

Transforming Lives By Investing in Those Who Invest in Students

By Dan Carson, Director • Student Ministry Matters

Each September, I look forward to a day that’s become one of the most important on our calendar — the Student Ministry Workers Retreat. It’s more than just an event — it’s a chance to refocus, reconnect and reenergize the people who pour their lives into the next generation.

As someone who has served in student ministry for decades, I know how easy it is to pour out until there’s nothing left in the tank. That’s why we created this retreat. We wanted to give student ministry workers — whether full-time, part-time or volunteer — a space to be encouraged, equipped and empowered. When you are spiritually refreshed and practically resourced, you’re better prepared to do what God has called you to do — make disciples who make disciples.

This year, I invite you to join us for the Student Ministry Workers Retreat 2025 on Saturday, Sept. 20, at Central Baptist College in Conway. Our theme is “Student Ministry and Tech,” and we’ll be joined by keynote speaker Stephen Castleberry as we wrestle with the question: “How do we faithfully use technology to communicate the unchanging gospel to students in a constantly shifting world?”

We’ve designed this retreat to be an intentional day of connection, worship and growth. You’ll hear biblical teaching, participate in breakout sessions tailored to your ministry context and spend time with others who understand both the joys and burdens of student ministry. It’s also just a lot of fun — we’ve got giveaways, snacks, lunch and goody bags for the first 100 registrants! But what makes this retreat truly powerful is what God does in and through it.



Jordan Goforth, student pastor at Southgate Baptist in Moore, Okla., put it this way:

“This was a very well-thought-out and carefully planned event that was relevant and pressing to today’s ministry landscape. Not only did we leave feeling uplifted and encouraged, but we also left with tangible resources that empower us to continue our growth long after this event ended. It was not just beneficial, but essential — a vital opportunity to sharpen one another and deepen our commitment to our calling.”

Glenda Harron, youth leader at First Baptist Church in Decatur, has attended almost every year with her husband. She shared how this event has transformed their approach to ministry and discipleship:

“We laugh together, share burdens, cry, pray and worship together. Our speakers and breakout leaders always bring relevant, biblical teaching. Last year, Dr. Jimmie Decker reminded us that discipleship begins with evangelism — we meet students where they are, not where we want them to be. That truth alone shifted how we see our ministry.”

She added that this retreat has become a rhythm in their ministry — a time to pause, receive and reengage with purpose.

“If you work with students and have never attended, I encourage you to make plans now to attend this year’s conference! You won’t regret the time you take to be



refreshed and encouraged.”

If you’re a youth pastor, Sunday School teacher, small group leader, campus worker or anyone who serves students, I want to personally invite you to make this retreat a priority. Not for your schedule, but for your soul. Not just for your students, but for your own spiritual walk. When God transforms your life, you are better equipped to help transform theirs.

Join us at Student Ministry Workers Retreat 2025 and let’s continue the mission of discipling the next generation together. Plan to be at Central Baptist College in Conway, Ark., on Saturday, Sept. 20, 2025.

Register at [SMWR2025.eventbrite.com](https://smwr2025.eventbrite.com). Early Bird Tickets: \$20 (first 20 only!) Regular registration is \$30 (+\$3.85 fee), with special rates for students and CBC staff. T-shirts are included if you register by August 31.

For more information, visit StudentMinistryMatters.com. Let’s invest in the people who are investing in students — and in doing so, change the future for Christ.

Early Bird Special	First 20 tickets: \$20 (no additional fees)
Regular Registration	\$30 + \$3.85 fee (includes t-shirt if by Aug. 31)
CBC Students & Staff	\$20
High School, College or Seminary Students	\$25
T-shirt Guarantee	Register by August 31
Goody Bags	First 100 registrants

STUDENT
MINISTRY
& TECH

STUDENT
Ministry
Workers
RETREAT
EST. 2018

#SMWR

September 20, 2025

Speaker: Stephen Castleberry

StudentMinistryMatters.com

Central Baptist College
1501 College, Ave., Conway, AR

- Plan to attend SMWR 2025 on Sept. 20, 2025. Visit smwr2025.eventbrite.com to register and watch for the early-bird special!
- Check out the Student Ministry Matters podcast at studentministrymatters.podbean.com or through most major podcasting platforms.
- Join the Student Ministry Matters Community on Facebook at Facebook.com/groups/StudentMinistryMattersCommunity.

— Student Ministry Matters is the Baptist Missionary Association of Arkansas Youth Department. Its goal is to offer connections, continuing education and coaching for volunteer, part-time and full-time student ministry workers. More information can be found at StudentMinistryMatters.com.



74 years (1951-2025) of sharing the gospel across ARkansas and beyond.
Our heARtbeat is to see lives changed for the glory of God as we
spread the gospel by planting new churches in AREas where
people need to be connected to Jesus through a community of faith.



BMA of Ozarks Mission Rally

By Dana Williams, Pastor • Cornerstone Baptist Church, Lowell

There are moments when ministry and mission work are so fulfilling. Those moments come when the people of God carry out the will of God for the glory of God. We see Jesus in those moments. We rejoice in them, and they bring us to the very throne room of God. We had one of those moments at the Gracias Soberano Mission on May 23. We discovered the work of God's will there, seeing the faces and the hearts of brothers and sisters from all over the world, and some a little closer to home.

We advertised in the *Baptist Trumpet* for the mission rally, we put it out through social media and we told others personally. Our local association turned out to eat and rejoice with one another; to hear of the work being done and to worship alongside others whose only commonality was a love for the Savior and the brethren. We had a good number there from Cornerstone Baptist, as we are their mother church, many from the BMA of the Ozarks, who have partnered with us in the ministry of the Gracias Soberano Mission. In total, we had approximately 50 attendees.

The evening began in true fellowship style, as the brethren from the mission prepared a homestyle meal featuring many traditional dishes from Central and South American countries, accompanied by desserts from the ladies of Cornerstone for a sweet treat. Everyone was joyful and enjoyed one another's company.

We then came to the time of the gathering of ourselves together, meeting up in the sanctuary, we began to sing praises to God both in Spanish and English. Aaron Williams led the English-speaking songs, and Roberto Marcelletti led all the Spanish songs. It was a tremendous time of blessing and praise to God.

I gave a report from Cornerstone about the mission from our church's perspective. Discussing how the work Bro. Roberto was doing was tremendously important for the community and how we, as a church, have benefited from partnering alongside them. The blessings have been amazing to see. Additionally, Roberto presented a report in both English and Spanish. Then we heard a great message on the importance of partnering together in missions by Michael Hight.

Sadly, as all good things must end, after spending three hours together in fellowship, prayer and worship, we departed and promised to pray for and help the mission anyway we could. All was done in a spirit of cooperation and love for Christ our Redeemer.



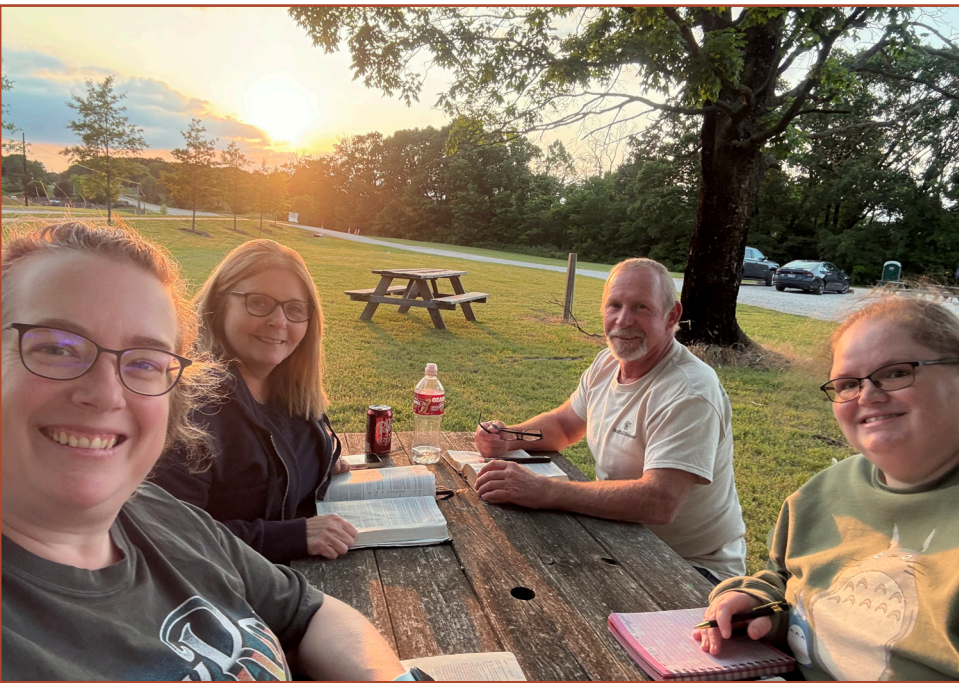
A Family Celebration

By Roberto Marcelletti, Missionary • Misión Gracia Soberana, NW Ark.

We met several days in advance to plan the Missions Rally event, where the brothers of the Ozark association would visit us, and we were responsible for the food. It was our first event where we received the brothers, so we met to plan and give instructions on how we would serve that day.

Friday was the Missions Rally, and pastors and brothers from the different churches arrived. The brothers enjoyed a delicious and abundant meal prepared by the sisters of our congregation. Then, we went to the sanctuary, where Dana Williams, pastor of Cornerstone Baptist Church in Lowell, our mother church, presided over the meeting. He spoke of his experience supporting our mission and challenged the brothers of the other churches not to stop doing it. We then had a beautiful time of worship in English and Spanish, followed by an excellent message from BMA of Arkansas Hispanic Coordinator Michael Hight. Despite the heavy rains and storm forecast, we were able to gather and complete our month-long focus on family, discussing how to resolve conflicts biblically, celebrating the birthdays of our brothers in May and joining with our extended family from sister churches in the association.





It Wasn't Just One

By Jake McCandless, Missionary • Epic Church, Pea Ridge

One of the first lessons the Lord put in my heart in ministry was this: **Don't get discouraged if the whole church isn't on mission.**

As a pastor — or any leadership role — I carry the weight of setting the culture. And what I've learned is that most believers love Jesus, want to be faithful and genuinely desire to live on mission. However, when it comes to actually sharing our faith and helping others follow Him, it often gets pushed to the back burner.

We feel stirred after a message or a Scripture reading, but it rarely sticks with us. It's not easy. But I can't read the parables of the talents or the minas without seeing it clearly — we are **all** called to the mission. That doesn't mean reaching thousands. Even Jesus focused on 12, and really poured into just 3. But every believer is called to make disciples.

That's the DNA we're building in our church in Pea Ridge. We're not just growing a Sunday crowd — we're raising up everyday missionaries. Through our **Connection Groups**, people are being trained to live on mission in their neighborhoods, workplaces and relationships. The fruit is growing, at different speeds for different people, and that's okay.

One moment, a couple of weeks ago, captured it perfectly. Our **Garfield Connection Group** met at a food truck for their Bible study. The owners were so intrigued, they wanted to shut down early and join in. That night, leaders Rodney and Melinda Chadwell and Tara Simon texted me a photo with this message: "Only one person showed up — but we had a great time."

What they didn't say, but what I reminded Rodney of, was this: It wasn't **just** one. It was **his niece**. The same niece for whom he had prayed for decades. That night, they got to open the gospel and pour into someone whose name had been on his heart for years. And unfortunately, even when we lead in church, we don't get to work with a family member on that level.

It wasn't just one. It was **the one**.



The Impact of the Evangelism

Ruben Isturiz, Missionary • Ebenezer, West Little Rock

I share with you the story of Pablo Rumbos, an immigrant from Puerto La Cruz, Venezuela. Like eight million other Venezuelans, he was forced to leave his once prosperous homeland, which the socialist system has plunged into poverty.

Like many other immigrants, Pablo works hard to stay in the United States, to help his family in Venezuela. For many, the priority is to work tirelessly, leaving little to no time for church, education or recreation. Free time is spent buying food, cleaning his home and washing his clothes.

Every immigrant who comes to the U.S. represents a valuable opportunity to share the gospel and transform their lives. This was true with Pablo. He has been attending Ebenezer Church for a month. In this short time, he has shown a great interest in inviting others.

Since his arrival, his life has undergone a remarkable change, and he now has a deep desire to know God and His Word more. Due to his night shift at UAMS during the week, he is unable to attend our Bible Discovery Studies (DBS). However, we have organized a DBS for him and a group of friends from work on Wednesdays at 10 a.m.

Last week, Pablo told me, "Pastor, Ebenezer is my church, and I want to get baptized and continue to grow in God and His Word." This testimony is a clear example of the impact of your prayer, support and giving. I encourage you to continue praying that God will bring many people like Pablo to Ebenezer — those with a genuine desire to seek God more deeply. To God be the glory!



BMA of Arkansas State Missions
2025 Special Emphasis





Making A Difference

"For we are **labourers** together with God..."
I Corinthians 3:9

BMA of Arkansas State Missions
Special Emphasis
May - June - July
Arkansas Missions Sunday
July 27, 2025

Mail All Offerings To:
BMA OF ARKANSAS STATE MISSIONS
P. O. Box 195514
Little Rock, Arkansas 72219-5514



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Mustang Message

Coach Brister's Lasting Legacy at CBC: A Life of Faith, Leadership and Impact

By Jessica Faulkner



Dr. Aaron Brister, head baseball coach, chair of the Kinesiology Department, and instructor at Central Baptist College, recently completed his 12th season at the helm of the Mustangs baseball program. However, his impact on CBC extends beyond wins and losses — his legacy is defined by leadership, mentorship, and an unwavering commitment to his faith.

Brister, who holds a Ph.D. in Kinesiology from the University of Arkansas, has racked up 358 wins at CBC and 509 total collegiate victories across 20 seasons, including eight years at Emmanuel College in Georgia.

"He is one of the best baseball coaches I have ever been under because of his passion to see everyone succeed," one former player said. "It's not all about baseball with him — it's about using baseball as a platform to impact lives."

Since arriving in 2013, Brister has coached dozens of student-athletes who have continued their careers at the professional level, including Ben Madison, who was drafted in the 9th round by the San Francisco Giants in 2018. He has also mentored a coaching tree. Fourteen former CBC players now coach at the collegiate level, with another 18 coaching in high schools or athletic training programs.

Off the field, Brister wears many hats. He is an instructor and academic leader, a devoted family man and a minister. He serves as the Family and Involvement Pastor at Four Winds Church, where he teaches Sunday school, leads worship and helps with outreach events. He and his wife, Billie Jean, have three children — Eden, a CBC graduate and a founder of the Tri Ziva women's social organization; Lilly, a junior volleyball player at CBC; and Isaiah, a sophomore at Conway Christian School.

Brister's passion for ministry also extends globally. He has led international mission trips for over 20 years. Just this past December, he took 20 CBC student-athletes and staff to Havana, Cuba, where they conducted sports evangelism camps, street witnessing and house-to-house ministry.

"He is a coach and leader who makes everyone around him better — not only on the field, but in life," said another player. "I learned from Coach Brister to always trust the Lord in all situations because the Lord will always provide you peace."

One of Brister's most cherished memories at CBC occurred in 2015, when his team played at Busch Stadium in St. Louis, just minutes after a Cardinals walk-off win, in front of 43,000 fans.

"It was surreal," Brister recalled. "Several alumni and friends of CBC were in attendance. That spring of 2016, the same team went on to set the all-time win record at 45-16 and won the program's first-ever conference championship. To God be the glory!"

When asked what first brought him to Conway, Brister said it was nothing short of divine timing. "I know it sounds 'churchy,' but I know the Lord brought me to CBC," he said. "My wife and I had been praying for the Lord to bring us back closer to Arkansas... After our last game, I was walking back to our bus and received a text message about the job opening. I took my resume in person to Conway. The rest is history! God's timing is perfect!"

Brister's commitment to spiritual development is evident in every aspect of his program. Each winter, his baseball team participates in a spiritual retreat, and in the past five years, 17 players have accepted Christ during these retreats.

"Central Baptist College is a phenomenal Christ-centered institution," Brister said. "We offer an educational experience that competes with any school in the state... Serving Jesus is the underlying pulse of everything."

As CBC looks to the future, Coach Brister's legacy will remain firmly rooted in a life that combines excellence in coaching with a passion for serving others — on the field, in the classroom and across the globe.

"He never gave up on me," one former player reflected. "He always had my back through the best and worst times."



CBC is committed to transforming lives by providing an education that integrates Christian faith and academic excellence in a Christ-centered environment.