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CBC 2024 Year in Review and Looking Forward to 2025

By Grover Duling, CBC Board Chair

The year 2024 has marked a period of remarkable growth and development for the Covenant Brethren Church (CBC). Reflecting on the progress made, it is evident that the Lord's work continues to flourish both domestically and internationally.

As of this year, the Covenant Brethren Church has grown to encompass 157 congregations worldwide, with a total membership exceeding 12,000 individuals. This milestone is a testament to the church's commitment to spreading the Gospel and fostering community among believers. When this all began over four years ago, none of us would have thought that God would have grown us to this point across the world. All I can say is Wow, God is so good.

The CBC's international footprint has expanded significantly. Currently, 51 congregations are established across five countries in Africa, underscoring the vibrant spiritual awakening taking place on that continent. Additionally, four congregations are active in the

Dominican Republic, with plans underway to include even more in the near future. In Central America, the CBC has planted one congregation in Guatemala, and the church's presence in Puerto Rico includes six congregations and a Christian School.

The Covenant Brethren Church continues to develop leadership training to sustain its mission. To date, 192 ministers have been credentialed, equipping them to lead and serve their congregations effectively. Sadly, six of these faithful servants have gone on to be with the Lord, leaving a legacy of dedication and spiritual guidance.

As we move forward, the Covenant Brethren Church remains steadfast in its mission to share the Gospel and nurture believers. The global community of CBC congregations is a living testimony to the church's faith and resilience. With every new congregation and minister, the CBC's vision of a vibrant, Christ-centered fellowship becomes more of a reality.

Continued inside

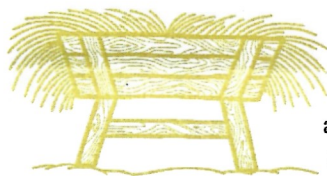
He Didn't Stay in The Manger

During the Advent Season, it is adorable to hear children sing Away in A Manger and watch them rock the imaginary baby while visualizing what it might have been like in Bethlehem that night.

But if Jesus had stayed in His manger how different His life and ours would be. If He had stayed in Bethlehem and out of Jerusalem, He would never have faced a cross. If He had cried, cooed, and not preached and taught, His life would have been much safer.

But He was not born for that. Jesus wasn't born to stay in a manger or Bethlehem. Jesus was born to preach, teach, heal, and forgive. We often cherish the warm candles and nativities of Christmastime but want nothing to do with the One whose birth they commemorate because we don't want to turn from our sins.

Herod and the Jewish leaders recognized the threat Jesus posed and both tried to eliminate Him. Even Jesus' hometown crowd tried to push Him over a cliff since He was too controversial for them, and many still try to cancel Him today. Jesus could have avoided all of that if He had just kept His head down, gone with the flow, and made no waves.



But He was not born for that. Jesus preached God's truth and shared God's love and compassion. But He also opposed all sin as well as unjust rulers who distorted truth and withheld grace. While He never wavered on God's laws, He also offered forgiveness and restoration to those who would repent and receive Him. He offended everyone at some point or another. And He still does. He did not come to please princes, presidents, or us. He came to do the will of His Father and He did it perfectly from beginning to end.

Even though we might like to keep Jesus in His cozy Bethlehem manger, we must recognize that He did not stay there! He came to show us how to obey God and get along with each other. He came to show the way, go the way, and be the Way.

Ultimately, He came to die for the sins of all. From before Bethlehem, from before His conception, from before the world's beginning, His purpose was to be the perfect sacrifice to take away the sin of the world so that humans might be reconciled to our Creator! This too He accomplished.

He also defeated death by rising from His grave triumphing over the darkness that imprisoned all humanity. And He lives today to provide that same victory to all who will receive Him.

As we marvel at the Babe in the manger, let us remember that He did not stay there; that He grew up to teach, love, and guide us and most importantly to save us. If you never have, admit your sin and ask God to save you through the blood of the One who laid in the manger that first Christmas night.

George Bowers, CBC Executive Board

Some Good Ideas to Share to Other Churches

The New Beginnings Covenant Brethren Church in Middletown, Md., has a couple of programs going that I saw as I read through their newsletter. I felt I wanted to share these with the larger church. This church sees God bless its body with growth and development, and I believe it is partly because they are thinking outside the box and willing to try some things as the Holy Spirit leads.

The first program that I found interesting is one they are calling GEMS (Girls Everywhere Meeting the Savior). This fall they officially began their GEMS Club! They have an amazing team led



by Julie Norris. Ann Marie, Patsy, and Julia make up the rest of the team. They are excited and averaged about 10 moms and daughters over the summer. Their main goal is to introduce Jesus to all who come and disciple them into a deeper relationship with Him, and that our Lord be glorified through these efforts. We think this is a great program idea that other churches could look into.

The second idea they are doing is one I was involved in as an elementary school child many years ago. The Good News Club is an international ministry that has over 84,000 clubs worldwide. They have seen nearly 4.5 million children reached for Christ and have offered training for over 577,000 teachers of their program. This is a great weekly program for churches that are within walking proximity to a local elementary school or where transportation can be arranged to the church. It is an after-school ministry that usually runs an hour to an hour and a half. They have been held in



churches, homes, community centers, and even within the school itself and have seen amazing success.

For more information on this ministry go to <https://www.cefonline.com/ministries/goodnewsclub>. There you can sign up for teacher training and more. I applaud New Beginnings for stepping out in these two great ministries and I would encourage other churches to take a look at them.

Submitted by Craig Howard – Publications Committee

Regional Conferences Roundup

Winter is here and our regional conference season has come to a close. All of our established regions have had the blessing of meeting together and sharing in worship, fellowship, and the business of the church. It was reported to me that all of the conferences had a great and blessed experience.



The Southern region reported that their conference was one of the most spirit filled experiences they have ever had at a regional meeting. John Collins was the keynote speaker, but what was amazing was that of the four speakers at the conference, unknown by each other, all chose the same scripture to preach from. The singing was amazing. The preaching was spirit led and the fellowship was sweet and centered on God's love. Most of the participants left feeling revived and excited about what God is doing in the Southern Region of the Covenant Brethren Church. Their business was simple but unified in spirit. They elected officers, heard reports and approved a budget and appointments. But while the business was important, it was not the center of the focus of the conference. The focus was God and worshipping Him.

The Blue Ridge Region held its conference and was attended by leaders from other regions. Their region addressed the topic of selecting a regional elder. This is something the national board has asked regions to do to help them stay focused and moving forward. While the office of the regional elder is primarily to be one of ministry and not administrative, that person or persons will work directly with the regional board and will bring concerns and ideas back to the

board helping to keep it focused on the ministry of that particular region. The Blue Ridge Region chose to select a team of three to fill this role instead of one person: John Prater, George Bowers and Henry Elsie. The meeting was truly focused on being in the presence of God and to that end, Grover called the new Regional Elders and board members forward and anointed all of them with oil and prayed over them for God's blessing and wisdom in their leadership.



At the Region 3 conference, held at the Melvin Hill Church, a new region was born. During the course of the meeting, the group separated into two groups. This was not born out of malice or anger or any type of disagreement but out of geography. The region covered a huge geographic area and now that numbers were sufficient to support two regions, it was felt that the group should split and form a new region. Thus the Susquehanna region was born. The two met separately for part of the conference then came back together to finish the day. Scott Kinnick and John Collins were two of the speakers that provided wonderful, spirit filled preaching, stirring the hearts of the group to greater things as they strike out on separate paths.



Last but not least was the Central Allegheny Regional Conference. It was highlighted by the presence of two young men from Liberty University who led worship at the conference. You may remember them from Annual Meeting and Worship Conference in Pennsylvania this year — Benjamin Palma of the Covenant Brethren Miracle Fishing Church in Guatemala and his friend Santiago, led in uplifting worship that blessed everyone present. The group had the theme led by moderator Phil Matthews of not looking back once we have put our hand to the plow. Phil gave a powerful moderator's address on this topic and Scott Kinnick, as the keynote speaker, drove the theme home. Grover Duling was installed as the new Regional Elder, a role he had been filling as regional board chair. He was

presented with a certificate and jacket to commemorate him being the first regional elder of the region. A few items of business were attended to and the conference ended with Grover anointing and prayer being said over all the officers of the region. Phil Matthews then passed the gavel to Mark Jones, the incoming moderator and he adjourned the meeting.

Submitted by Craig Howard – Publications Committee

CBC is Alive and Well in Puerto Rico

Recently Grover Duling and Scott Kinnick traveled to Puerto Rico as representatives of the national board to offer encouragement and blessing to our churches in that region. The Puerto Rico region currently has six churches, and there is some work underway to begin a seventh. The Region is led by Jose Calleja Otero and is thriving.

They have started and run a Christian school in the town of Bayamon since the government closed down many smaller schools in 2020, due to earth quake damage and a realignment of educational philosophies. They were able to secure one of the



buildings that was closed and, after a lot of work to put it back in a condition to use, opened the school. It operates as a K-12 using the Accelerated Christian Education program and has around 20 students with more students coming each year. God is blessing the program there and the students are blessed to have this beautiful facility where they are receiving a Christ-centered education.

Grover and Scott were each blessed with the opportunity to preach at one of the local churches and share a meal with the loving church families.

It was exciting to see what God is doing in CBC in that region, and to see what the larger church can do to be a part of it. We are excited that our youth mission trip will be to this region this year and look forward to our fellowship together with them. It will give us the opportunity to serve together.



Submitted by Craig Howard – Publications Committee

Year in Review — continued from front

The 2025 Annual Meeting and Worship Conference will be held at the Joseph S. Koury Convention Center, Greensboro, NC on July 17-19. One highlight of this conference is the Thursday evening Keynote address will be brought by Will Graham, son of Franklin Graham.

In 2024, CBC continued to work with Samaritan's Purse growing even stronger in that partnership. Since our work started with them we have sent nearly \$300,000 to help support identified work in Jesus Name. Some of the most recent work included supporting the spiritual, physical and financial needs for the Hurricane Disaster victims in Tennessee and North Carolina. This type of collaborative ministry has worked extremely well because it is most important for Samaritan's Purse and CBC to serve in Jesus Name.

In 2024 the CBC Executive Board started a transition of leadership. The original members are finishing their second term of eligibility on the board. With this, new leadership will be called each year for the next four years. In order to prepare new leaders for their work, the

Executive Board will be having at least one board retreat each fall after the AMWC.

Also, it should be noted that the Board will be approving and making available the new "CBC Christian Essentials Membership Manual" for all our churches to use as a training guide for new members.

Scott Kinnick has organized a trip for the two of us to travel to Columbia South America to talk to several church leaders from Venezuela and Columbia that are interested in joining CBC

May the Lord continue to bless the Covenant Brethren Church as it grows and thrives in 2025 and beyond. I just can't wait to see what the God of creation has instore for the coming year.

"And God Blessed them, And God said to Them, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth...." Gen 1:28

Blessings, Grover

Part of Something Big!

On December 6th and 7th over 130 people, including many teens, from the Covenant Brethren Church joined thousands of others from all over the eastern United States, to process thousands of Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes to be sent to multiple places on every continent. Last year these Shoeboxes were responsible for starting over 1000 churches worldwide! Only God knows what the outcome will be next year.

You get a clear sense when you are in that building with all those other people working on getting the shoeboxes ready to go that you are part of something enormous. You can feel God at work doing something great that is going to change so many lives eternally, and our CBC teams were a part of that. It is truly exciting to be part of something bigger than yourself that is going to make an eternal difference.



To all those who went from the Southern Region, the Blue Ridge Region, the Central Allegheny Region and Region three, we truly want to say thank you for representing us. That does not minimize the huge number of CBC people who packed boxes back home and the local churches that hosted packing parties and saw to it that the boxes got to the drop off centers.

Every person that was involved along the way has potentially, changed a life, or even many lives, forever! Thank you to all and realize that you have become a part of one of the biggest ministries our world has ever seen. Praise God!!

*Submitted by Craig Howard
Publications Committee*

