

**Proceedings of the One-Hundred-Seventeenth Annual Session**

**Santa Rosa Baptist Association**

**Sunday, October 13, 2024**

**Ferris Hill Baptist Church**

**AFTERNOON SESSION ONLY**

1. Moderator Jim Stickle, called the 117th Annual Meeting of the Santa Rosa Baptist Association into session.
2. Education Pastor Zach Smith of Pine Terrace Baptist Church led in the opening prayer.
3. Raymond Dye, Pastor of Ferris Hill Baptist Church addressed the messengers and welcomed them to Ferris Hill Baptist Church.
4. Pastor Jeremy Holley read the Response thanking the host church, Ferris Hill Baptist Church, and the Association.
5. Clerk's recommendation of enrollment of Messengers, seconded, vote taken and passed unanimously.
6. Pastor Bob Lowe moved that the program printed be adopted. Second made for the Adoption of Program by Joel Hunt, vote taken, and passed unanimously.
7. Pastor Ray Dye, Pastor of Ferris Hill Baptist Church gave his testimony. He is the new pastor of Ferris Hill, who moved his family from Arkansas to Milton, Florida. He described all the tangible ways in circumstances that God moved, opened doors, and confirmed that he was to be the pastor of Ferris Hill Baptist Church. He gave thanks to God for an active/healthy association and the partnership & friendship of Pine Terrace with Ferris Hill.
8. Moderator Jim Stickle presented the Treasurer's Report on pages 4-13 in the Book of Reports. After each item is presented there will be a vote. He explained the breakdown of the Balance Sheet and Budget Report. No questions were entertained. A Motion was made by Johnathan Russell, Pastor of Milton First to accept the Treasurer's Report as printed. It was Seconded by John Everitt of Avalon. The vote was taken and approved.
9. Moderator, Jim Stickle also presented the Stewardship Report (2025 Proposed Budget) on pages 14-16. There is an increase in health insurance premiums and the Association plans on having several church growth events. The new budget is increased by 1.41 percent. Pastor Jeremy Holley of Immanuel made a Motion to accept the treasurer's report as printed. Pastor Nathan Brown of Pine Terrace Seconded. No questions entertained. Vote taken with AYES and no NAYS. It was approved.
10. Moderator also presented the Nominations Report for 2024-2025 on page 3 of Book of Reports. He read the leadership positions with the names of the new leaders and the needs for open positions; No discussion. A Motion was made by Patty from New Life Church to accept the Nominations Report as printed. Second made. Vote taken to accept the Nominations as printed and it was approved.
11. Jim Stickle made a recommendation to accept 2 New Church plants seeking Association Membership: Vietnamese Living Faith with Pastor Robert Lepine and Vietnamese Christian Church with Pastor Christian Phan. Both churches have gone through the credentials process. AMS Jim Waters explained because Vietnamese Living Faith Church is connected to East Side and Vietnamese Christian Church is connected to Santa Rosa Shores, they will not be under a year's "watch-care" and will be full-fledged members after the vote. A Motion was made by Norm Sullivan of Living Truth Church to accept Vietnamese Living Faith Church into the membership of the Santa Rosa Baptist Association. Second was made by Shirley Pierce of Olivet. No discussion. An Aye vote was taken and unanimously approved. Pastor Robert Lepine of Vietnamese Living Faith Church came forward and was extended the right hand of fellowship into the Association. A Motion was made by Jeremy Holley to accept the Vietnamese Christian Church into membership of the Santa Rosa Baptist Association. Second by Brian Unruh of Ferris Hill. No discussion. An Aye vote was taken and unanimously approved. Pastor Christian Phan was not in attendance. Moderator Jim Stickle prayed for Pastor Robert Lepine and Vietnamese Living Faith Church and Vietnamese Christian Church.
12. Moderator Jim Stickle introduced Pastor of Pine Terrace, Nathan Brown to give his testimony. Philippians 1:vs 3: 3: I thank my God every time I remember you. 4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, 6 being confident of this, that he who began a good

work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” Pastor Brown likened our Associational life and partnership together as a “partnership in the Gospel.” “What unites us is stronger than anything that might divide us. In 1972 it was the selfless sacrifice of Ferris Hill that sent out members to plant a church on the northwest side of Milton. In 1973, forty-eight charter members established a church called Pine Terrace; it was known as the Ferris Hill Mission and became the Pine Terrace Baptist church that met in a garage of one of their charter members. So we, at Pine Terrace owe a great debt of gratitude to Ferris Hill”.

“When we learned that Ferris Hill, our mother church had fallen into a season of difficulty and was need in of revitalization, after they had done a deep dive into their reality and concluded that they wanted to pursue revitalization, that they wanted to pursue a fostering relationship.” Pastor Brown and his wife are licensed to foster through One More Child. They have five biological sons and one adopted son which became official seven months ago. After the adoption training and the adoption process, he said he can no longer read in several places in the Bible about our adoption in Christ in the same way anymore. Pastor Brown approached Pine Terrace church and said “we have to do this.” Pastor Brown said God put this burden in his soul and that of his Executive Pastor, Ray Summerlin, who said he would come alongside him and do this. Pine Terrace sent over 12 people and some of them have come to stay to become members of Ferris Hill. Others have completed their one-year-long mission trip and have come back home to Pine Terrace and have loved being a part of what God has done and is doing in them and at Ferris Hill.

“What we have seen this past year in partnership has been nothing but a tremendous blessing. God’s hand has been in all of this and we have seen Ferris Hill rise to the challenge. From taking care of some facility issues to taking care of programs, taking care of new staff; some people from Pine Terrace are part of new staff. They began to meet and they prayed and strategized, and covenanted together.” They began to pray for a new Pastor, but what resulted is that Pastor Brown got a new friend in Pastor Raymond and Chelsea Dye and their kids. “Christ is exalted, God is blessing, the church is growing, and Ferris Hill baptized 8 in the 4 months since Pastor Ray Dye has been here. Whatever God has started here at Pine Terrace, this association, and Ferris Hill; He will finish for His glory! Let’s be on mission together! Amen.”

13. Jim Waters, AMS gave his report. He opened by reading 2 Corinthians 11 with Paul giving his credentials in relation to false prophets. He said Paul lists all the hardships he endured, but what got him daily was his deep concern for all the churches. Bro. Waters then went on to explain and describe the incredible journey of 2024 and the 2<sup>nd</sup> year to be an AMS and the honor to serve the association. He shared what he’s come to understand this past year is, whatever the personal journey, whether it’s great, or whether there’s challenges; there’s one thing that sticks in his craw, is the care for all the churches-daily. He’s had the pleasure to speak to many church staff members and pastors; he hears of the wins, the testimonies, the “go-Jesus” moments but he also hears, ‘Jim, I’ve got a challenge.’ What he hears many, many times is, “I need a worship leader.” What he hears over and over is, “Jim, pray for us, we’re struggling.” With that said, Jim asked those in attendance to remember to pray for him. He asked specifically that they pray that he would have wisdom as he seeks to come alongside and encourage all of our churches and pastors. Pray that in every situation to the glory of God, that he would have wisdom. He then asked them to write down the scripture of which he prays for our association churches: Acts 9:31 and asked them to pray over the churches with him this prayer as he read Acts: 9:31. “Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.” The church had just gone through an intense time of persecution; they were dispersed, yet they were walking in a time of peace. He asked those present to pray for our churches to have peace. There was also a spirit of unity.

Jim said when he was pastor of Friendship, he and his secretary, Ms. Barbra would pray together: that if anyone walked through the church doors who was going to be an element of disunity, he prayed for them to have a flat

tire.” Do whatever it takes to keep them away from Friendship, Lord; and the Lord honored that.” The scriptures also said, “be built up.” It’s not necessarily speaking of church numbers but of being encouraged. Jim prays that our churches would be encouraged and see the Go-Jesus moments, daily, weekly; with people anticipating God to show up. He also prays that our churches would be engaged in discipleship; and that our people would know that baptism is the starting line into mature believers. Finally, our scripture says, they were multiplied. He prays that our churches will be increased numerically. In 2022, there were 200,000 people in Santa Rosa County. The Chamber of Commerce said that there were 130 churches in Santa Rosa County. “Presumably, we were at one time in the World Guinness Book of Records. Do the math! If every one of our county churches had 1,000 people that would only be 130,000 people, leaving 70,000 unchurched people. Do you think there’s a need to church plant? Absolutely. Is there a need to reach out and get outside of our holy huddle? Absolutely. A statistic is that every day in Florida, 619 people are stepping out into eternity. How many are going into eternity apart from our Lord and Savior? We must be outward thinking.”

“To celebrate what happened in 2024, we began with a Prayer Conference at FBC Milton with speaker Pastor Josh Walnoffer of Klondike Baptist shared on Reviving Joy related to prayer. Notes on that and other events are on our website. To follow that, Tax Update for pastors and financial secretaries, led by Charissa Cotten, CPA, and SRBA Stewardship Ministry Leader led this annual association event. Youth Pastors came together Disciple Now in February Disciple Now (DNOW) – the student pastors from sister churches come together to plan this association-wide evangelistic event. This year it was celebrated at Immanual. Port City worship band came from the University of Mobile and led worship and Alvin Smith brought the Word. Leaders Bo Mills, Tanner Guidry, and Cameron Theodos put in a whole lot of work that week, and when you showed up, you could tell. A lot of kids made decisions for Christ that weekend. In March, Pine Terrace hosted the West Region VBS training. In this season, there were over 60 decisions for Christ. Later in March, Royal Ambassadors and Girls in Action had a Field Day at Camp Paquette with an option to camp out overnight. Activities included knot tying, fishing, archery, softball throw, hike, tug of war, and we heard missionary testimonies. Pastor Matt Dobson was instrumental in making that happen. Mid-April, Pine Terrace hosted a Regional Sunday School Conference. The focus was on the Five Mindsets of the Christian Educator. Content experts were brought in for children all the way through adults, in break-out classes. Late spring, we had state Association Bible Drills. In summer, Olive hosted the Regional Disaster Relief Training. For disaster relief, the FL Baptist Convention is making it easy to get training in about 4 or 5 things on their website.” He then listed many churches that traveled on missions through the summer and the locations they traveled to with the gospel. Santa Rosa Shores hosted the Mobile Dental Unit in the spring and Pine Terrace partnered with Ferris Hill and hosted it late August – September.

“Former AMS, Chip Fox by divine intervention, met Aslam at a Southern Baptist Convention about 5 years ago. We have got to aid Aslam and plant churches in Pakistan. To date, this year, 1900 baptisms.” A short video clip was shown of some of the work there. “The last ministry mentioned where God is working mightily is the foster/partnership agreements that have happened within our association last year; Wallace partnered with FBC Navarre, with Pastor Greg Love. This year, Pine Terrace partnered with Ferris Hill and right now, FBC Milton is kind of in the works in partnering with New Life. These are exciting times thinking of what God is going to do in bringing those churches together.” When AMS, Jim first came to the association there were 6 churches without pastors. Today, Greg Love is pastor of Navarre FBC, Raymond Dye is pastor of Ferris Hill, John Vickers is pastor at Gulf Breeze and John Edwards is pastor of New Bethel.” He asked for prayer for those churches without pastors, Olivet, New Life, and Cora. “These churches have outstanding interims, and God is working within them with each church having baptisms and someone was called into ministry! It has been a very busy year, but it’s been a fruitful year. Going back to our theme, “How Good It Is” when our people work together. We’re coming together strong so that 200,000 people of Santa Rosa County can be reached for the gospel. Make it your goal to be fruitful, not busy.”

14. A Short Intermission was called for 10 minutes.

15. Memorial Recognition of Association Church Deceased Members.

16. Cameron Theodos, Music Minister of Immanuel Baptist invited participation and led a time of Worship.
17. AMS, Jim Waters introduced Lewis Miller, West Regional Catalyst for the Florida Baptist Convention, to give the message. It is a farewell challenge because Bro. Lewis will be retiring in November. He read from Matthew Chapter 9:38. It was discussed earlier that our goal for next year in Santa Rosa Baptist Association is to be fruitful, not busy and there's a big difference between the two. That's what Lewis spoke about as it relates to missional clarity. He has a friend in ministry who frequently leads his people with this phrase, "Mission is boss." What is leading us, what is driving us, what compels us; Mission is boss. What he means by that is effective ministry is fueled by a clear mission. It is likewise a way to measure fruitfulness in ministry. As we think about this goal for next year of fruitfulness, let's ask ourselves, "Are we accomplishing our mission?" The mission that God gave us. A review of this is Luke 19:10, Jesus said, "The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost." His mission was clear, and then He said, "Come follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." So, He invited us to join Him in that mission. Just before leaving Earth, He said, Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations." Make disciples. You're clear on the mission and you realize you've been empowered to do it. (Acts 1:8) "When the Spirit comes upon you, you will receive power be witnesses." A witness tells others what he knows. I'll empower you to tell them what you know and as you tell them what you know, I'll do the harvest; I'll be the one to save them. You want to be saved by Jesus, not Lewis.

Matthew 9:38: "Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the Harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Anytime you see the word 'Therefore' at the beginning of a sentence, you have to see what it's there for. Back in verse 35, we see what therefore is there for. It says, "Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. Verse 36, "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them for they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. And then it picks up in verse 38, "Therefore, pray earnestly..." These preceding verses present to us the rationale for Jesus' call to us for prayer and personal engagement in the harvest. There's two things here and let's look at these first preliminary verses 35 and following.

In Jesus, we see first of all, our example. He's our example in teaching, proclaiming, helping, or ministering, or caring. He is our example in teaching; as followers of him, we are to follow his example. This challenges us to answer the question, "Am I open to be used by Jesus to teach, to proclaim, to care for those around me? Are you open? Lord Jesus, this verse shows me you went through all Galilee teaching, proclaiming and caring. So, Jesus is our example in teaching, proclaiming, and ministering.

Second, I want you to see in Jesus how we embrace the culture; the people that live around us. He had compassion, He saw their condition; they were harassed and helpless. It communicates the idea of having no purpose, no guidance. The meaning behind those words is of sheep that have been ravaged by their false shepherds (the Pharisees of their day). One writer said that these words could be literally construed as torn or thrown down. That sounds desperate. It sounds a lot like our culture today. When we consider this context in light of the 200,000 people that make up Santa Rosa County, what do you see? , I ask two questions, When I look at the culture, what do I see? "Where is our broken hearts for the lostness? How does it move me? It ought to move us; Jesus was moved with compassion. Jesus wanted to move; compassion is a pained feeling and a deep desire to remove some of those sufferings. Jesus wanted to do something about the fact that they were torn and thrown down. He was moved by compassion, and saw their condition, and said this can't keep going on. Jesus saw the shape of the sheep and it bothered him, moved him, and burdened him. How does it move us? How does your understanding of those lost 200,000 people in Santa Rosa County move you? We see in Jesus not only our example in teaching, proclaiming, and caring; but we see in Jesus how to embrace the culture.

The third thing we see in Jesus, an invitation to mission engagement. He's inviting you and me to get involved; to engage into the reality of "His harvest". We get to participate; He does the work. The harvest is plentiful, there are people all around us. We realize many will not respond positively to the gospel, but we cannot deny that the

harvest is plentiful. There are thousands of people needing Jesus all around us. God knows those who will respond positively, so He's empowered us again, to be those witnesses that we talked about earlier.

A second observation about the realities of the mission invitation is that the laborers are few. The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. We're unable to meet the needs of our culture. So, what do we do? We lead those who will respond, lead and disciple them, and call them out to join us in the harvest. Let's walk the Word with them, let's grow in relationship with Jesus with them, let's debrief life together, and let's challenge each other to be witnesses. You don't have any idea who will pray to receive Christ, but you ought to be accused of trying. We ought to try minimally of trying to talk to somebody about Jesus. Jesus had 12 disciples, and he called out the 70, and the need was great in His culture; in His day, in His time; knowing that they could not reap the harvest on his own – He calls us, He invites us to action, to involvement. In verse 38, it says, "He calls us to pray. Pray. When you say you'll pray for someone, do it! Wherever you are, stop and pray with them right there, wherever you are. When you're asked to pray, pray earnestly, with a depth of sincerity. Why? Because prayer acknowledges our inability to accomplish the task; we need God. None of us can do this work on our own. We need each other and we need God more than anything to help us. Praying invites the wisdom that God has, praying communicates the urgency of the need and our availability. A quote from the President of the Florida Baptist Convention and Senior Pastor of FBC of Chipley, Mike Orr, said, "Prayer is a massive weapon against spiritual warfare;" a massive weapon against our enemy. Then he said, "One that is often unused." If we have a massive weapon, why wouldn't we employ it? God says in 1 John 5:14, "This is the confidence we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us." We pray because we can't do this work without him. Our first step to obediently join him in his harvest is to pray. Step one is to pray. Then he doesn't leave us there, he says to pray to the source. Pray to the Lord of the harvest. That communicates ownership. He owns the harvest. God sent Jesus to provide the means of the harvest through salvation. John speaks of this at the baptism of Jesus, about Jesus in Matthew, Chapter 3:12. "His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Friends, there's going to be a day, "that day." His winnowing fork is in his hand, today, and he's going to gather his wheat into his barn. Lord, will you give us one more day; just one more day; to talk to one more person about you, to engage in the harvest, and to pray for the harvest? He says the chaff will burn with unquenchable fire. Jesus is the owner of the harvest, so we pray to the source of the harvest.

Notice the third thing of prayer, the substance of those prayers. We pray not just to the source of the harvest, but he will send out laborers. "Send out" speaks of, thrust out, or throw out which speaks to the urgent need that there is. It could be understood as "light a fire." Lord, light a fire in them as they go out. Light a fire in those who have become indifferent to the culture they live in. There's got to be a difference in us. It's all about Jesus, we're not worthy." Lewis concluded by reading an excerpt from "Calling Out the Called" by Shane Pruitt. About a Christian who worked with a co-worker for a year before going to seminary. He wore Christian t-shirts to work and tuned into Christian music within earshot of his co-worker. Toward the end of the year, the co-worker came to work excited and told his friend that he had gone to church, heard the gospel, and accepted Christ. He then asked his friend why he never shared the gospel with him, when they both knew that those who die without trusting in Jesus would be eternally separated from the Goodness of God and spend an eternity in hell. He asked the Christian, "Didn't you care enough to tell me that"? We need to pray that God will light that kind of fire in our hearts. For people that have worked right beside us and have for years, and talked about everything but Jesus. Lord, light that fire in my heart. Let's agree to stop making excuses. Let's take every opportunity we've been given to share the gospel, to call out others to join us in the harvest. We do it first by praying, and second-by talking and sharing, and inviting. We must encourage those that we disciple to listen for and to respond to the call of God. Romans 10:14. You and me are that someone. We're the ones to preach the good news. Will we join Jesus in his redemptive mission? Lewis then prayed over the attendees.

18. Jim Waters invited former AMS Chip Fox and his wife Janet to come forward. Chip spoke and remembered the initiation of Regional Catalysts in the Florida Baptist Convention and shared gratitude for Lewis Miller's service to the Santa Rosa Baptist Association. Jim Waters prayed over both Lewis Miller and his wife, Becky. He then recognized Jim Stickle, with a Moderator 2024 plaque expressing his gratitude for his service.
19. Pastor Chad Diamond prayed over the Association 2025 leadership, blessed the meal, and closed the meeting in prayer.