

Wheelerburg Baptist Church 1/11/2026 Sunday morning Pastor Brad Brandt
"State of the Church Address 2026: The Blessing of Being a Boring Church"

The Blessing of Being a Boring Church

"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." -Acts 2:42

We love to exegete the holy Scriptures at WBC, which means "to interpret a text and expound it." That's what we typically do at this point in our worship service. But once a year, instead of exegeting the *Word* of God, we exegete the *work* of God.

It's time once again for one of the most meaningful Sundays on the church calendar. Every year since I have been your pastor we have begun the new year with what we call "The State of the Church Address." There is no sermon outline to fill in today. In this message we're going to look back and ponder the work God has done at WBC in the past twelve months. We'll also talk about the work He is placing in front of us in the upcoming year. We'll conclude with a special time of praying the Word (that's what redeemed people do, *pray the Word*) and worshipping the Lord through communion.

To prepare ourselves for this exegesis of the work of God, I'd like to read something the Spirit of God guided Paul to write to Timothy regarding the church. Listen to 1 Timothy 3:14-15. "I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that,¹⁵ if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth."

Now consider 1 Timothy 4:13–16, "Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.¹⁴ Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.¹⁵ Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress.¹⁶ Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers."

A few years ago, I asked the chairman of our deacons, Dave Beam, to meet with a new members' class and share his perspective on what God is doing in our church. I love this brother. He has been a faithful servant at Wheelerburg Baptist Church for three decades. After talking for a few minutes about ministries and opportunities, he finished by saying something rather interesting. Here's my paraphrase of what he told the class.

"Basically, we're a pretty boring church. We do the same things week after week." We all chuckled. A boring church? Really? Yes, he emphasized. And then he elaborated on what he meant by those "same things". The careful study of God's Word. Prayer. Fellowship. And so forth. *"This is what happens at our church,"* he concluded, *"week after week after week. The same things. And it's wonderful."*

The blessing of being boring

We don't typically consider "boring" to be a compliment. We associate boring with being dull, monotonous, uninteresting, and so forth. Boring is a bad thing, right?

Who wants to watch a boring movie, or read a boring book, or enroll in a class with a professor that others describe as boring?

But there's another side to boring. Think about the root word "bore". That term brings to mind a tool in my workshop called a drill press. Have you ever stared at a drill press while it's doing its thing? It's quite *boring*, and I mean that literally. A drill press is a tool designed to drill holes, and it accomplishes this assignment by doing the same thing over and over and over.

Frankly, when you watch a drill press in action, it doesn't look like much is happening. The bit keeps hitting the same point again and again. In reality, that's not true, for the bit is not hitting the same point but a new point every time it turns. The drill is making progress, slowly yes, but unmistakably. Every time the bit turns, progress is happening. By doing the same thing over and over, the desired result is occurring.

The need for more boring churches

I'm convinced that there is a great need for more boring churches. Again, my friend, please don't hear what I am not saying. I am not suggesting that churches should be dull, monotonous, and uninteresting. What I'm talking about is the resolve to keep doing the same God-ordained, Christ-exalting, Scripture-commanded, joy-producing activities over and over, regardless of whether we see immediate outcome.

As most of you know, the Lord called me to become your pastor in 1987, and we've enjoyed ministry together for nearly four decades. We've also experienced something else together. Pressure. There's incredible pressure on pastors and churches to be innovative, novel, and cutting edge. Try this new method. Order this new resource.

But as a wise pastor told me when I first entered the ministry, "Remember, Brad, what you hook them with is what it will take to keep them. If you reach them by pulling a rabbit out of the hat today, you'll need to pull out an elephant tomorrow."

Brothers and sisters, I am not smart enough to be innovative, creative, and novel, week after week after week. And that's a good thing, a necessary thing, in fact. Why? Because the Lord has already revealed what He wants to occur in His beloved church week after week after week. He wants to put on display, not my creativity, nor yours, but Himself.

The first boring church

I find myself returning to Acts 2:42 frequently. Luke describes the activities of the first church this way. "*And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.*"

I'm encouraged by the simplicity of that statement. What did the first church do with its time, energy, people, and budget? They poured themselves into these same four activities, week after week after week. Teaching. Fellowship. Breaking bread. Praying.

There's tremendous freedom in being a boring church. Trying to be novel every week, now that's cause for frustration. But the Lord didn't call us to be novel, rather to be faithful. When Monday comes, I know what I must do in the upcoming week, and so

do you. The same things we did last week, and the previous week, and will do next week.

“We will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word,” said the apostles in Acts 6:4. And so must we, my fellow pastors, deacons, trustees, members of WBC. We must devote ourselves to the teaching of the Word, to meaningful fellowship with one another, to the breaking of bread together (which I think refers to worshipping Christ by breaking bread together at the Lord’s table and in other ways), and prayer. And we do all of this week after week, enabled by His sufficient grace and for His glory.

What did being boring produce in the first church? Read the book of Acts. What a marvelous story! We see hell-bound sinners learning about Jesus, believing in Him, and being saved by Him. We see Christ-followers telling others about Him, joyfully suffering for Him, filling the Roman empire with the knowledge of Him. Never underestimate the power of being a boring church.

An exhortation to embrace a boring ministry

Paul didn’t use the word “boring” in his admonition to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:13–16, but he could have. I love the practicality of this passage. It has encouraged me many times during seasons of ministry frustration. Why am I here? What am I supposed to be doing as a shepherd of God’s flock? God’s Word tells me in plain, simple language.

Notice the verbs. **Devote** yourself. **Practice** these things. **Persist** in this. In other words, Timothy, keep doing what you’ve been doing. Read the Book. Preach the Book. Explain the Book. Live in light of the Book. And help others do the same, all to the honor of the Giver of the Book. Do it this week, and the next, and the next.

And what will be the result of this *boring* ministry? I like how Eugene Peterson’s, *The Message*, sums it up in verse 16, “Keep a firm grasp on both your character and your teaching. Don’t be diverted. Just keep at it. Both you and those who hear you will experience salvation.”

There’s the outcome. *Salvation*. In the end, nothing matters more. Hell-bound sinners are saved, by His grace and for His glory!

If you want to read a good biography about a faithful servant of God, I recommend, *Memoirs of an Ordinary Pastor*, written by D.A. Carson about the life of his father, Tom Carson. Pastor Carson served faithfully in Quebec for nearly six decades. Here’s a sample from the tribute at the end. “Tom Carson...never wrote a book, but he loved the Book. He was never wealthy or powerful, but he kept growing as a Christian: yesterday’s grace was never enough. He was not a far-sighted visionary, but he looked forward to eternity.”

A powerful foe we must resist if we are to experience the blessing of being a boring church—The Numbers Game

When I became your pastor, a sign hung on the wall in the auditorium in the old building that recorded the church’s attendance and giving. You’ve probably seen such a sign. They are in many churches all over Appalachia.

In some churches, this sign is the most important symbol in the room (rivaling even the cross hanging up front). It represents what matters most to many people, both clergy and laity alike. *Numbers*. Specifically, *increasing numbers*.

Our mission is to grow, isn't it? When the numbers are going up, it means we are successful. When they're going down, it means we're not successful. Sadly, how we define success in the church is too often determined by what "the sign" says rather than what God's Word says.

This alarming reality deserves our attention. It's one of the reasons I wrote a book this past year called *The Numbers Game: Encouraging Pastors to Think Biblically about Success*. If you'd like to read it, I'd be glad to send you the digital version.

It's not just pastors who battle the numbers game either. You're likely facing this battle as well. It shows up in the way you're assessing how your family is doing, and your work, and your ministry at church.

Taking personal inventory

Think back to the ministry you did in the past year. Were you successful? Perhaps you taught an adult or children's Sunday School class. Every week you spent several hours studying the Word of God, preparing a lesson, praying for your students, sending them notes of encouragement, perhaps visiting them to pray with them. And what was the outcome of all this effort?

Perhaps your class grew by 25%, and people sent you encouraging notes to express their appreciation. Does that mean you were successful? On the other hand, perhaps your class declined by 25%, and there was very little expressed appreciation. Does that mean you were unsuccessful?

Be careful. There can be a lot of reasons for Sunday School growth, and the lack of growth. Perhaps a year ago a sister church closed its doors, and people from that church trickled into your class and caused your graph to go up. Does that mean you were successful? Or perhaps this past year you engaged in the ministry of admonishing, as the passage you were teaching said you must do. And so, you lovingly challenged some of your class members, one on one, to deal with particular sin issues. And they resisted. They didn't send cards of appreciation. They even stopped coming. Does that mean you were unsuccessful?

Perhaps you serve in our youth ministry. Every week you invest a lot of time loving the young ones. You're on your knees for them in your prayer closet. You have them over to your house for game nights. You write letters to their parents to encourage them. You go with them, and visit their friends, and invite them to come learn about Jesus.

The results? In the past year they loved the games for sure, but when you gave the lesson, it seems like they weren't even listening. And it was a rare thing to see them attend two weeks in a row. Or perhaps they did come regularly, and did listen well, and you were privileged to witness three of them make professions of faith in Christ. Does the former mean you were unsuccessful, and the latter mean you were successful?

Perhaps your ministry is serving on the greeting team, or providing quality care in the nursery, or mobilizing Christ-honoring care for shut-ins. The question is, what's the measuring stick to know whether you did a good job or not, whether you were *successful*?

Boring churches embrace a biblical understanding of success.

We need a biblical understanding of success, and I believe Paul models it for us in 1 Corinthians 4:1–5. He says in verses 1-2, “This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.” So according to Paul, what is success? He says that success is being a faithful steward of what God has entrusted to us. Success, at its core, is *faithfulness*.

That’s certainly helpful, but it raises another vital question. What is faithfulness? Some say the Cleveland Browns have faithful fans (I’m one of them) because they remain loyal to their team one losing season after another. Is that what faithfulness is, just hanging in there through the tough times? That may be part of it, but it’s not what Paul has in mind.

Boring churches produce faithful followers of Jesus.

Faithfulness is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, according to Galatians 5:22. It comes from God through the merit of His faithful Son who reproduces His faithfulness in those who abide in Him (John 15:4). This means an unregenerate person cannot exhibit the kind of faithfulness that people indwelt by the Spirit of God can exhibit.

To be faithful means, “to be full of faith,” for our faith plugs us into Christ and His power. It is Christ who then enables us to be as He was and is, “trustworthy, dependable, reliable,” no matter what is happening (or not happening) around us.

So what is success? Here’s a good definition. *Success is being a faithful steward of what God has entrusted to us in good times and bad.*

Fellow servants, this means we were successful last year if we were faithful. According to Paul, success has very little to do with what we can see. This is why he says in verse 3, “But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself.”

This is the truth. We can’t determine success. We don’t see enough to make that assessment. Paul says in verse 4, “For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me.”

Only the Lord has the ability to make an accurate assessment of our ministry. And He will do that, says Paul in verse 5, when He comes again and “brings to light the things now hidden in darkness...Then each one will receive his commendation from God.”

What about the numbers?

It’s not that numbers don’t matter. There is a book in our Bible called *Numbers*. And the book of Acts records the numbers of people that God saved and added to His church (Acts 2:41, 47). Numbers are important. Numbers can be a helpful indicator.

Declining numbers may indicate that we’re not doing the *work* of the ministry as we ought. Ministry is just that, a *work*, and we may need to work harder or smarter. Perhaps the numbers are saying that we’re not inviting our neighbors into our homes for Bible studies, or that we’re not a welcoming church, or that we’re not being *faithful*.

On the other hand, declining numbers may indicate that we *are* being faithful, that we’re doing the work of the ministry, that we’re seeking to make solid disciples rather

than settling for emotional decisions. It is this commitment to do ministry by the Book that causes some people to leave.

Growing numbers may indicate faithfulness too, that we are taking evangelism seriously, and that God is saving people and adding them to our number. Or those same increasing numbers may indicate that we are merely transferring sheep from other churches.

So, the numbers matter. They just don't determine success. Faithfulness does. And faithfulness is something that God alone can produce, and when He does, He deserves all the glory.

This brings us to an important question. What did *boring* produce at WBC in 2025? What did God accomplish through this boring church in the past year?

What God Accomplished through a Boring Church in 2025

In a word, *much!* It's fascinating to exegete the work of God, to ponder what He has done in our midst. He has changed lives this year, *our* lives. He has brought people to us (young people, older people too). He sent 108 visitors through those doors this past year (that's an unofficial number based on my records), plus the thirty or so summer staff at Scioto Hills, plus guests that were part of Scioto Hills winter and summer celebration that worshipped with us on that Sunday.

He has also taken people from us. This too is part of His work. Our current membership is 182. The Lord added 18 new members to our family in 2025. We lost 8, including our dear brother Jack Branom who went to his eternal home after serving some fifty years as a faithful deacon and Sunday School teacher at WBC. The Lord gives. The Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord (Job 1:21).

The book of Acts describes church growth by using an important phrase found in Acts 2:47. "And the Lord *added* to their number day by day (see also 2:41; 5:14; 11:24)." It's possible for a church to grow by using man-centered marketing and techniques, but the early church grew because the Lord added to it. There is a difference. Sometimes the Lord adds. Sometimes the Lord takes away.

It's been fascinating to watch this sovereign adding and subtracting over the years at WBC. We've been through times of pruning. We're currently seeing numerical growth. In 1987 our Sunday morning attendance was 145. In the early 90s we passed 200. In 2019 it was 101. In 2020, which is when COVID began to spread, the number dropped to 94. In 2021 it increased to 99. In 2022, it was 114. At the end of 2023, it was 146. In 2024 it dipped to 143. In 2025 our Sunday morning average was 150.

Even this doesn't tell the whole story. Thanks to the labor of love invested by our technology team, every week we minister to an unknown number of people in their homes. The Lord is adding to us for which we thank Him.

He provided us with finances in 2025. Let me provide some context. When COVID hit, we stopped passing the offering plates and the result was \$255,396 in general fund giving in 2020. In 2021 the number was \$280,986, the highest in the history of WBC.¹ In 2022, the general fund giving was \$241,719. In 2023 the Lord provided us

¹ For comparison purposes, here are some giving and attendance averages from previous years:

2025 - \$304,952 (weekly 5864) – attendance AM 150, PM 50, Wed PM 32, FLY 50

2024 - \$278,901 (weekly 5363) – attendance AM 143, PM 46, Wed PM 25, FLY 28

2023 - \$269,667 (weekly 5186) – attendance AM 146

with \$269,667 in general fund giving, exceeding our budgeted need by over \$45,000. In 2024 we approved a budget for \$227,000, and the actual general fund giving was 278,901. And what did the Lord do this past year? To Him be the glory, He provided the highest general fund income in 2025 in the history of WBC at \$304,952! It all came from Him through you, His generous people. Praise be to our all sufficient Father.

So the Lord has given us people and money. But just that's the tip of the iceberg, the surface answer. What did the Lord accomplish with the people and money He sent our way.

It's always good at this point to remind ourselves why we are here. According to our mission statement, "We are Wheelersburg Baptist Church, a church that cares because of Christ. We are dedicated to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to the responsibility He has given us: to make disciples of Christ locally and world-wide, through the proclamation of the whole counsel of God's Word, by which lost people will be evangelized, and saved people edified, until Jesus comes again."

Those aren't just words on a page. Those words describe what the Lord produced at WBC in 2025. If you look back at the church calendar, you'll see something significant. Not flashy, but significant. You'll see that every week we put on the schedule between seven and ten hours of planned events. They prioritize the same activities we see in Acts 2:42. Teaching, fellowship, worship, and prayer.

Every Sunday there's a pastor's prayer partners meeting at 8:30, Sunday School for all ages at 9:30, a corporate worship service at 10:30, community groups throughout the afternoon, preachers in training on second Sunday evenings, Wednesday evening FLY and adult Bible study/prayer, and more). And then there are other non-weekly events (Counseling and discipleship training, women's prayer meetings, Men in the middle, etc).

Boring. Boring. Boring. And for those who availed themselves to all this, the results were life-transforming.

As you know, everything revolves around the ministry of the Word at WBC. This is how we know Christ and make Him known to others, through a commitment to teach the whole counsel of His Word.

We sang the Scriptures last year with our "Redeemed People Sing the Word" theme. We preached and taught the Scriptures last year, from this pulpit and in a host of other contexts.

2022 - \$241,719 (weekly 4648) – attendance AM 114
2021 - \$280,986 (weekly \$5403) – attendance AM 99 with others at home due to COVID?
2020 - 255,396 (weekly \$4911) – (attendance AM 94)
2019 – 241,352 (weekly \$4641) – (attendance AM 101, PM 51, Wed PM 49)
2018 - 231,897 (weekly \$4459) – (attendance AM 102, PM 47, Wed PM 38)
2017 - \$234,425 (weekly \$4434) – (attendance AM 109, PM 58, Wed PM 44)
2016 - \$247,509 (weekly \$4828) – (120, 55, 47)
2015 - \$239,625 (weekly 4609) – (127, 60, 59)
2014 - \$228,253 (weekly 4367) – (124, 64, 78)
2013 - 226,507 (weekly 4355) –
2012 - 206,588 (weekly 3973) – (136, 73, 86)
2011 - 199,633 (weekly 3839) – (129, 69, 89)
2010 - 197,900 (weekly 3717) – (121, 61, 70)
2007 – 189,347 (weekly ?) – (129, 61, 74)

The Lord has raised up a joyful commitment to expository preaching at WBC. He has produced in this congregation a love for hearing and applying the undiluted teaching of His Book, and He continues to bring more and more people with this same desire.

We began the year with a topical, expositional series entitled, “Killing Pride, Cultivating Humility.” This is a core value the Lord is working into the DNA of WBC. Humility. Our greatest need is humility. The Lord alone is great and the focus of everything that happens.

Then in March came our series, “No Longer a Slave to Sin: An Exposition of Romans 6.” We really believe the gospel sets sinners free! This was followed in April by, “In the Shadow of the Cross: An Exposition of Isaiah 53,” which the Lord used to take us even deeper into our love for our wonderful Savior who suffered so much for us.

In May through July you graciously granted me a sabbatical break (for which Sherry and I are so grateful), but there was no sabbatical for the Word. A team of men preached a series, “The King’s Parables in Matthew’s Gospel.” Rex led us in a series, “Flourishing Fellowship With God: A Study in First John.” Steve Stairs addressed an important topic with a Sunday evening series, “Learning How to Talk About Significant Theological Differences.”

Nine different men preached from this pulpit in 2025, and eight additional men participated in preachers in training on Sunday evenings. Let that number sink in. Seventeen different men preached God’s Word last year. Same Book. Seventeen different voices.

When I returned from the sabbatical break, we launched an important series, “The Struggle Within: An Exposition of Romans 7”. This was followed by, “The Secure Struggler: An Exposition of Romans 8.” We learned that it’s okay, even necessary, to affirm that we are struggling. But we don’t struggle alone. We are *secure* strugglers because God has united us with His Son *and* with each other.

We finished the year with, “Behold the Son: An Exposition of Hebrews 1-2.” The Lord willing, we’ll be returning to this Christ-exalting book in February.

All this was the Lord’s gift to us. When we eat our Thanksgiving feast, we rightfully give thanks to the Giver. We have enjoyed a wonderful spiritual feast in 2025, and we now say, “Thank You Father!”

Yet there’s more. He didn’t just allow us to *hear* His Word. He gave us opportunities to digest it in the context of fellowship. That’s what Sunday School is all about. Thank you, Sunday School teachers, for your countless hours studying and praying for your classes.

That’s what community groups are all about. Thank you, community group leaders and hosts, for creating opportunities for our people to grow deeper in the knowledge of Christ and each other through intentional interaction with the Sunday morning sermons.

And there was more feasting. On Wednesday evenings, Michael Dow led a team of brothers who taught us the “Messianic Psalms” and “Finding Our Identity in Christ”. In the summer once again a different missionary joined us each week. On the second Sunday evenings, our preachers in training took us through 2 Peter.

The Lord continues to use our Counseling and Discipleship training to minister to people worldwide through our Monday evening course in the winter (over forty

participated), as well as our online class *Biblical Counseling in the Local Church* at TSBC.

The Lord has provided us with a wonderful building to accomplish this ministry of the Word. He has given us godly trustees who work hard to maintain it and prepare it for use. The Lord provided \$30,290 so we could pay our building and grounds costs, and \$27,209 for utility costs. He has given us a godly treasurer and assistant treasurer who provide excellent accountability and reporting for how the Lord's money is received and used.

The Lord has raised up a pastoral team that encourages my heart greatly. We meet weekly to pray and coordinate efforts to equip you, the saints at WBC, for the ministries He has designed to accomplish. These brothers who serve in shepherding roles at WBC in a part-time capacity. Pastor Matt serves as our Associate Pastor of Discipleship. Michael Dow is Director of Youth Ministries. Douglas Goncalves serves in a position we call "Pastor's Assistant" and is responsible for mobilizing the church in the assimilation of visitors, facilitating joyful corporate worship on Sundays, and leading our Sunday School ministry as Sunday School superintendent.

This past year WBC voted to become the sending church for Douglas and Lacey Goncalves and their three children as they follow the Lord's calling to serve as career missionaries with ABWE in Brazil.

In 2025 we brought Rex Howe on staff as part time Associate Pastor of Outreach. Rex began the year by teaching us how to share the gospel, then mobilized our people to create gospel conversations, at the flea market, even at a tailgate prayer station before a football game.

The Lord has raised up a team of six deacons who are the spiritual pacesetters in the church. I'm so grateful for their efforts to facilitate member care and especially for their commitment to pray. They meet monthly for the express purpose of praying for this church family.

When we start exegeting the work of the Lord at WBC in 2025, it's difficult to know where to stop. On Wednesday evenings He used Rex and Aimee and our FLY team to teach more than fifty children in our church and community about Jesus and the wonderful truths of His Word.

He continued to use Two:Two groups for men, and Titus 2 groups for women to reproduce reproducers of God's Word for the future.

The Lord used Adam and Chris begin a ministry called "Men in the Middle". He used Ashley and Pam mobilize a women's prayer ministry. It's encouraging to see other organic, non-structured Bible studies happening in the church.

To repeat something I mentioned last year, it's not just that we are seeing this happening at WBC. It's why. The Lord is gathering and growing a people at WBC who are hungry for Him, who want to know Him and the treasures of His Word more deeply.

And what He has given to us, we want to share with others. During Passion week, He allowed us again to have a special outreach initiative, which we called, "In the Shadow of the Cross." A team of a dozen men used their woodworking skills to make about two hundred *Cross Shadows* so we could give them to our friends and neighbors on Good Friday and Easter Sunday. We also used our home to have a neighborhood sunrise service on Resurrection morning. The goal in all this is to help people think about what Jesus accomplished on the cross.

Back in the 90s He used a generous donor to help us establish a Youth Endowment Fund. The current balance is about \$140,000. This past year it generated about \$5,236 in interest, which we used to fund various aspects of our ministries with children and teens. We love our young people at WBC.

He has raised up Scioto Hills Christian Camp and Retreat Center. We love Scioto Hills and what God is doing through this regional ministry. Our treasurer gave me this interesting number this week. The amount of money WBC was privileged to give to Scioto Hills this past year was \$26,254. This includes our monthly support (\$4,000), as well as other special gifts (\$15,900) and money from the YAF (\$6,354) which were used to send children to camp, support summer staff, and to help the ministry in other ways.

Through our fall harvest offering He provided \$3,717 to replenish our benevolent fund so we can continue to help those with particular practical needs.

He has given us the WBC Community Center which was used 218 times in 2025. This includes 188 bookings from non-profit renters such as Girl Scouts, OSU Extension classes, Wednesday Senior's Breakfast, Over 55 Club, Quilters, Community Groups, Fellowships, Trainings, and Compassion Meals and it was rented 30 times for birthdays, family reunions, showers, etc. and generated donations in the amount of \$3,325.00.

As a result of the Lord's provision in 2025, we were able to give \$46,540 from our general fund to support our missionaries and other ministries (like Scioto Hills, TSBC, ACBC, the GARBC, the OARBC, etc.) that help us make Christ known to the nations. We also invested close to \$5,000 in our ministry in Nepal the fall. This means that about one-fifth of our general fund income goes to make the gospel known beyond these four walls. We love missions at WBC.

Allow me to highlight a specific example. The Lord enabled us to give \$2,700 to CRADLE out of general fund moneys this year, a ministry we love and in which several of our members serve. We received this information from CRADLE's executive director (Mandy Arthur) on December 16. "Since the beginning of the year, we've had 63 new clients join us. We have been blessed to serve 401 families and 702 children for a total of 950 visits. God has graciously saved 22 moms and dads at CRADLE so far in 2025."

On a personal note, the Lord continued to give me opportunities to encourage pastors in sister churches throughout this Tri-State region and beyond. Pastoral longevity is a gift from Him that I desire to steward it well, by His grace. He allowed me to write for The Focused Pastor, a ministry of Focus on the Family, which exists to strengthen church leaders around the world. He also allowed me to write two book drafts, *The Numbers Game* which I mentioned earlier, and *When It's Time to Mourn: An Exposition of Lamentations and the Lamenters*. Would you pray with me for clarity about next steps with these projects?

Friends, this is what *boring* produced in the hands of God in 2025. Praise be to the One who did it all! What's coming in 2026?

Opportunities for Future Boring, God-Exalting, Joyful Ministry in 2026

Again, *boring* means we keep doing the same God-ordained activities over and over and over. It's like watching a John Wooden basketball team (Wooden won ten NCAA titles at UCLA back in the 60s and 70s). Wooden didn't surprise other teams. They knew what was coming. He won by emphasizing the fundamentals and doing the

same things over and over, game after game, year after year. Good defense. Disciplined offense. Full court press. Promoting the team over the individual. Over and over.

This is the playbook at WBC. The first opportunity in front of us involves **the ministry of prayer**. As I shared with you last Sunday, our theme for the year is “Redeemed People Pray the Word,” as the banner up front indicates. If a boring church is going to accomplish anything in a world that says that being innovative and cutting edge is vital, we need God. We need God to do the impossible. And this is why we need to give even more attention to prayer in 2026, and not just prayer, but a specific kind of prayer. Praying the Word, not telling the Lord what *we* want Him to do, but affirming what *He* said He would do. We’ll learn more about what that means the next two Sundays, and then in a ten-week summer series looking at the prayers of Paul. We’ll also be putting this *praying the Word* focus into practice through several organized prayer services like we had last Sunday evening.

The second opportunity in front of us once again involves **the ministry of the Word**. We must not neglect the ministry of prayer and the Word, said the apostles in Acts 6. And so say we at WBC. What’s coming at WBC in 2026? You already know what’s coming. In Sunday School classes, and in youth group meetings, in FLY and children’s church, and all our other ministries, organized and informal. Prayer and the Word.

I’m excited to talk about where we’re heading in the preaching ministry. In February, the Lord willing, we’ll return to Hebrews with a Sunday morning series, “Behold the Son and Rest in Him: An Exposition of Hebrews 3-5.” What a wonderful thought! Jesus Christ offers a sabbath rest to sinners. We don’t have to perform our way back into a relationship with God. We rest in what our Savior accomplished for us.

When we move into Hebrews 5, we’ll ponder these staggering words together. “In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence... And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him (Hebrews 5:7, 9).” Staggering! He suffered anguish, to save us from eternal anguish!

Then on Resurrection Sunday, April 5, I plan to preach a message that considers one great outcome of His suffering, “The Torn Curtain.” This sermon will coincide with this year’s woodworking project and Good Friday outreach. We want to fill this community with the knowledge of the torn curtain and why it was torn and what this now means for us.

As the Lord allows, we’ll move into Hebrew 6 after Easter, and eventually into the prayers of Paul series in the summer. And more.

And what will the ministry of prayer and the Word produce? If the Lord is pleased to bless it, we’ll engage in **the ministry of giving away what He has given us**.

We’ll provide free biblical counseling for hurting people. Last year our counseling team provided more than two hundred sessions helping people struggling with their marriages, with parenting issues, with depression, fear, and anxiety. And the opportunities will only increase in 2026. If you’d like to be a part of giving biblical help to hurting people, I encourage you to take advantage of our current Counseling and Discipleship training course, either on Monday evenings or online at TSBC. This is a tremendous way to get the tools necessary to give away the blessings we enjoy. It’s year

27 for this ministry, and it kicked off this past week with another large class of 31 people. There's still room for you if you want to grow in your ability to skillfully minister God's Word to people who are struggling with life issues.

There are other ways we'll be giving away what the Lord has given us. There will be special outreach events coming. Be listening for details from Pastor Rex. I mentioned one earlier, *The Torn Curtain* initiative during Passion week. Men, if you have some basic woodworking skills and tools, we can use you. And we can use everyone to spread the word. Be praying now about who you can invite to your home, either for a Good Friday outreach, or for an Easter Sunday morning sunrise service, or both.

But let's not wait for an event to share Christ with others. The bread and butter for evangelism at WBC is redemptive relationships. Let's love our neighbors well this year, and the people we work with, and go to school with, and work out with, and then as the Lord opens the opportunities, let's tell them why we love them, and about the One who loved us and gave His life for us.

We want to help children go to Scioto Hills camp again this year. Parents, if you will pay the deposit, we as a church will pay the balance. Be watching for more details. We want to see many young people go to camp this year, as well as serve at camp on summer staff! And if the Lord has blessed you financially, why not participate in the Expanding our Impact initiative at Scioto Hills?

We want to help Douglas and Lacey Goncalves on their journey to raise a support team to help them make disciples of Christ in south Brazil.

We look forward to another ministry trip to Nepal in November and the opportunity to give biblical instruction to church leaders there through Tri-M. We also anticipate an opportunity to provide biblical counseling training in the capital.

There are so many ways for us to give away what the Lord has given us. Why not volunteer at CRADLE this year, or at Tri-State Bible College? Last year some of our people participated in the TSBC library relocation project. Talk to Rex and see how you can serve this year. And why not consider taking a class or two as well?

Why not participate in FLY ministry, or our nursery ministry, or children's church ministry, or youth ministry, or seniors' ministry, or funeral meal ministry? Why not open your home for community groups this year, or participate in church work days?

All this and more is what the boring ministry of prayer and the Word has produced in the past at WBC, and by God's grace, will produce in 2026 and beyond.

Response: Redeemed people...PRAY THE WORD. As mentioned, this year we are making a concentrated effort to pray the Word personally and corporately. Let's now allow the Lord's Prayer to guide us as we call on the Lord in response to the message we've just heard.

Closing Song: #462 "Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us" (all four verses)

Communion: Luke 22:14-20

Sunday evening service

Welcome and ministry updates (Matt)

Prayer

Worship through singing

Sermons (Preachers in Training)

2 Peter 3:1-3 Matt Wilson

2 Peter 3:4-7 Jason Willis

2 Peter 3:8-10 Raj Kataria

Monthly Business meeting