vocational ministry/missions long term. Contact the HBA Office for more information and apply at holstonba.org/internship by Friday, April 4th, 2025.

Cherokee Baptist Church

Senior Pastor

Jonesborough, TN | Bi-Vocational

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.

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.

Boones Creek Bible Church

Administrative Assistant

Johnson City, TN | Part-Time

Looking for a hybrid (On-site and Remote) Administrative Assistant at \$18-20/hour. Accepting applications immediately. Contact Andrew Isbell at andrew.isbell00@gmail.com for more information.

Woodlawn Baptist Church

Youth Director

Bristol, TN | Part-Time, Bi-Vocational

Woodlawn Baptist Church is accepting resumes for a bi-vocational part-time Youth Director starting immediately. Send resume to 1400 Southside Avenue, Bristol, TN 37620, ATTN: Personnel Committee or email to woodlawnbaptistbristol@btes.tv

Visit holstonba.org/jobs to view more information or apply for the listed openings.

SAVE THE DATE

Clark Street Baptist Church
Invites all women to a Ladies
Tea

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





Trail Ministry Spring Schedule

Trail Worship Service & Meal

- Sunday, May 4, 2025
- 11:00 a.m.-12:00p.m.
- At Chestoa Picnic Area (subject to change)

If you are unable to attend but still want to participate in this service or any AT ministry opportunity, please call Sam Dalton (423)895-2487

BIBLE DRILL

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)

Pray for Churches Without Pastors

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



MISSIONS GET-TOGETHER

what **JOY**

APRIL 4-5 * FIRST BAPTIST DICKSON
DICKSON, TN

Tennessee WMU

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



Cohort #3

Tuesday, April 29th, 2025

11:30-1:00 p.m. at West Hills Baptist Church

Are your church's small groups/Sunday School Classes set up to build and deepen relationships? That is what we will talk about at this month's cohort! We will discuss the need to care for one another, how to find the necessary balance of connection and content, and how to be inviting and hospitable to newcomers.

Lunch will be provided.