

BFC Conference Proceedings – 2026

Second meeting

Monday, April 27, 2026, 6:30 P.M.

Moderator Randall A. Grossman called the evening meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Keith M. Long offered prayer for the evening's events.

Musical worship was again led by Jeremy L. Harkins as the pastors and delegates raised their voices in praise to God by singing "O Church, Arise," "There is a Fountain Filled with Blood," and "All I Have is Christ." In between, he read Philippians 3:7-8.

Sean Cooper followed with an address entitled, "A Biblical Mandate to Church Plant," drawn from Acts 1:1-3. "Last words are not wasted words," Cooper said in introducing his topic. Jesus' last earthly words before He departed from the disciples and ascended to the Father's right hand held great meaning and importance. What we know as Jesus' Great Commission took place between His resurrection and ascension; it was during this time that He with specificity spoke of the kingdom of God. A 2018 Barna poll, Cooper said, revealed that only 17 percent of churchgoers who were polled understood what the Great Commission is and what it means.

These "last words" – the Great Commission – in the four Gospels and opening the Book of Acts were both intentional and purposeful.

In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus called His disciples to "Go and make disciples of all nations." In this longest and most detailed of the commissioning passages, Jesus directed His disciples to meet Him on a mountain. Mountains, Cooper said, are a major motif in Matthew's Gospel, noting the Sermon on the Mount and the Mount of Transfiguration. Mountains, he said, are places "where heaven comes to meet earth and God comes to speak."

When Jesus says to them, "all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me," as He speaks to them on a mountain, it is clear that God is addressing them.

What does Matthew say the disciples are to do? Make disciples. Disciple-making is not to be an option or a good suggestion. Discipleship may be defined as "seeking to do spiritual good to those in the body of Christ." Cooper asked, "For all that you have going on in front of you, week in and week out, the fact that Sunday's a-coming... who is your Timothy? Can you tell me his name? Do you have a Timothy? A Titus?" Who are the faithful men to whom you are entrusting the Word?

The fruit of a church is to be more churches just as the fruit of an apple tree is ultimately more apple trees. "The heart of the Great Commission is about church planting, Cooper stressed. Jesus tells us we are to go, teach, and baptize. We are to teach them to observe all that Jesus commands. We are to teach what Paul calls "the full counsel of God" – from beginning to end. And we are to administer the ordinances, just as Jesus has instructed. These are things we are to do to "all nations." This translates the Greek word *ethne*, which much more closely identifies with ethnicities or people groups than it does with nations. We identify people groups with their languages. Finishing this task that we have been given involves taking the gospel to the remaining 3100 unreached language groups in the world.

“You can’t microwave this process,” Cooper said. “If we’re going to send qualified elders, are they prepared to be examined and vetted by their local church...Are those we are sending vetted so that they can defend sound doctrine?”

Mark 16:15, which is similar to Mark 13:10, tells us that Jesus sends His disciples to “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.” If we’re going to go and proclaim the gospel, the good news, we’re going to do this in the whole world among all these different cultural contexts, it means that proclamation is going to require clarity and proficiency. We must be clear with the gospel we preach. “Proclamation demands a clear gospel message. Are we modeling in our preaching a clear gospel?”

Proclamation also necessitates proficiency. Cooper works with professional linguists. They will tell you that learning a language proficiently requires, on average, 3500 hours. Language-learning could require 6-7 years at 10 hours of study per week, or perhaps 3 ½ years at 20 hours per week. But many who will do this may need to learn two languages, not one, or perhaps even more. “It’s going to take time; that’s what I’m driving at,” Cooper explained. “Our expectations need to be clear about what it’s going to cost us.”

To clearly proclaim the gospel, we need to understand what the gospel is, and then how to explain it. Luke 24:46-47 contains a clear explanation. Jesus says, “Thus it is written...” “The gospel grows out of the soil of the Old Testament,” Cooper said. The Old Testament points to Jesus. “The whole Bible is pointing to Christ: His life, His death, His resurrection, and His purpose to gather a people to Himself from all peoples.”

Cooper pointed out four gospel ingredients that we must preach and teach. Ingredient # 1 – “Is the gospel you preach a gospel that can be preached from the Old Testament. Ingredient # 2 – Does your gospel declare that Christ suffered, died, and rose from the dead? This gospel demands a human response. “All revelation demands a response.” Ingredient # 3 – What response is demanded of humanity? That they repent and believe. Ingredient # 4 – For those who repent and believe, what are they promised? Forgiveness of sins.

John 20:21 adds, “As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you.” “Sent-ness is not just something we do to keep busy,” Cooper noted. “It is one of the ways we bear the image of God Himself, who is a sending God.” While we are not sent like Christ, to atone for sins, we can argue from John’s Gospel, at minimum, that those who are being sent are expected to be those who, like their Master, serve. Second, John’s context suggests, being sent means suffering. A servant is not above his Master, and so if Jesus, the Master, suffered, we should expect that possibility. Jesus is the suffering Servant and we are united to Him. “Are we prepared to help those we send recognize and understand that, and step into that?”

Finally, Acts 1:8 stresses that disciples will be Jesus’ witnesses “to the end of the earth.” Cooper says the work indicated by the four Gospel accounts and from Acts 1:8 “is not something we can do in our own strength. This work, to be carried out, must be carried out in the power of the Spirit.” Apart from His strength, after all, the Bible says we can do nothing.

David E. Gundrum, outgoing Director of Church Extension Ministries, came forward to speak about the two new Particular Churches that would be approved and welcomed to BFC Conference. Hope Community Bible Fellowship Church of Milford, DE, and Grace Community

Bible Fellowship Church of Chestertown, MD represent the 23rd and 24th churches to be welcomed into the Bible Fellowship Church.

The following resolution for receiving Hope Community Church of Milford, DE was introduced by Gundrum:

Whereas, Church Extension Ministries has assessed the elder candidates and has reviewed the financial reports of the Hope Community Mission Church, Milford, DE and

Whereas, Church Extension Ministries affirms that the Hope Community Mission Church, Milford, DE, has sufficient men qualified to be elders as well as a sufficient committed participant group who will sign as charter members, and

Whereas, the financial reports of Hope Community Mission Church, Milford, DE, have been reviewed, and it was determined that Hope Community Mission Church is financially self-supporting, therefore be it

Resolved, that Hope Community Mission Church, Milford, DE, be received into the BFC Conference and be recognized as a Particular Church.

By raise of hand and by vigorous applause, BFC Conference unanimously approved the resolution. Joshua A. Dupiche, Hope's church planter, said "For those of you who know my history, this is a long time in coming," he said.

He added that faithfulness doesn't always result in fruit, but God calls His people to be faithful. Upon arriving in Milford, Dupiche found himself asking, "Whose glory am I after?" He concluded of God, "He's the one who opens and closes doors, who blesses and curses, and I need to trust Him." And God has indeed blessed Hope Church – both numerically and spiritually.

Dupiche thanked several individuals and churches for their encouragement and support throughout the journey from church plant to Particular Church. He expressed gratitude for the many churches who helped in the purchase of a new church building. "So much support, from people who said, 'Keep on going,'" he said.

He shared his verse for the church: Revelation 3:8. "I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept My word and have not denied My name." "Pray that for us – that every door Christ opens, we would run through it," Dupiche said.

Several members of Hope Church made the five-hour trip to witness Hope's graduation.

Gundrum also introduced the following resolution for Grace Community BFC of Chestertown, MD"

Whereas, Church Extension Ministries has assessed the elder candidates and has reviewed the financial reports of the Grace Community Mission Church, Chestertown, MD, and

Whereas, Church Extension Ministries affirms that the Grace Community Mission Church, Chestertown, MD, has sufficient men qualified to be elders as well as a sufficient committed participant group who will sign as charter members, and

Whereas, the financial reports of Grace Community Mission Church, Chestertown, MD, have been reviewed, and it was determined that Grace Community Mission Church is financially self-supporting, therefore be it

Resolved, that Grace Community Mission Church, Chestertown, MD, be received into the BFC Conference and be recognized as a Particular Church.

Grace Community Bible Fellowship Church was also welcomed with enthusiastic applause. Gundrum introduced church planters James D. Reff II and Tracy D. Haines. After asking Conference how many knew where Chestertown is located, Reff said, “We are excited to bring the Bible Fellowship Church to Maryland.”

“It’s been a long journey for us as well,” Reff said, noting that he felt the call to church planting several years ago. “It’s been almost 10 years, but it’s been amazing how God has directed us.”

“We were technically a restart,” Reff explained, noting that there was a small remnant that stayed with the church when it committed to Reformed theology. James and Mindy Reff engaged in the work, and God has brought a strong foundation of committed members. Trace and Renee Haines came to the church in 2022. “Trace has been a great help to us. Many have said that he doesn’t know a single stranger anywhere.”

“We’re thankful for all of you guys,” he added, singling out several people who have provided support over the years – support through finances, prayers, and friendship. Grace Community Church also brought a strong contingent to celebrate along with the pastors, delegates, and other guests.

Both new Particular Churches used encouraging video presentations to introduce themselves to BFC Conference.

The evening session concluded with a prayer offered by William G. Schlonecker at 8:20 p.m. A reception in honor of Hope Community Church of Milford, DE and Grace Community Church of Chestertown, MD followed in Pinebrook’s Fellowship Hall.