

BFC Conference Proceedings – 2026

Sixth meeting

Wednesday, April 29, 2026, 8:45 A.M.

Moderator Randall A. Grossman called the Wednesday morning session of the 143rd BFC Conference to order at 8:47 a.m. as Beau E. Coffman prayed for the day's business and ministry.

Jeremy L. Harkins led Conference in the singing of "Facing a Task Unfinished," "And Can It Be," and "All Sufficient Merit." He also read Philippians 3:7-10.

Sean Cooper addressed the matter of "The Task Remaining: Unreached People Groups and the Training Needed to Get There." "It is impossible to finish a task that you haven't clearly defined," Cooper said. "Are we clear on exactly what [the task] is?"

Definitions determine outcomes. "Semantics matter. Words carry weight. But just like our theology, our ecclesiology, and our eschatology need to be defined, I would argue that our missiology also needs to be defined," he explained. "If everything is missions, nothing is missions," he said, quoting Stephen Neill.

Cooper explained that while there are similarities between the ministries of Paul and Timothy, there were also distinct differences. Timothy was called to pastor the church at Ephesus – a church Paul had planted. But what was Paul to do? He was off to the next place. "Paul is trying to go where no one else has laid a foundation – where the gospel has not been preached," Cooper said. He was intending to go to Spain to plant churches there. So the ministries of Paul and Timothy were clearly different.

While Cooper was in college, he worked with a master carpenter in building houses. "We did about everything that you could absolutely imagine," he said. They were handed blueprints which told them what to do and how they were to do it. They were not to be creative. "It was the homeowner and not the laborer that decided what was on the blueprints."

Turning to 1 Corinthians 3, Cooper noted that Paul often used agricultural and architectural metaphors; he uses both in that chapter. One man plants and waters; another lays a foundation and others build on top of it. Paul's warning in v. 10: "Let each one take care how he builds." We will only finish tasks that we have clearly defined. Jesus has given us the blueprint and pattern from His post-resurrection commands and the apostolic pattern set in Acts.

"The question we must ask is, 'What is the present task remaining?'" Cooper noted. We are to plant churches in every single ethnic and language group. Most of the unreached people groups, it is widely known, reside in what is known as the 10-40 Window. "This is where we must go," he said.

"We might do many things when it comes to missions, but we must do this thing," he said. It is God's intention to reach the people inside that 10-40 window where most unreached people groups reside. Matthew 9:37 reminds us, through Jesus' words, "The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

Why are the laborers so few? Cooper said several talks would be required to begin to provide the answers to that question. "Some are willing to go but are unable. Many are able to go but are unwilling," he said. But a willing heart and a warm body are not enough, Cooper added.

“Just because there’s a shortage of laborers, that doesn’t mean that we should short-cut the demands of the development that we send.”

What will it take to reach the remaining 3100 unreached people language groups? First, workers and laborers must be equipped by the local church. The local church must equip workers in terms of *character, competency, conviction, and calling*. Workers must meet the qualifications listed for elders and deacons in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. These things are ironed out over time and in the context of a church.

“There’s no magic switch that gets flipped when you take the ministry cross-culturally.

In terms of competency, are the works adaptable? Are they problem-solvers?

Workers we send must have biblical convictions. “Are the workers clear in their own theology?”

Fourth, are we affirming the calling of potential workers – both their inward and external callings?

From there, workers must be trained. They must be educated for the work. Training programs must be implemented in order that pre-field workers be equipped for ministry. Cooper endorsed Radius International as a valuable immersive ministry that takes pre-field workers to Tijuana, Mexico in order to give them 10 months of cross-cultural ministry training. At that point, workers should go back to their local churches so churches and laborers work together.

Upon going overseas, laborers undergo the “arduous grind” of language-learning in the field prior to researching minority language groups are within the greater language context. Returning to the local church, the next question is, “Which one of these language groups is our church being led to reach?” Building a business team that can be established within that minority language group setting allows laborers to then be sent to that people group. There they finally have the opportunity to start formal narrative Bible teaching, beginning with Genesis 1 and walk people through the whole Bible so they see the full narrative of God’s redemption plan. This leads to the planting of churches and the development of qualified elders and pastors. Finally, as healthy churches are planted and established, the worker can come home.

Cooper concluded by going back to his initial statement: “Brothers, it’s impossible to finish a task that we haven’t clearly defined.” He asked the pastors how a proper understanding of missiology will affect how they minister in their churches. “Now is as good a time as any. Will you passionately fulfill the Great Commission?”

Michael W. Walker of the Prayer Committee directed the pastors and delegates through a time of prayer using Psalm 67 as a guide.

Board of Missions report: (see page)

Resolved, that the report be accepted.

James D. MacArthur, Director of the Board of Missions, talked of his own life’s direction and then pointed to Cooper’s messages as an incentive for us, both as ministers and as guides for the people in our churches. “I hope your heart has been ignited by the things that you’ve been challenged by,” he said.

MacArthur pointed out several missionaries who have retired after long and fruitful ministries: Bill Early (39 years), Walt & Sue Johnston (38 years), and Tim & Michelle Obarow (25 years). He also noted several transitions that took place since the last BFC Conference:

- Nate Reimer, commissioned in January to DiscipleMakers ministry on the campus of Muhlenberg College.
- Amy Everett was commissioned in March to be the Board of Missions ESL Outreach Facilitator.
- Melea and Temo Ramos were commissioned in January to work with Rio Grande International, mobilizing new workers from Latino churches in Central and South America.
- Kim Schlonecker Cyr married Jeff Cyr; Kim has had her membership reinstated and Jeff was accepted as an associate member of the Board of Missions. The Cyrs now serve at Black Forest Academy in Germany.
- Mark & Jocelyn Scott have discontinued membership in the BFC and have joined a non-BFC church.
- Dan & Ana Istrate, and Randy & Amina Ruth, have transitioned out of missions.

“My contention...is that mission is God’s desire. It begins with the heart of God and is a theme that’s entirely through the Bible,” MacArthur said, noting that in some cases, promoting missions in churches is like swimming up Niagara Falls. It should not be that way. Outreach should be at the heart of what we do as churches. That is a consistent message from Scripture, he stressed.

MacArthur echoed Paul’s words from Romans 10 as a challenge to us and to our churches: “How will they hear? How can they believe in somebody they haven’t heard about unless someone is sent to proclaim the gospel?” Where, he asked, is our evangelistic spirit today? “I believe in the BFC that God is at work in someone in your churches’ lives,” MacArthur said.

His dream for the next 5-10 years is that the BFC would identify one or two unreached people groups, raise up competent laborers, and then plant churches among them. This will require humility on our part and a willingness to focus, not on our individual churches but on the greater team that is the Bible Fellowship Church.

Sean McNamara, Chairman of the Board of Missions, prayed for the ongoing work of the BFC Board of Missions.

Reports of elected boards and committees

Report of the Ministerial Candidate Committee: (see page)

Resolved, that the report be accepted.

Resolved, that the list of men under the care of the Ministerial Candidate Committee be approved.

Report of the Ministerial Relations Committee: (see page)

Resolved, that the report be accepted.

Report of the Conference Pastor: (see page)

Resolved, that the report be accepted.

Ralph M. Soper said he has now been in his current role for 10 years and noted that he still greatly enjoys his ministry. He expressed thanks that he can join the various pastors' regional meetings and encouraged pastors who may not be currently doing so to participate.

The Darlene J. Mahurin Memorial Fund offering was received. A total of \$1,739 was collected for this fund that provides support for our pastors in times of emergency and need.

After announcing that the recent Grace BFC (Harrisburg, PA) Book Sale raised about \$10,000 to aid church planting in France, Joshua P. Miller, Steven J. DeDuco, and David E. Gundrum informed BFC Conference about a growing connectional relationship between the BFC and Manuel Brambila, who seeks to plant an international church plant in Cannes, France. The relationship between Brambila and the BFC began at a Founders Conference in California, for it was there that Brambila met DeDuco while standing in a line. A relationship and partnership between Brambila and the Harrisburg Church began. Brambila, who is now a Probationer under the care of the Ministerial Candidate Committee, greeted Conference and received a warm applause from the pastors and delegates.

Committee to Report on Stewardship (see page)

Resolved, that the report be accepted.

First Reading legislation proposed by the BFC Executive Board:

Article 408 – Church Properties (p. 57, 2025 Yearbook)

(Strikeouts indicate current language of Article 408 that is to be removed. Proposed changes are indicated in bold face italics.)

408-1 The title of church property where the church is incorporated shall be conveyed directly to the Corporation. In cases in which the church is not incorporated, ~~the conveyance shall be made to a Board of Trustees duly elected according to the Rules of the BFC Conference (setting forth their names), their successors, and assigns.~~ ***the BFC Executive Board shall hold title to that property until the church becomes a Particular Church within the BFC, self-incorporates, and elects officers, after which the BFC Executive Board shall transfer the title to the Particular***

Church Corporation. Whether the title is conveyed to a corporation or *is held by the BFC Executive Board*, the title shall contain a trust clause in the following words:

In trust for the use of the ministry and membership of the Church (name of the Bible Fellowship Church) at (location) subject to the doctrines, laws, usages, and ministerial appointments of the BFC Conference of the Bible Fellowship Church incorporated under the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as from time to time established, made and declared by the lawful authorities of the said church, and if the said property shall be sold or encumbered, the proceeds of the sale or the encumbrance shall be applied for the use of the aforesaid, subject, however, to the provisions of the law of the church relating to abandoned church properties and of that forbidding mortgaging of real estate for current expenses. ***If the congregation controlling this property shall be disbanded or dissolved, the property and assets shall be controlled and disposed of according to the rules of the Bible Fellowship Church.***

Conference agreed to adopt the above at First Reading by a hand vote. The vote was nearly unanimous.

408-3 In instances where a Particular Church loses its corporate officers, votes to close, and abandons its property ***and assets***, the BFC Executive Board is authorized to appoint surrogate elders ***who become the officers***, to settle its affairs in closing the church, and to ~~sell its properties~~ ***dispose of its assets***, with any residual proceeds going to the Bible Fellowship Church, ***Inc., a non-profit 501c3.***

The motion to adopt the above at First Reading was approved unanimously via hand vote.

Christian D. Lefko closed the morning meeting in prayer at 12:10 p.m.