
OFWB COMMUNITY

April 2026

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Free Will Baptist Press

Are We Raising Disciples or Consumers

Dr. John Hill, Editor & CEO

I have begun asking myself a hard question: in my ministry, am I forming disciples—or simply serving consumers? The difference is subtle but profound. A consumer attends, evaluates, and chooses based on preference. A disciple follows, obeys, and is shaped over time. Consumers ask, “Did this meet my needs?” Disciples ask, “How must I change?” The danger is that church culture can quietly drift toward the language of satisfaction rather than transformation.

I feel the pressure. Attendance matters. Engagement matters. Retention matters. It is tempting to measure fruitfulness by visible response—numbers, compliments, growth metrics. But I have to ask: what are we producing? If our preaching, programming, and leadership are designed primarily to attract and retain, we may unintentionally cultivate people who view church as a service provider.

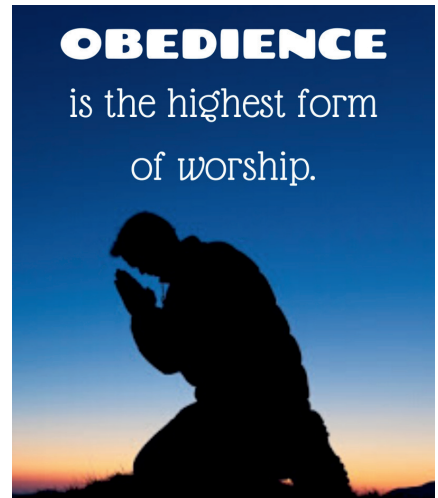
Consumers prefer convenience. They sample sermons online. They compare worship styles. They move when preferences are not met. Disciples, however, commit. They endure discomfort. They submit to Scripture even when it confronts them. They serve when unseen. If I avoid difficult texts, soften sharp truths, or over-accommodate cultural expectations, may be making church easier to attend—but harder to grow in.

This question confronts my preaching. Am I calling people to obedience, or merely offering insight?

Do my sermons invite repentance and allegiance, or simply reflection? It is possible to preach truth clearly and still stop short of demanding a response. Yet Jesus did not gather admirers; He called followers. It also challenges my leadership. Do our ministries move people toward maturity, or simply keep them busy? Activity is not discipleship. Programs can create participation without transformation. Discipleship requires depth, accountability, sacrifice, and time. It asks more than attendance—it calls for surrender.

I must also examine my own heart. It is easier to manage consumers than to form disciples. Consumers reward you with approval. Discipleship often produces resistance. When people leave because truth feels costly, I feel it personally. Yet if I avoid cost, I may be shielding them from the very path that leads to life.

The gospel does not invite consumption; it calls for crucifixion. To follow Christ is to deny self, take up the cross, and walk a narrow road. That language does not trend well in a marketplace culture. But it forms resilient believers. So I return to the question regularly. What am I building? If Christ were to evaluate my ministry, would He see crowds satisfied—or disciples transformed? I cannot control every outcome. But I can refuse to shape the church around comfort alone. My calling is not to entertain preferences but to shepherd souls. And souls are not formed by consumption—they are formed by costly grace, consistent truth, and a community committed to follow Jesus together.



Calendar of Events

April 2: Maundy Thursday

April 3: Good Friday

April 5: Resurrection Sunday

April 10-12: Morning Star,
WAux, @ Cragmont

April 11: Albemarle Woman's
Auxiliary Conference, Trinity
Church, Pantego, NC. 9:30
Registration.

April 12: Gospel Concert: The
Stedfast Quartet, Friendship
Church, Farmville, 6pm

April 13: Pitt Co Area Ministers
Breakfast, Bum's, Ayden,
8:30am

April 16: Central District
Woman's Aux Study Course,
“I Can Do All Things Through
Christ” Speaker: Ann Copeland.

April 17, 18, & 19
Prince of Egypt at UMO

April 19: Homecoming,
Friendship Church,
Farmville, 11am

“Crucial Commitments: 5 Simple Decisions That Members of Healthy and Growing Churches Make



By Thom S. Rainer, *Church Answers*
Review by Dr. John Hill, Editor & CEO

In *Crucial Commitments*, Thom S. Rainer once again places the focus of church health where it belongs—not merely on pastors, programs, or strategies, but on members. Drawing from years of research and consultation with congregations across the country, Rainer argues that thriving churches are made up of members who make five intentional and biblical commitments. The strength of the book lies in its simplicity: these are not complex systems or corporate models, but spiritual decisions rooted in New Testament principles.

Rainer identifies five commitments that mark healthy church members: **worshiping faithfully, growing spiritually, serving sacrificially, giving generously, and unifying consistently**. Each chapter unpacks one of these decisions with clarity and pastoral concern. Rather than presenting these commitments as burdens, he frames them as privileges—joyful responsibilities that strengthen both the believer and the body of Christ.

One of the refreshing aspects of this book is its tone. Rainer does not scold struggling congregations; instead, he gently calls believers to examine their own participation in the local church. He reminds readers that church health is not something “they” create—it is something “we” cultivate. In an age when consumer Christianity is common, this message is both timely and necessary.

The first commitment, faithful worship attendance, addresses a growing cultural drift toward sporadic involvement. Rainer connects consistent gathering with spiritual vitality and unity.

The second commitment, spiritual growth, emphasizes personal Bible study, prayer, and discipleship. Healthy members pursue Christ beyond Sunday mornings. The third, serving sacrificially, calls believers to use their gifts for the common good rather than waiting to be asked. The fourth commitment, generous giving, challenges members to invest financially in the mission of the church. Finally, unity is presented as both fragile and essential—members are urged to guard it through humility and encouragement rather than criticism.

What makes this book particularly useful for pastors and church leaders is its practicality. Each chapter includes questions and reflections that could easily be adapted for small groups, membership classes, or leadership retreats. The material would work well as part of a church-wide emphasis on renewal or as a follow-up to a sermon series on church membership.

While the content is straightforward, it is not shallow. Beneath the simplicity lies a profound truth: churches flourish when individual believers take personal responsibility for their spiritual commitments. Programs cannot compensate for passive membership. Strategy cannot replace devotion. Healthy churches are built on healthy, committed members.

For pastors, this book offers a helpful diagnostic tool. For church members, it offers a mirror. Rainer’s central message is clear: when ordinary believers make intentional decisions to worship, grow, serve, give, and unify, extraordinary things happen in the life of the church.

Crucial Commitments is a concise, accessible, and convicting read—well-suited for church leaders and members alike who desire to see their congregation strengthened for Christ’s glory and mission.

Psalms For The Soul

Ms Linda Herring

The Bible speaks to us, but the Psalms speak for us. Psalm 46:10 says, “Be still and know that I am God.” When we are in a crisis, we usually start thinking about how we are going to get out of it. Think of the people at the Red Sea, the people living in Jericho, and when David killed Goliath. Can you imagine how they must have felt? We must get still before God, get alone with Him, and wait patiently until He speaks to us. Our minds must be clear and be willing to let God write in it. Stay in the Word, and stay on your knees in prayer. Jesus once healed some lepers, but their healing did not take place immediately. The Bible says, “As they went, they were healed.” At first, they may have thought, “Nothing’s happening.” I still have leprosy. But when they got to a certain point in their journey, the miracle took place. We must be willing to step out in faith and try things in order to find what works and what does not. Do not let the stresses of the day steal your Psalm.

A Modern Success Story: Grover Gaming CEO Garrett Blackwelder to Speak at UMO

Rhonda Jessup, Director of Public Relations

The University of Mount Olive will welcome Garrett Blackwelder, founder and CEO of Grover Gaming, for a special guest presentation titled *A Success Story Shaped by Family and Community* on April 1 from 10 to 11:30 AM in the Southern Bank Auditorium.

A Greenville-based technology company, Grover Gaming is nationally recognized for its innovative charitable gaming software and electronic gaming systems. Under Blackwelder's leadership, the company has grown from a small regional startup into a major industry player operating across multiple states and employing hundreds of team members. In 2025, Grover Gaming completed a landmark \$1.05 billion sale of its charitable gaming assets to Light & Wonder, marking one of the largest transactions of its kind in the sector.

Known for his emphasis on company culture, product excellence, and strategic growth, Blackwelder has built Grover Gaming into a model of high performance and innovation within a highly regulated industry. His campus visit will offer students, faculty, and guests insight into entrepreneurship, vision, and purpose-driven leadership, while highlighting the role of community in long-term success.

The event also reflects a deeply personal connection to the University. Blackwelder is the grandson of Ray Scarborough, a former Major League Baseball pitcher whose professional career spanned ten seasons. Over the course of his MLB career, Scarborough established himself as a dependable left-handed starter and postseason contributor, earning respect for his durability and consistency. His career included an All-Star selection, a World Series championship with the New York Yankees, and memorable moments against some of baseball's most celebrated hitters.

Following his baseball career, Scarborough's influence became firmly rooted at Mount Olive. In the early 1980s, he was the driving force behind reestablishing the baseball program at Mount Olive College, overseeing recruiting and player development, designing the baseball field,

and creating an endowment to support scholarships and field maintenance. On April 19, 1980, the University dedicated Scarborough Field in his honor, cementing his lasting impact on the institution's athletic and academic legacy.

Continuing the family's longstanding relationship with the University, the Scarborough-Blackwelder homeplace was gifted to the University in fall 2018. The historic property now serves as an executive home for University leadership, symbolizing a multigenerational commitment to Mount Olive and its mission.

This upcoming event, hosted by the Tillman School of Business, is free and open to the public. For more information, contact Dr. Kathy T. Best at kbest@umo.edu.



The poster features a circular image of the George and Anne Sall Kornegay Arena at the University of Mount Olive, with pink flowers in the foreground. To the right is a logo of a globe with a cross and a book. The text reads: "ANNUAL CONVENTION OF ORIGINAL FREE WILL BAPTISTS" and "University of Mount Olive MAY 20 2026".



The poster is decorated with a border of colorful flowers and butterflies. The text reads: "Albemarle District WOMAN'S AUXILIARY Spring Convention at Trinity OFWB Church Pantego, NC" and "8775 NC Highway 99 North, Pantego, NC 27860" and "Saturday, April 11, 2026 Registration and Refreshments begin at 9:30am".



Supply Drive **Pop-Up Event**

Event Details:

- When: Wednesday, May 20, 2026
- Where: OFWB Convention at UMO
- Bring your paper products, cleaning supplies, and hygiene items
- Donation trailer will be located in the Kornegay Arena parking lot
- Help us pack the trailer to help our children
- Volunteers will be on hand to load your items



**This will take the place of our
previous Supply Drive Ball
Game**

***Let's make a
difference
together!***

Contact us:
cbrown@fwbch.org
252-235-2161
fwbchildrenshome.org/needs



University of
MOUNT OLIVE
Music Program

Proudly presents

DREAMWORKS

The

Prince

of

Egypt

Music & Lyrics by Stephen Schwartz
Book by Philip LaZebnik

April 17th - 6 pm

April 18th - 6 pm

April 19th - 4 pm

The Hazel Waters

Kornegay Assembly Hall

**THE CRAGMONT CLASSIC
GOLF
TOURNAMENT
2026**

Wedgewood Golf Course
(3201 Stantonsburg Rd SE, Wilson)
Friday, August 14
Tee Times
8:00 & 1:30

Registrations will be mailed to players in database in April.
There will also be a registration link option on the
Cragmont Classic Facebook page!



For additional information: toddsutton1@gmail.com or 252-341-1093



rebrand.ly/teowevz

OFWB Convention Theme Series for 2025-2028
"Moving Forward as One"

Adopted by the OFWB Convention Executive Committee on August 29, 2024



Unifying Series Theme		Unifying Series Scripture	Unifying Rationale					
"Moving Forward as One"		Ephesians 4:4-6 - There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.	We are independently minded, which sometimes leaves us isolated and weak. Yet, God calls his people to be strong and courageous, united with him and with each other. Unity is our greatest need as a denomination, because if we have unity with God through Jesus Christ and each other, then our vision, path, and work, which often elude us, will become clear. To strengthen our unity, the Executive Committee has chosen a four-year convention theme series to best honor God's will in addressing that need. It is our hope that each ministry, conference, church, lay ministry group, youth group, and every individual person in our denomination will adopt this theme series and incorporate it into their planning and programming for the next four years. The way forward is forward, together, with God.					
Yearly	Unifying Theme Focus	Unifying Scripture	Unifying Symbol	Unifying Application Activity	Unifying Faith Evidence	Unifying Commission & Commandment	Unifying Church Function	Unifying Call and Commitment
2025	Christ Centered, and Moving Forward as One	Philippians 3:10-11 - that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.	Cross	Lord's Supper	Knowing Christ Bringing them in	As you go, baptize and make disciples.	Fellowship	Call and Commitment to Christian Unity through Salvation
2026	Bible Based, and Moving Forward as One	2 Timothy 3:16 - All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;	Bible	Bible Lesson	Growing in Christ Building them up	As you go, teach them all that I have commended you.	Discipleship	Call and Commitment to Christian Unity through Maturity
2027	Ministry Focused, and Moving Forward as One	John 13:14 - If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.	Basin and Towel	Foot Washing	Serving Christ Equipping them to serve	As you go, love others as you love yourself.	Ministry	Call and Commitment to Christian Unity through Ministry
2028	Missions Minded, and Moving Forward as One	Acts 1:8 - but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."	Globe	Hands-on Project	Sharing Christ Sending them out	As you go, love God, obey God, be His witnesses, and baptize.	Evangelism	Call and Commitment to Unity through Christian Missions

Sunday School Overview: Spring Quarter ~ April

Rev. Adrian Grubbs

If there is no resurrection of the dead ... begins our text for this Easter Sunday. In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul addressed one of the issues in the Corinthian Church. Some Christians there did not believe in the resurrection and life after death. They became concerned when some believers died, thinking that only those who were alive when Christ returned would be taken to Heaven. They had no concept of resurrection. To the unbeliever resurrection of the dead defies logic. It makes no sense until one comes to believe in Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord. In 15:2-6 Paul outlined the Gospel he proclaimed: Jesus died for our sins; he was buried in a tomb and was raised on the third day; and the resurrected Lord appeared to the apostles and many others during the forty days before he ascended to the Father. Without that faith in Christ, there is no hope for resurrection. As Paul argued, if there is no resurrection of the dead ..., then Christ was not raised, the Gospel as proclaimed is futile, and faith in Christ is in vain. It is a mystery (15:51), but fact is, Christ has been raised! (15:20), and believers who die will be raised.

They marvelled (KJV) or were utterly amazed (NRSV) does not do justice to the Greek expression in Mark 12:17. The statement Jesus made was astounding, it was shocking – maybe not the statement itself, but that Jesus said it. He said to render to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God. The question was whether it was religiously right and legal to pay taxes as required by law, the laws of a foreign, occupational government. Christians live in two worlds simultaneously – the physical and the spiritual; we are subject to two governments – the civil and the religious, the temporal and the eternal, the law of the land and the law of God. In Romans 13 Paul advised Christians to be submissive to governmental authority and to “pay what is due” – taxes, tribute, respect, honor, and especially love. 1 Peter 2:13 instructs Christians “for the Lord’s sake” to submit to human institutions. Christians are to keep God’s law and, as far as possible, to be submissive to the law of the land.

Truly I tell you ... is a phrase Jesus used fourteen times in Mark – so, listen up, pay close attention, this is important. Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a child will never enter it.

In Mark 10 the disciples had discouraged parents from bringing their children to Jesus and distracting him from important matters. In Mark 9 the disciples acted like children when they argued about which of them in the group was greatest. Jesus reprimanded them both times by putting his arms around the children and saying that the only way into God’s Kingdom was as a little child. Children are dependent upon adults for their safety, shelter, security, and sustenance. An infant is totally dependent on the parents for everything. That is the standard for adults to enter the Kingdom of God; that is the sign of greatness. That phrase, Kingdom of God, does not mean heaven-after-you-die; it means recognizing, acknowledging, accepting, receiving God’s rule and reign in this life. A child-like attitude of trust and dependence is the key to the Kingdom of God.

Joined to and joined together in Matthew 19:5-6 are from two different Greek words. The first instance literally means “glued to, or stuck to” and the second reference means “yoked together.” The question from the Pharisees was about divorce. Jesus’ answer at first sounds like a strict legalistic view of marriage and divorce. Indeed, some Christians seem to think that divorce is the unforgivable sin, it is certainly a sign of serious failure in a personal relationship; but we know Jesus’ attitude toward legalism was negative. In his answer to the Pharisees, he pointed out that the first rule of marriage, from the time of creation, is that no man must separate what God has joined, or yoked, together. Secondly, he noted that Moses made an allowance for divorce when a marriage relationship went bad. Broken relationships is Sin and is a human problem in- and out- of the Church; but, as Jesus taught, there is forgiveness for sin. Jesus’ response to the Pharisees was not so much a legalistic rule of law but an emphasis on the sacredness of marriage and family; but when a marriage fails because humans are human, forgiveness is available. Deuteronomy 6:3-9 speaks to the importance of keeping and teaching the first commandment to our children– to love God with all that you are and have. Teaching the faith requires first keeping the faith

O the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus

Song By Samuel Trevor Francis

Devotion by Sharlene Scott

Many years ago, a depressed teenager, was walking on a bridge overlooking the Thames River in London. He was having serious doubts about his faith. But that was when God showed up. As he looked at the scene around him, he saw the power of God at work.

The young man, Samuel Trevor Francis was changed completely. He went home and wrote the moving lyrics, because he had seen the deep, deep love of Jesus.

He wrote, using much imagery in his song, especially about water. In the first line, he refers to the love of Jesus, as “vast, unmeasured, boundless, free.” The love of Jesus is so vast, it can’t be measured, so boundless and free that we can never be anywhere that His love is not seeking us. Wherever we are, “as a mighty ocean”, his love rolls in its fullness over us.

This may remind us of the experience of baptism, as the love of Jesus washes away our sins, and we are completely in the presence of God. He really is, as Francis wrote, “all around me.” Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven is “at hand” (Matthew 4:17). No matter where you are, your hand is right there, and so is the love of Jesus.

The song speaks of Jesus as “underneath me” as well. This reminds us of the promise in Deuteronomy 33:27 that “underneath are the everlasting arms.” That is a precious verse to me. On the night before my late husband Paul entered the hospital for what turned out to be the last time, he was on the phone with our pastor’s wife, and she prayed for him, asking God to support him with his everlasting arms. After the call, he was crying, and asked if I had noticed that there were hands beneath him lifting him up. He felt, that night, the reality of those everlasting arms.

This same Jesus, “changeth never, never more”. He “watches o’er His loved ones, died to call them all his own”; and “for them He intercedeth, watcheth o’er them from the throne.”

How do we respond to a deep, deep love like this? We need to “spread his praise from shore to shore.” Let’s make sure we do that. This is, as the song reminds us, “love of every love the best.” And that love will, “lift (us) up to glory for it lifts (us) up to Him.”

O the deep, deep love of Jesus,
Vast, unmeasured, boundless, free!
Rolling as a mighty ocean in its fullness over me.
Underneath me, all around me is the
current of thy love.
Leading onward, leading homeward
to my glorious rest above.

2. O the deep, deep love of Jesus,
Spread His praise from shore to shore!
How He loveth, ever loveth,
changeth never, never more.
How He watches o’er His loved ones,
died to call them all his own;
How for them He intercedeth,
watcheth o’er them from the throne.

3. O the deep, deep love of Jesus,
Love of every love the best;
“Tis an ocean vast of blessing,
“Tis a haven sweet of rest,
O the deep, deep love of Jesus,
‘Tis a heaven of heavens to me,
And it lifts me up to glory,
for it lifts me up to Thee.



The Ninety-Eighth Annual Session
Woman's Auxiliary Convention

Thursday, May 14, 2026

Registration, Refreshments, and Fellowship • 8:30 am
Convention Praise and Worship • 9:20 am
Opening Devotion • 9:30 am
Closing Followed By Lunch • 1:00 pm

Hosted by Western District
Spring Hill OFWB • Goldsboro, NC



Coming in April!



STORYTIME

at CROSS & CROWN

Come join us each Wednesday at 10:00
for Story Time for ages 2-5*. Sign ups are required
and you can reserve your spot by emailing
lisa@cross-crown.org. We begin on April 8th.
We look forward to seeing you!

WEDNESDAYS AT 10:00

**3928 Lee Street
Ayden, NC 28513
252.746.6128**

*children should be supervised by an attending adult



CENTRAL DISTRICT WOMAN'S AUXILIARY

STUDY COURSE

**SPEAKER: ANN
COPELAND**

Study Course: "Fruits of the Spirit"

7:00 PM

THURSDAY, APRIL 16, 2026



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WINTERVILLE

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RESCHEDULED

RETREAT

CRAGMONT

NEW DATE

APRIL 30 - MAY 3, 2026

BLOOM WHERE YOU ARE PLANTED

IN THE SEASONS OF LIFE

SPEAKER: MRS. KIM COLLINS

PASTOR OF DISCIPLESHIP, PINE VALLEY GMC

Bible Study

Worship

Fellowship

Sponsored by:

OFWB Christian
Education Ministry



Crafts

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OPEN TO ALL

LADIES

If you have not already registered, please fill out the attached registration and mail with your deposit to

OFWB Christian Education Ministry

P.O. Box 29, Mt. Olive NC 28365

by April 15, 2026

Visit www.ofwbchristianeducation.org for more information

or call Gail @ 919-631-9407