

Bible Conference focuses on God's steadfast, eternal love

Jonathan Millar

STAFF WRITER

Students and faculty will enjoy a break from classes to hear encouraging preaching during Bob Jones University's annual Bible Conference Feb. 14-17.

Each year BJU invites guest speakers to campus to address a specific theme

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News Nuggets

UMA Super Bowl ad review

Feb. 13, 7 p.m. LH
Join students from the University Marketing Association to discuss the year's most expensive ads.

Missions Advance

Feb. 13, 9 p.m., FA 217
Students gather to pray for missionaries around the world. See page 8.

New student grades posted Feb. 14

See grade report on StudentCentral.

End of regular classes

Feb. 14, 5 p.m.
Bible conference activities officially begin. Students may use grassy areas for recreation and picnics.

Woodwind, percussion and brass contests Feb. 18, FA 119

Bruins senior day basketball games Feb. 18, 1 & 4 p.m.

The women's and men's teams will play Johnson University in the DFH.

Gov. Asa Hutchinson speaks for Presidential Leadership Series

Nathaniel Hendry

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Former Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson spoke at his alma mater, Bob Jones University, on Friday, Feb. 3 at 11 a.m. in the Founder's Memorial Amphitheater. Speaking for the University's Presidential Leadership Series, he discussed his time at BJU and principles for Christian leaders in public service.

He also spoke on his philosophy of leadership and potential 2024 campaign for president. "I will have to make a decision in the future about whether I'm going to be a candidate for president in 2024," Hutchinson said in his speech.

Hutchinson served two terms as governor of Arkansas from 2015-23. He was reelected in 2018 in a landslide victory where he won 65% of the vote.



Hutchinson first gained national attention in 1982 when he became the youngest district attorney in the U.S. Photo: Nathaniel Hendry

Sarah Huckabee Sanders succeeded him as the new governor of Arkansas last month.

BJU's Presidential Leadership Series events bring in outside speakers with personal experience in current issues facing students and faculty. Hutchinson's speech, titled "A Time for Choosing," recounted his experience growing up in Arkansas, lessons he learned at col-

lege and career in public service. Hutchinson also described his principles for good leadership, including humility, civil discourse and servant leadership.

To illustrate humility, Hutchinson shared the story of Bill Crawford, a WWII soldier and medal of honor recipient who later worked as a janitor at the U.S. Air Force Academy. A student at the Academy learned in a history book

that the school janitor was a distinguished war hero and asked why he never mentioned it. "That was a long time ago and one day in my life," Crawford said.

Hutchinson said that leaders must value civil discourse. "I believe the heart test is more important than the purity test," he said. He explained that the Bible says the issues of life flow out of the heart (Proverbs 4:23) so Christians should value someone's heart more than simply agreement on a checklist of issues.

The governor also referenced the 2024 presidential election. "I believe that America needs a servant-leader," Hutchinson said. "I believe that a president of this United States is somebody who is responsible to bring out the best of America and not appealing to our worst

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COLUMN



Waiting on God

Jordyn Britton

PHOTO EDITOR

If you're anything like me, you probably don't like waiting very much. Waiting in line at the dining common, waiting in traffic on your way home from work, waiting for the bell to ring at the end of your last class for the day.... These are just a few kinds of waiting we do on a daily basis.

There are even more ways we wait on a larger scale in our lives. We wait for seasons and weather to change, for our next favorite movie or TV show to premiere, and for the next break from the busyness of college. Waiting is just part of normal life, something that we all experience at various times and places.

But have you ever been in a season of life where you've been waiting on God to do something? To answer your prayers for healing for a family member? To show you the right job opportunity for after you graduate? To provide for you and your family financially? To do something only He specifically can do?

If so, you're not alone. Abraham waited 25 years from the time God promised him descendants until Isaac was born. Jacob waited and worked for seven years before Laban would let him marry Rachel. The Israelites waited and wandered in the wilderness for 40 years before they could enter the promised land. Even Jesus waited 30 years before beginning His public ministry.

This kind of waiting can be even harder, because sometimes God makes us

Good theology requires the ability to count. Unfortunately, many social media theologians skip this important skill when they talk about love.

Popular influencers scoop up likes by telling people to love themselves first and recite daily affirmations about their own worthiness: "I am worthy of love; I am attractive; I am strong." Unless we love ourselves, they say, we cannot love others.

When a lawyer asked Jesus which commandment was greatest, Jesus replied, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment" (Matt. 22:37-38).

Jesus continued, "And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. 22:29).

Then Jesus stopped. He had no need to add a third commandment, because "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:40).

The two commandments were to love God and to love others. Jesus gave no third commandment to "love yourself." Loving oneself was assumed, and it therefore described the way to love others.

Of course, as frail humans, we need to take care of our bodies physically by getting good rest, food, hydration and exercise so that we can support those around us instead of burdening them. But popular concepts of self-love go far beyond basic bodily self-care and also promote self-adoration as the key to loving others.

However, reveling in one's own supposed worthiness feeds conceit, not compassion. Rather than meditating on ear-tickling self-affirmations, we should seek to align our view of ourselves with what God says about us.

We must start by meditating on the greatest commandment, to love God. God

wait for reasons we don't understand. We want to know what His plan is and where He's leading us. We want control over our lives and what happens to us, but only God truly controls that.

Even when we don't know what He's doing, we can know that He is trustworthy. Lamentations

3:25-26 says, "The Lord is

good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."

God is always good to us, and He calls our waiting good. He is trustworthy in the middle of our times of waiting.

Now, I know reminding you that God is trustworthy

is worthy of all love, admiration, worship, glory, honour and praise (Rev. 4:11).

This God made us in His own image (Gen. 1:27). Stamped with God's fingerprint, every human is therefore worthy of respect, so we have no right to harm others (Gen. 9:6). To disrespect an image-bear of God is to disrespect God (James 3:9).

Yet the Bible also explains that God's image has been stained by sin. We are fallen creatures in desperate need of a Savior to save us from ourselves. We are naturally estranged from God and worthy of death (Rom. 3:10-19, 1:32). Our pervasive sinfulness means that our very best works of righteousness are worthless in God's eyes (Isa. 64:6).

Herein lies the beauty of the Gospel: because of our sinfulness, we are unworthy of love, yet God loves us anyway. "But God commendeth his love

toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). Saying we are worthy of love unravels the very core of the gospel.

God loved us, not because of anything we did to merit love, but because He

made us in His image, and when He saw His image marred by sin, He set about to restore it to its original glory through the gospel. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18).

The Bible nowhere commands us to love ourselves. In fact, one passage even seems to condemn self-love (2 Tim. 3:2). Rather, the Bible commands us to love God because He is altogether worthy. Realizing that we are unworthy should make us stand in awe of the God who loved us anyway and inspire us to love others the same way.

may not make it seem any easier to trust Him, especially in waiting. We all know waiting can be extremely difficult. Still, God is present with us in the waiting. While we are impatient, He is patient with us. He is gracious to bring us to the point of surrendering to Him over and over again, gently asking us to trust Him.

the Collegian

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In reality, God cares more about changing our hearts than giving us exactly what we want. Ultimately, He uses waiting to transform us to become more like Him. So, in your seasons of waiting, look for how God is transforming you, and be thankful for His goodness.

BJU now offers SC residents tuition-free scholarship

Armando Morales

STAFF WRITER

The dawn of the 2023 spring semester also marks the beginning of a new scholarship at Bob Jones University. Known as the SC Pell Promise, this scholarship offers full-tuition coverage to qualifying residents of South Carolina. This is the second full-tuition program BJU offers to South Carolinians, following the BJU Fellows Scholarship announced in spring 2017.

According to Bobby Wood, BJU's vice president of enrollment and marketing, last year's admissions data demonstrated that a growing number of financially struggling families are still unable to afford college education despite the help of a Federal Pell Grant. The BJU Fellows Scholarship does not address this need because its awards are based on academic merit. For many students, such scholarships are out of reach because their financial situation has already undermined their chances for academic merit in high school. "Those

students are kind of giving up on the college dream," said Wood. "So we're going to figure out another pathway."

To create this pathway, BJU launched the SC Pell Promise, offering an affordable BJU experience to South Carolina families. Wood explained that the goal of establishing this scholarship was "to create opportunities for students who did not believe there was any opportunity to go to college." He hopes that by offering this new scholarship BJU will extend the original Federal Pell Grant into an effective solution to the financial barrier faced by prospective students.

To qualify for the SC Pell Promise, students need to qualify for the South Carolina LIFE Scholarship and the Federal Pell Grant. The general requirements of these programs are (1) the equivalent of a high school diploma, (2) the student's commitment to pursue college with diligence, and (3) financial information demonstrating insufficient funds to afford college. Students who are accepted into these programs can apply

normally to BJU, and upon admission the University will automatically grant them the financial benefits of the SC Pell Promise.

In creating this scholarship, BJU seeks to deliver Christian liberal arts education to students in a way that financial situations previously undermined. "I think it gives them opportunity to come and be successful," said Wood. "And I think that's been one of the greatest things about Bob Jones University." He explained that by meeting the financial needs of prospective students, BJU will provide them with an education that will equip them to elevate their social status. In return, their participation in the BJU student body will benefit the University both financially and in fellowship. The end result is that these students will have a better foundation to raise their own families and provide for their education.

Wood encourages students to rejoice for others who are benefitting from this program, even if they themselves do not qualify for it. "One of the things as



Bobby Wood, vice president of enrollment and marketing, said the new scholarship helps cover gaps in existing aid. Photo: Hannah Guell

believers that we often have the privilege of doing is rejoicing when other people have access or opportunity to gain something that they otherwise wouldn't have been able to gain," Wood said. "It's an opportunity for us to have some really, really awesome stu-

dents here that are going to sharpen the quality of the whole student body." The launch of the SC Pell Promise this semester provides an inlet for new iron to come sharpen iron on the BJU campus and creates an exciting prospect of fellowship for God's glory.



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during Bible Conference. This year's lineup includes Brian Peterson, head pastor of Lebanon Baptist Church in Roswell, Georgia; Drew Conley, teaching pastor of Hampton Park Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina; Kurt Skelly, senior pastor of Faith Baptist Church in Fredericksburg, Virginia; Tim Lehman, pastor of Shannon Baptist Church in Shannon, Illinois; and Josh Crockett, pastor of Morningside Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina.

The guests will preach on this conference's theme of God's steadfast love. Alan Benson, the University's executive vice president of student development and ministry advancement, says that this theme contin-

ues the Student Leadership Council's theme for the fall 2022 semester, "*Hesed*," the Hebrew word for God's covenant loyalty and love.

Benson said this is the first time the conference theme has been a continuation of the fall theme. "This one was so impactful that we decided this is an opportunity to really explore this further," he said.

Fundraisers for foster care facility

In addition to the daily sermons, many other events occur during Bible Conference week, including dozens of fundraisers. This year's funds will be going toward the Harvest House, a ministry in Guam which focuses on foster care and adoption on the island. "We're focusing on doubling their ministry so that they actually can han-

dle more children as well as handling the care materials that are needed for those children," Benson said.

BJU student societies organize many of the fundraisers. Society fundraisers work well, said Zachary Haynes, men's director of the Inter-Society Council, because "they understand what the goal is and what they're doing it for."

Ruth Urraca, women's director of the ISC, said the societies band together to look beyond just BJU to alleviate the needs in the community and around the world. "We are working to give to someone else, not to give back to ourselves," Urraca said.

BJU students can expect some classic fundraising events to come back again this year, such as the Epsilon Zeta Chi's color run,

the Nu Delta Chi and Tau Delta Chi's speed dating, the Basilean Eagles' promotional video and many other events that will raise money for Harvest House.

Students on campus are already excited about Bible Conference and eager to do what they can to help raise money for Harvest House. Blake Von Bokern, a junior ministry and leadership major, said, "It brings all of the students together for the common purpose of loving God most by loving others." Kimberlee Hutchison, a junior biblical counseling major, said, "I'm looking forward to being under the preaching of God's Word about steadfast love."

Bible Conference has been a yearly tradition for BJU since the University was founded in 1927, said

David Fisher, vice provost for academic administration. Bible Conference was for many years a gathering for the student body that also drew many people who traveled from around the country to worship God and to hear sermons from His Word. Many families even came to preaching conferences such as the one at BJU for their annual vacation.

When Steve Pettit became president of BJU in 2014, he wanted to conference to focus on uplifting the student body and faculty spiritually by creating a refreshed mindset and a readiness for the spring semester. Jon Daulton, director of Student Life, said, "We're not just interested in teaching a student how to make a living. We want to teach him how to live."

TALKBACK

What are your plans for Valentine's Day?



Lauren Weniger
Sophomore business administration major

"I plan to give some of my friends some chocolates. I got some dark chocolate.... I'm gonna give them some of that and a note, hopefully."



Dawei Wang
Sophomore engineering major

"I'm an usher, so I'll probably usher till we close and see.... It depends on what type of fundraiser they have that night."



Aiden Mackey
Sophomore engineering major

"I am accepting applications."



Sven Loeffler
Junior business administration major

"I don't even know when Valentine's Day is."

School of Education and Human Services conference featured bestselling authors

Kirsten Warren

STAFF WRITER

The Bob Jones University School of Education and Human Services held their first annual Resilience Conference last Saturday. Attendees heard from bestselling author and national speaker Kathy Koch and other guest speakers, including best-selling author Jonathan Catherman.

The conference gave students, parents and educators the opportunity to



Jonathan Catherman

learn expert strategies for strengthening children and families from a biblical perspective. Speaking on the topic of resilience, speakers gave sessions on providing guidance on supporting military families, families who are grieving and families experiencing the challenges of cancer.

“We’re passionate that children know who they are and discover their purposes,” said keynote speaker Kathy Koch. As an author of six books, founder and president of Celebrate Kids, Inc. and co-founder of Ignite the Family, Koch has influenced thousands of children, parents and teachers in 30 countries through chapels, seminars, keynote messages and other events.

She said she seeks to change lives through the written and biblical word.

“I want children to be-



Kathy Koch (pronounced “cook”) has written six books, including *Screens and Teens* and *8 Great Smarts*. Photo: Submitted

lieve that they were created on purpose, with a purpose, for a purpose by a very good, intentional and strategic God who knows what He was doing,” Dr. Koch said.

Jonathan Catherman also spoke. Catherman is a sociologist and educator who has worked in public and private education for 24 years and is the author of

several bestselling books for teens including *The Manual to Manhood* and *The Manual to Middle School*. Speaking worldwide to audiences of all ages, he has influenced many people in the world of education. Catherman was awarded the 2016 President’s Volunteer Service Award and Martin

Luther King Drum Major for Service Award.

At the conference, Catherman shared practices that aimed at helping prepare their children to thrive in the real world in his lecture “Raising Them Ready.”

The event ran from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. with a break for lunch. The event included six different speaking sessions, vendor booths and meet and greets with the speakers. At the end of the event, a prize drawing was held where attendees were able to win a variety of prizes, including books written by Kathy Koch and Jonathan Catherman.

The University’s School of Education and Human Resources plans to host this conference annually. The event is an opportunity for people in ministry to grow themselves in unique ways so that they can minister to children, teens and families more effectively.

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instincts.”

“Here in South Carolina you’ve got some really great people, Tim Scott, a believer, who is looking at the president — Nikki Haley, former UN ambassador,” he said. He also mentioned his own potential bid.

Hutchinson said he began college majoring in accounting because it was top on the alphabetical list of options, but he found a passion for law in his senior year and went on to earn a Juris Doctor from the University of Arkansas School of Law in 1975.

After practicing law for several years, he was appointed by President Ronald Reagan as the U.S. attorney for the Western

District of Arkansas. At only 31 years old, Hutchinson was the youngest U.S. attorney at the time.

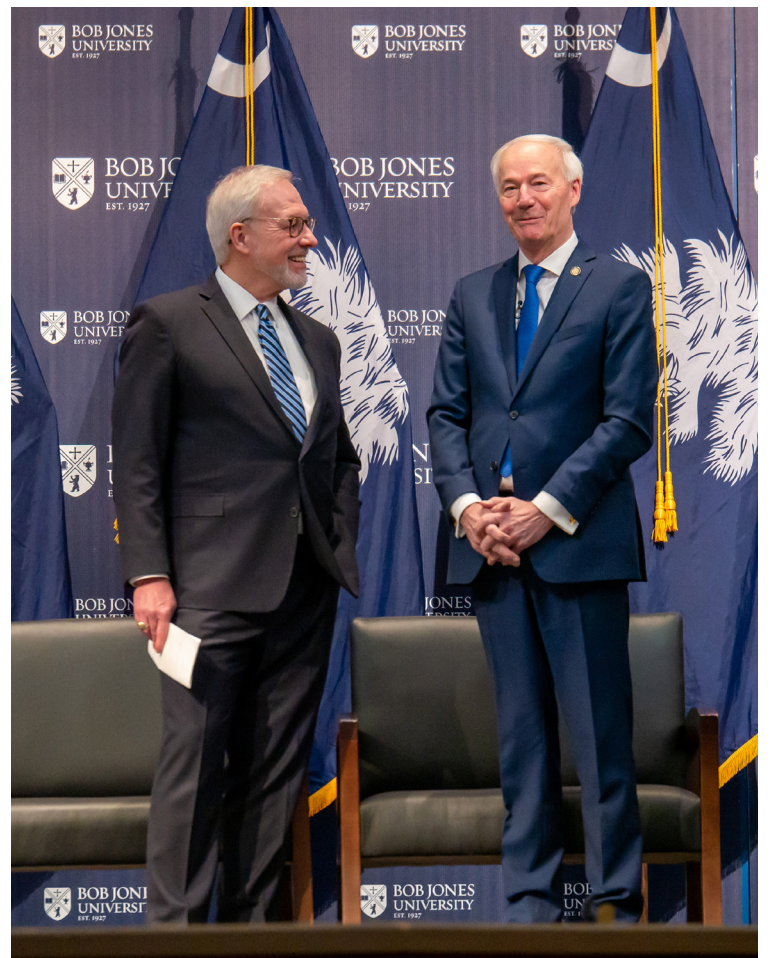
In 1996, Hutchinson was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, where he served until 2001. President George W. Bush appointed him as director of the Drug Enforcement Administration and the first undersecretary for border and transportation security in the Department of Homeland Security.

“I’ve been blessed with a lot of opportunities and a lot of challenges in life, but at the same time, I hope that God finds me as a good steward of the opportunities He’s given,” Hutchinson said.

Hutchinson described how he built relationships through basketball. After becoming governor

of Arkansas, he traveled to Cuba in October 2015. He was one of the first governors to do so after relations between the U.S. and Cuba normalized in December 2014. While there, he joined a game of basketball with the local national team. He built a tradition of playing basketball games while traveling in other countries including Japan, China, Israel, Switzerland and Germany.

Hutchinson closed with a challenge to the students attending. “Prepare yourself as you have this incredible opportunity at Bob Jones University, be ready for the challenges of life and be an encourager to the people you’re around,” he said. “Stand for your faith, and show love in your words and your action.”



Hutchinson also appeared as a guest on Steve Pettit’s “Highest Potential” podcast in April 2021. Photo: Nathaniel Hendry

Four soloists perform with orchestra in showcase concert

Eylan Martinez
STAFF WRITER

The winners of Bob Jones University's annual concerto/aria competition performed their winning pieces, accompanied by the University Symphony Orchestra on Jan. 28 in Rodeheaver Auditorium. The audience enjoyed various musical compositions led by soloists Zach Davidson playing the trombone, Blair Carrier on the flute, mezzo-soprano Sarah Grace Johnson and pianist Taryn Johnson.

To play in the performance, the four soloists had to win two strenuous rounds of competitions. Their long hours of practice paid off when they were selected as the winners in April 2022. Taryn Johnson, a senior accounting major, spent two and a half years learning Tchaikovsky's Piano Concert No. 1 in B-Flat

Minor. Through the contest, Johnson grew in her confidence as well as from practicing alongside the orchestra. "Just seeing the process of how a soloist can make music with an orchestra, all the different pieces that takes to put that together is pretty cool," said Johnson.

Similarly, Zach Davidson, a senior business administration and music double major who played Ferdinand David's Concerto in E-Flat Major, learned perseverance and determination as he reflected on how he grew through the competition. "It's been a long process, but it's been a very rewarding one as I've been able to grow along the way in preparation for now," Davidson said.

Blair Carrier, a sophomore orchestral instrument performance major who played Charles Griffes's Poem for Flute and Orches-



The soloists were accompanied by the University Symphony Orchestra, the highest-level instrumental student ensemble on campus. Photo: Jordan Britton

tra, said she enjoyed seeing the connection that music can make between people.

Carrier refined her technical abilities through more

than a year of dedication. "I would say that I have definitely grown in my technical skills of the flute," she said. "The piece is a fairly challenging piece, and so, when I was learning it, I really had to take time to break it apart into smaller sections, and then also memorizing it was a pretty substantial part of that too."

The concert also featured some opera compositions. Sarah Grace Johnson, a senior voice performance major, sang three pieces: including "Amour! Viens aider ma faiblesse" by Camille Saint-Saens, Purcell's "When I am laid in earth" and "Una voce poco fa" by Gioachino Rossini.

Audience members enjoyed each composition and enthusiastically applauded after each performance, then crowded forward to congratulate the soloists after the 75-minute concert was over.

Although the competition process culminated last week for the four soloists, there is still an opportunity for others to participate in future contests. Carrier encourages those who would like to compete to "start working on a piece in smaller sections and to really spend time doing that." She said the contest experience will help participants grow; "The judges' comments, all of the different components of it, help you to become a better musician."



Sarah Grace Johnson sang three pieces during the concert. Photo: Jordan Britton

sudoku

		1	3		9	5	2	
	8	5	2	6				
					1		9	8
			4	3			6	
				9				
	3			1	5			
4	1		6					
				2	4	9	8	
	5	8	9		3	4		

Inaugural indoor track season keeps Bruins on their feet

Armando Morales

STAFF WRITER

Last semester showcased one of the greatest seasons in the history of Bob Jones University athletics, with the Bruins teams winning five national championships. Seeking to build on its success, the Bruins track and field program began competing in its inaugural indoor track season in early December.

Indoor meets continued into February, with qualifying teams traveling to Ohio on Feb. 10-11 to compete for national honors in the arenas of Cedarville University. Due to printing deadlines, the results of the national championship will appear in the online edition of this article.

Bruins athletes will now prepare for the outdoor season, which begins in March.

The Bruins Athletics first included a running team when the cross-country program was established in 2013. This was followed by the track and field program in 2016. Both programs have seen growth and success. In the fall 2022 season, the men's and women's cross-country teams took home top honors for the seventh and third consecutive year, respectively, while both track and field teams broke impressive program records in their competitions.

With so much potential to build on, Bruins athletes are excited to use this new indoor track season as an opportunity to stay fit, but also to grow in team unity. Because running athletes typically specialize in different subcategories, they often train in smaller groups. It is also easy to let the individual aspects of the sport become the main thing on the track. However, team chemistry has been a major focus and blessing

of this season, which carried "the most momentum we've had going into a new thing in my time here," said mid-distance athlete Joe Grassmid.

While there is some overlap between the Bruins running teams, many new athletes joined during the indoor track season. "We're in a building phase right now," said team captain Michael Steurer. "I think Coach is really focused on just getting a lot of people.... And then a lot of these people are pretty new to running." He explained that it will take time to maximize the potential of completely new athletes. While the team is already off to a good start, Head Coach Ken Roach

has long-term goals for the freshmen to develop their talent, and Steurer expects to see a lot of growth as the team continues to train together.

The newer athletes offer a treasure trove of experience to tap into as they seek to build the future of the program. Both Grassmid and Steurer have contributed immensely to the current success of the men's running teams over the years. Senior Douglas Stone has several program records attached to his name and has established himself as a top performer in the men's cross-country team while also running track. Building on the talents of these and other athletes and the direction

of Roach, the NCCAA DII coach of the year, the Bruins track and field program continues to enjoy a legendary run of success.

So what are the next steps for the Bruins running teams? According to Grassmid and Steurer, adapting to the larger team sizes has been one of the main challenges. They need focused training in each subgroup, while maintaining team unity and camaraderie. The coaching staff are dedicated to creating this balance to establish the ideal environment for the student athletes. The teammates enjoy overnight outings together during national competitions, and have made fun excursions to places like the St. Lou-

is Arch and events such as hockey games.

A strong sense of purpose and commitment drive the team's growth and creates a shared excitement for the team's potential in the coming years. The indoor track season helped prepare the team for their outdoor season, and they look forward to uniting to run for the glory of God.

Steurer testified to the strong unity he shares with his fellow Bruins. "I really value all the little moments I've had with people, because like all my best friends are my teammates, really," he said. "Those are the people I hang out with the most, and bond with the most."



Numerous Bruins athletes set personal records during the indoor track and field competitions that took place from Dec. -Feb.

Photo: Marissa Ellerbrock

Learning, praying, mobilizing: The mission of Missions Advance

Zachary Smith

STAFF WRITER

Past and present leaders of an unassuming band of Bob Jones University prayer warriors testify to a rich history of God's faithful work through their student organization. What began on BJU's campus more than eight decades ago as Mission Prayer Band continues today under the name Missions Advance. The group of primarily undergraduate BJU students meets in Alumni 217 on Mondays and Thursdays at 9 p.m.

Lukas Shelton, a junior biochemistry and molecular biology major, is in his second semester leading Missions Advance. "It taught me to pray," Shelton said. He highlighted several ways he has been blessed through his participation in the organization, including developing a consistent prayer life and making connections with visiting missionaries.

"I've met a few missionaries from Papua New Guinea who have come here a couple times, and they stay in touch with me," Shelton said. "I met one from a closed country. ... When he's in the States, I can text him, and he prays for me; I pray for him."

"Missions Advance is a great environment to meet humble, anonymous heroes of the faith that are alive today and let them make an impact on you," said Timothy Martin, who graduated in 2022 with a degree in ministry and leadership. "If you've never participated in or heard of Missions Advance, you're missing out on a really good opportunity."

Martin served in Missions Advance leadership roles for two years. He is



During the Jan. 19 Missions Advance meeting, Dr. Carol Loescher (left), missionary to France, prayed with students after presenting lessons she learned from working in medical missions. Photo: Nathaniel Hendry

now a pastoral intern in Greer, South Carolina. During his time with Missions Advance, Martin worked to build a broader network of speakers from likeminded mission boards and increase attendance at meetings. On one occasion, he helped arrange for underground pastors from China to speak at Missions Advance while they were on campus for an event, which he said was a highlight of his experience with Missions Advance.

One of the underground pastors did a Q and A for the Missions Advance attendees. The pastor gave "a lot of wisdom and grace from someone that had spent a lot of time in prison and suffering on multiple different occasions," Martin said. "We sang an original Chinese hymn that [he] had composed in the context of his local church for us." Martin later learned that some of the pastors had been questioned about their trip by the Chinese authorities upon returning home, adding another layer to the experience.

Impact on Alumni

At age 73, Jim Chakeris, who graduated from BJU in 1997 with a degree in pastoral studies, still faithfully participates in Missions Advance meetings. He is by far the oldest regular attendee. When asked what he enjoys about the organization, he replied, "Good fellowship and the missionary speakers and singing and praying for missionaries."

Chakeris, affectionately known as "Mr. Jim," sympathized with busy students. He participated

in Mission Prayer Band during his studies in the 1990s. He encouraged students to prioritize Missions Advance because it is "a good stress relief from classes and all. You can come over here and just talk to people and then pray with them," he said. Aside from participating in Missions Advance, Chakeris helps at church plants in upstate South Carolina.

Brendon Johnson earned three degrees from BJU, including a bachelor's degree in church music. He served as the organization's

secretary from 2011-2013 and treasures many memories of special missionary speakers through the years. However, he believes many of the most important meetings were when they didn't have a special speaker. Instead, the students split into small groups and read missionary update letters, then prayed for needs mentioned in the letters. "That teaches you a lot about what's going on around the world," he said.

"What I think was valuable about those times is you're getting together with other believers and hearing them pray," Johnson said. "You learn a lot about what prayer is. You learn about what it means for us to agree together in prayer, and doing that regularly has given me a habit of regular prayer for missionaries that I continue to this day."

Johnson emphasized Missions Advance's role in fulfilling BJU's mission of equipping Christians to serve God around the world. He said does not know of any participants who regret the time they invested in the organization. "I strongly encourage every student at the University to participate as much as possible!"



"Mr. Jim" Chakeris (wearing striped sweater) graduated from BJU in 1997 but still attends Missions Advance meetings to worship God and pray for missionaries around the world. Photo: Nathaniel Hendry

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