

MISSIONS NEWS



I congratulate Bill and Sharon Smith for 55 years of marriage and 54 years as missionaries together in Brazil. Together you have planted churches, started mission works, seen God call national pastors, trained pastors and Christian workers, held Christian camps and Vacation Bible Schools, and many other ministries.

Bro. John Peeples
Psalm 16:11

You have been faithful, and God has blessed your marriage and your ministry. You have allowed God to use you together for His glory.

BILL AND SHARON SMITH
MISSIONARIES TO BRAZIL

July & August 2025

Dear Friends,



JULY

July 12th we had a Pastor's Breakfast at Pastor Paulo's church here in Boa Vista. We challenged each church to do more in the evangelization of the churches. Some are giving out tracts, having special meetings and others are teaching Bible classes. We had a good time of fellowship and food. Continue to pray for the National Pastors and the churches here in Northern Brazil.

On July 19-20 Bill preached the Anniversary service for Pastor Werlesson. The theme was the "True Gospel of Christ" from Galatians 1:6-17. The four churches in the State of Roraima were represented and it was good to see the people again.

AUGUST

August 10th was Father's Day in Brazil. We had 10 Father's and they all received a gift from the church. We praise the Lord for men that are serving the Lord. We attend services with Pastor Rogerio since that was the last church we started in Boa Vista. Some of these men we have known for years and others are new.



Bill and Sharon 55" Wedding Anniversary August 15, 1970

We praise the Lord that He has allowed us to partner together these "55" years and 54 years as Missionaries here in Brazil. The LORD first in our lives.



Your Missionaries serving in Northern Brazil,
Bill and Sharon Smith



We appreciate all the love and preparation that Pastor Rogerio and Zipora did to make our "55" very special. The people of the Alvorada church brought food and provided the decorations. "55" years of marriage in Brazil is Amethyst but in the United States it is Emerald. These are pictures of the four Pastors of the churches we started in the State of Roraima.

May God bless each of you that pray and give that we might be your missionaries here in Brazil.



Pastor Rogerio and Zipora



Pastor Paulo and Edwrigens

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Excavation is Well Underway for
Our New 26,000+ sq. ft. Facility!



You only have one chance to lay a foundation
to your ministry! NBBS goes "48 courses deep"
in Bible, doctrine, and in pastoral & missions
courses, taught by a faculty of preachers!

The Searchlight

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PO Box 151259 | Ft. Worth, TX 76108 | Phone: 817.367.3422 | Email: ibfi@ibfi.us | Website: ibfi.us
IBFI Board of Directors: Pastor Eric Crawford, Mission Director John Peeples, Evangelist Jonathan Stewart, Pastor Barry Bedwell
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Pastor Caleb Shipman, Pastor Jerry Siler, Pastor David Webb, and Pastor Michael Wiggins.

INDEPENDENT BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

The
Searchlight
AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2025 VOLUME 42 ISSUE 2

IBFI Annual Fall Fellowship Meeting
Monday Evening-Wednesday Evening • Oct. 13-15, 2025

"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, *that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*" 1 John 1:3

MONDAY 7:00 PM	Dinner Will be Provided Monday at 6:00 PM			\$45,000 OFFERING GOAL	Dr. Charles Wetherbee Victory Baptist Ch., Weatherford, TX
TUESDAY 9 AM - NOON 7:00 PM	Pastor Philip Blackwell Bible Baptist Ch. Tuscaloosa, AL	Bro. Zack Newman Gateway Baptist Ch., Clarksville, TN	Pastor Josh Farmer Gateway Baptist Ch., Clarksville, TN	Evang. Kelly Cinereski Heart of Truth Ministry, Kenai, AK	Pastor Troy Brown Marantha Baptist Ch., Columbus, GA
WEDNESDAY 9 AM - NOON 7:00 PM	Pastor David Grice Lighthouse Baptist Ch., Grand Prairie, TX	Bro. Mark Brown Gateway Baptist Ch., Clarksville, TN	PRESIDENT'S HOUR Pastor Eric Crawford Heritage Baptist Church, Haslet, TX	GENERAL ASSEMBLY NBBS Update Special Offering Business Session	Pastor Tyler Gillit Worth Baptist Church, Ft. Worth, TX



2001 Dawes Road
Mobile, AL 36695

CO-LABORERS TOGETHER WITH GOD

"they went forth, and
preached every where, the
Lord working with them"
Mark 16:20

NBBS
Training
Preachers &
Women for
Church-Based
Ministry

MISSION
AGENCY
Assisting Churches
in the Caretelling
of Missionaries

SEARCHLIGHT
Newsletter

IBFI CHURCHES & PREACHERS

REMEMBERING DR. BARBER

Pastor Heath Hogue

I had the privilege of taking Dr. Barber's Life of Christ class my second year at the Norris Bible Baptist Institute in the Fall of 1993. As a 19-year-old student, I learned that I did not know as much as I thought I did. I remember Dr. Barber telling the class to fold our paper in half, length wise. On the left-hand side of the paper was everything that was expected to be known for the test. On the right-hand side of the paper was "nuggets" that we could write down. After many notes and many more "nuggets," I had a completed notebook. It is a notebook I will always cherish.

Having the opportunity to attend school and sit under Dr. Barber is an experience I will never forget. I remember him praying, and after he was done he would write down the three point alliterated message he prayed! He also taught us the importance of time management. One morning, he stood at the pulpit and looked at us for one full minute. We all thought he forgot what he was going to say. It was eerily quiet, then he said, "You all wasted one minute of your life that you will never get back. You could have opened your Bible; you could have prayed. Instead, it is gone." The memories are so many, but Dr. Barber's presence will always be at the NBBS just as J. Frank Norris's is. **Dr. Barber was a mentor and blessing to my life.**

Upon graduating in May of 1997, I did not attend any fellowship meetings or have much to do with the school. In 2017 (20 years later), and larger around the middle and less hair on my head, I attended the meeting in May for some reason. One of the first people to talk to me was Dr. Barber who greeted me and called me by name, then asked how things were going. It was then that I knew I made a good decision and have supported the fellowship and the school ever since. It has been difficult to say goodbye to tremendous men of God, integral to the school, who have passed on to Heaven the past few years, but also a blessing to see the direction and leadership that is in place today.



Now more than ever we need pastors, preachers, evangelists, missionaries, and ALUMNI to stand with and behind the fellowship and school, by praying, giving, and attending meetings. I encourage you to make the fellowship meeting October 13-15, at Grace Tabernacle Independent Baptist Church in Mobile, Alabama, pastored by Alumnus Michael Wiggins. It will be such a great time of singing and preaching that you do not want to be left out.

Pastor Tyler Gillit

The debt of gratitude I owe Dr. Raymond Barber is unpayable. He and Mrs. Barber gave their lives to a group of people who have shaken a city for Christ and impacted every corner of the globe. I have the privilege to serve those people, and I benefit daily from the sacrifice and faithfulness of those who came before me. **Dr. Barber was one of the greatest preachers of his generation, a visionary leader of Independent Baptists, a prolific author and poet, and a spiritual father to thousands.** What C.H. Spurgeon was to the Metropolitan Tabernacle, and D.L. Moody was to the Moody Church, and Dr. J. Frank Norris was to the First Baptist Church, Dr. Raymond Barber was to Worth Baptist Church.

Bro. John Peeples

The first time I heard Raymond W. Barber preach was in 1984. Starting my second year of preparation for the mission field, I was

at the Opening Day Rally and enrolled in the new Norris Bible Baptist Institute. Dr. Barber took the pulpit and emphasized, in a way few preachers can, my need for preparation in the ministry. He quoted J. Frank Norris, "What is needed is a school that teaches the whole English Bible," and continued "Dr. Norris taught us to learn as much of the Bible as we can while we are young, so we can reap the fruits of that knowledge for our entire ministry." That day made an impact on my life and ministry!

As the years passed by, I learned other lessons from Dr. Barber. I learned that life's race is long, and I need to pace myself, and patience puts us in position to continue and finish our course.

Progressing in God's purpose, Dr. Barber's position changed with time. From pastor and president to other roles such as counselor, encourager, and supporter. When the finish line came into view, I watched him press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. **Always a preacher of the Gospel, a faithful servant of Christ, a prayer warrior, a wise counselor, a steadfast supporter, an encourager, and a friend!**

Pastor David Grice

I met Dr. Barber in August of 1999. I had never heard anyone preach, with all the Scripture he was able to quote like that before. Through the years, **he and Mrs. Barber were a constant encouragement to us**, especially on the many occasions he and I preached together in IBFI conferences, prophecy conferences, special days at churches, and even my graduation. He was always welcome to preach at our church.

At my ordination, Dr. Barber asked the hardest question, "Knowing your past, if someone sticks their finger in your face, can you walk away from the fight?" While there have been some challenging moments, I have kept my word. I appreciate Dr. Barber identifying a potential weakness, and helping to head off a problem. I loved and appreciate Dr. Barber.

Pastor Eric Crawford

I first met Dr. Barber in 1990 at the seminary, and from the very beginning one thing was unmistakably clear-his love for the Word of God. He was not a man who cared for trends, personal opinions, or polished motivational speeches. Instead, his heartbeat was that young preachers would anchor themselves in the Scriptures and make Jesus Christ the central subject of every sermon.

Dr. Barber reminded us often that our calling was not to impress, but to faithfully proclaim. He believed that the Bible itself was sufficient and powerful, and that Christ alone must be lifted up in our preaching. That conviction shaped not only his own ministry, but also the ministries of countless others whom he trained, influenced, and inspired.

Over the decades, Dr. Barber left a lasting mark on several generations of preachers. His voice still echoes in pulpits across the country and beyond, through the men he poured into-men who continue to faithfully "preach the Word" as he charged us to do. His legacy is not only in his own sermons, but in the multiplied ministries of those who took his counsel to heart.

Though Dr. Barber has now gone home to be with the Lord, he loved and served so faithfully, his influence endures. Every time the Bible is opened, Christ is preached, and the Gospel is proclaimed by one of the men he trained, his impact lives on. Truly, his life was a testimony to the power of God's Word and to the centrality of Christ in all things.

THE HEAVENLY PERSPECTIVE!



*Jonathan J. Stewart
NBBS President*

We Miss Him Greatly, But Rejoice He is Present with the Lord!

Entering into Heaven, even into the very presence of God is surely emotionally, spiritually, and intellectually all-encompassing! That which adorns the throne room on high must both captivate and intimidate (Isaiah 6:1-3ff)! Whether or not Dr. Barber has begun to "make the rounds" to see family members, church members who have gone on before, as well as faithful preacher friends, Bible characters and other great historical persons of the past who knew the Lord in salvation, none could say! However, I can say, **his sword has never been sharper, his knees have never been bent more reverently, and his eye is now on something more than the sky – the firmament of the third heaven behind the throne of God** (Ezekiel 1:26-28), **and the Lord Himself upon that throne.** After teaching the Life of Christ for 35 years, and preaching on his favorite subject (Christ) for over 70 years, he may still be singular in the focus of his Savior. Who among us can know the joy that he is experiencing (Psalm 16:11).

I would like to think that sooner or later J. Frank Norris and Louis Entzminger will seek him out, if they have not done so already, along with his old seminary buddies, Don Gregory and Paul Ague, and NBBS co-laborers A.E. Jernigan and Terry Riggsby, and of course a host others. Men and women who played a key part during their time on earth to help keep the Norris Bible Baptist Seminary going would also be in that mix. If so, I think they may have sung "I'm Glad Salvation Is Free" – the song that Entzminger sang with the old Bible Baptist Seminary students years ago. This sung as most you probably know, has been regularly sung in chapel at the Norris Bible Baptist Seminary from day one.

We had hoped that Dr. Barber would be with us for the first Opening Day Rally in the new facility, but we can be assured that fruit will continue to abound to his account through the seminary, as it will for so many others who have been an integral part of it through the years (Revelation 14:13, Malachi 3:16, I Corinthians 15:58, etc.). **Maybe** on that day here on earth (August 11, 2026), there will be our own aforementioned "great cloud of witnesses" – who in a sense will be looking down from Heaven! If not, we know the Lord God will be doing so, whether we are in the new facility that day (or a few weeks later), as He has these many years! Christ is the one to whom they have taught us to especially look (Hebrews 12:1-3).

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Our 42nd Year is Underway

As with every new semester, we have new students that are full of potential and hunger for the Word of God that want to learn how better to serve the Lord. Some are students right out of high school, some are fairly recently married, and others who have been married many years. Several more look to join us in January for the spring semester.

Our New Campus is Under Construction!

It may be location, location, location in real estate, and we are excited about our soon to be new location, but **when training for the ministry, it is foundation, foundation, foundation!** How appropriate that we are being required to carve out a 12-foot deep section to be refilled with soil that is compacted layer-by-layer, up to 10 feet, with the last 2 feet being "select fill dirt" for the facility's 26,000+ square foot upon which our specially engineered slab is to sit. Not only so, but it will also rest on numerous piers. We had hoped that an 8-feet was going to be enough, but after soil tests, the soil engineer whom the city requires we make use of, reaffirmed that we needed to excavate deeper.



From here on out, **this highly engineered foundation will be an object lesson to our students on why NBBS is so committed to the thoroughgoing approach of teaching the whole Bible.** The approach we take is by starting with a serious book-by-book survey of the books of the Bible over two semesters. We also initiate that same first semester a book-by-book exposition of every book in the Bible - starting with Genesis.

Correlated to the sections of the Bible we are in, are several doctrinal classes. As well as many courses on the pastorate, missions, and living the Christian life. This is further undergirded by a preachers-training-preachers approach to faculty (all faculty members are either pastors, evangelists or missionaries and wives of such). **We include several courses just for women who are training for ministry appropriate to the vital role they play in the cause of Christ. Mrs. Barber wonderfully exemplified this through her many years of serving alongside Dr. Barber.**

The foundation work on the new facility is in the works. The pictures below show the first 1/3rd of the excavated cavity being filled by the previously excavated dirt. The other 2/3rds will done in the same manner as designed by the engineering firm hired, and the soil scientist whose role in it is required by the city. In a few weeks, piers will be dug and filled with concrete, then forms will be set for the post-tension slab that the building will sit upon. The plumbing will then be roughed-in, then the grading at-large will be put in place and everything will be readied for the pouring of concrete! We are hoping early into the new year we will have a slab in place ready to build upon!

ALUMNI NEWS



*Heath Hogue
Alumni President*

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ...."

Over the last few months, several exciting things have taken place with our alumni. Heritage Baptist Church in Haslet, pastored by Bro. Eric Crawford (1995), has teamed up with **Antioch Baptist Church Planters to replant the church in Nocona, Texas, that Bro. Crawford pastored over 30 years ago.** A lot of work has been done to remodel, and they are currently having services. One can see pictures on the Facebook page of Antioch Baptist Church Planters.

Also, Bro. Heath Van Zandt (2021) is the new president of the IBFI Great Southwest. He is putting together a schedule of meetings and will have more information soon.

Last, it was exciting to hear that Bro. Ryan Blair (2025) has accepted the pastorate at Eaton Baptist Temple in Eaton Ohio. Bro. Ryan and Mrs. Rachel plan on being in Ohio by the end of September. Eaton Baptist Temple has had a long connection with the IBFI and NBBS. Bro. Lowell Spencer has given his support to the fellowship since day one.

We may be pastors, associate pastors, teachers, missionaries, workers, bus drivers, laymen, or even "retired," **but the work of the ministry goes on, and the NBBS alumni are hard at work.**

If you are an alumnus and have some exciting news to share, please email me at norrisalumni@gmail.com. I would love to hear about it, and I might be able to share it in the next Searchlight.

OPENING DAY RALLY AND FALL MEETING



*Eric Crawford
IBFI President*

What a joy it was to gather for the great Opening Day Rally at Norris Bible Baptist Seminary! The Lord truly blessed as we came together in unity, and anticipation for what He is doing in this great work. The spirit was high, the fellowship was sweet, and the preaching was powerful.

We were greatly encouraged by the messages brought forth. Dr. Weaver delivered a stirring challenge from God's Word that reminded us of the urgency of the hour and the importance of training men for the Gospel ministry. Bro. Weatherbee followed with a powerful message that lifted our hearts and renewed our vision for the future of the seminary. **Both men preached with**

clarity, conviction, and compassion, and we are grateful for how the Lord used them.

A very special moment was led by our President, Bro. Jonathan Stewart, **as he reflected on the life and legacy of Dr. Raymond Barber.** With heartfelt words, Bro. Stewart honored Dr. Barber's tireless efforts in the founding and nurturing of the seminary. **His remembrance served as a powerful reminder of our heritage, and the great responsibility we have to carry the torch forward.**

The Fall Fellowship Meeting will be here before you know it. Bro. Wiggins and the Grace Tabernacle Independent Baptist Church are rolling out the red carpet and have a great line up of preachers. Do not forget your offering for the seminary. Our goal is \$40,000 which can easily be reached if everyone participates. Norris Bible Baptist Seminary is a great investment.

In addition to the spiritual blessings of the day, we are thankful to report that progress continues on the new building project. The dirt work is now nearly complete, marking a major step forward in preparing the site for construction. Each step brings us closer to seeing the vision of a permanent home for NBBS to come to fruition.

As Psalm 126:3 reminds us, "The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad." Truly, the Lord has blessed, and we look forward with great anticipation to what He will continue to do in the days ahead.



YOU'RE INVITED!

Bro. Michael Wiggins

Our church is so excited to host the fall IBFI meeting. You will not want to miss this meeting in the south. We are having a fresh gulf shrimp boil on money before service. We have a great line up of preachers for this meeting. If you need any thing please give me a call at 817-247-2881.

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530 Providence Park Dr E, Mobile AL 36695 (251) 634-8664

METROPLEX AREA IBFI MEETINGS

September 18, 2025

Rockwall Baptist Church
Rockwall, Texas
Pastor Tony Roa

October 13-15, 2025

IBFI Fall Fellowship

November 20, 2025

Worth Baptist Church
Fort Worth, Texas
Pastor Tyler Gillit