

The MESSENGER
of the
Sweetwater Baptist Association

"Churches on Mission Together"
Celebrating 195 years, 1830 – 2025

SWEET WATER
BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Check Out Our Website

www.sweetwaterbaptistassociation.com

Visit us on Facebook

SBA Office Hours:

Monday-Thursday

8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

TONY RUTHERFORD

Director of Missions
tonyrutherford@bellsouth.net

SHERI STEPHENS

Administrative Assistant
sweetwaterassoci@bellsouth.net
423-442-6604 (office)

BECKY JONES

Ministry Assistant
becky.jones@bellsouth.net
423-442-6605 (office)

SVITLANA SELF

Resident Interpreter Volunteer

Volume 15

November/December, 2025

Number 77

Sweetwater Baptist Association presents

The Shirah Brothers

Senior Adult

Christmas Show

Hosted by: **Union McMinn**
Baptist Church

Monday, December 8th

10:30 a.m.

EVERYONE INVITED!

Pastor & Wife Christmas Banquet

December 8th

6:30 p.m. Union McMinn Baptist Church
(Reservations Required for Banquet)



Annual Meeting 2025

Please join us as we pray for the Leadership of the
Sweetwater Baptist Association

(left to right)



Gabe Brannon, Moderator 2025-2026 (Pastor, Union McMinn)
Jamie Johnson, Out-going Moderator 2024-2025 (Member, Delano)
Rick Harris, Vice Moderator 2025-2026 (Pastor, South Madisonville)
Tony Rutherford, (Director of Missions)

Sweetwater Baptist Association in conjunction with
Notchey Creek Baptist Church presents

EAST TENNESSEE

Ministry Summit

& Evangelism Rally

February 28, 2026

Guest Preachers: **Dr. Jim Henry,**
Rev. Allan Taylor, Dr. Roc Collins

Ladies Breakout Leaders: **To be announced**

Hosted by **Notchey Creek Baptist Church**
5529 New Hwy 68, Madisonville TN
(Details included in newsletter!)



Sweetwater Baptist Association, Family of Churches Welcome

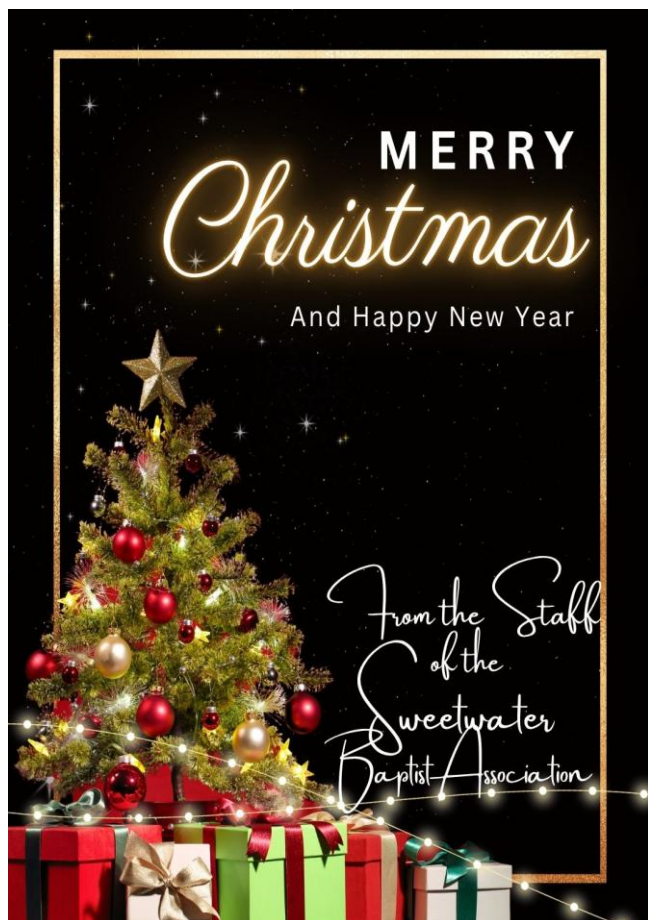


Pastor Kenny Keller

OLD POND HILL

BAPTIST CHURCH

We are praying for this pastor and congregation
as they share the love of Christ in their community.



As we gather together
In this season of
Love and beauty
Let us rejoice in the
Celebration of His birth.



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year
Sweetwater Baptist Association

Tony Rutherford

Becky Jones

Sheri Stephens

"...behold I bring you good tidings of
great joy, which shall be to all people.
For unto you is born this day in the city
of David, a Savior, which is Christ the
Lord. "
—Luke 2:10-11



2025

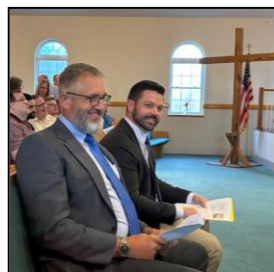


Associational News, Events, Information

REPORT FROM ANNUAL MEETING, 2025: Thank you, Pastor Mitch Isbill and New Macedonia Baptist Church, Philadelphia for hosting *Messengers* as they gathered for the 195th Session of the Sweetwater Baptist Association. He Sends Us Forth was the theme for the 2025 Annual Meeting as we begin our steps toward the 200th Bicentennial Celebration in 2030.



Pastor Mitch Isbill presented the opening welcome and prayer for this year's meeting. Steve Pearson, Tennessee Baptist Mission Board, Harvest Field 4 Team Leader, shared a word of greetings and presented a plaque representing churches of the Sweetwater Baptist Association that participated in the *Golden Mission Offering*. The Memorial Report included Dedication of the 2025 Minutes of the Association in memory of former pastors: Marvin "Bud" Millsaps and Jimmy Hollinghead. These men were beloved and faithful servants to this Association and our Lord. They will be sadly missed.



We thank our Moderator Jamie Johnson for his kind spirit and outstanding leadership. During the Moderator's Message, he encouraged us to fulfill *The Great Commission*.

We were blessed as Jeni Hinton, Phillip Johnson and Darrin Nichols from Fairview Baptist Tabernacle Church shared special music for the service, and Ben Curtis, Music Director from New Macedonia Baptist Church led the congregation in singing. In addition, Vice-Moderator Gabe Brannon did an exceptional job in leading the Business Session. Items approved by *Messengers* included: Gabe Brannon (Pastor of Union McMinn) will serve as Moderator and Rick Harris (Pastor of South Madisonville) was elected as Vice-Moderator for 2025-2026 and a proposed budget of \$226,958.00 was approved. The Director of Missions shared his 15th Annual Report with his vision going forward for *Individuals and Families; The Church, and The Association*.

We want to thank Pastors, Messengers and visitors from churches that were in



attendance for the sessions. We also want to thank everyone that served on the program for this year's Annual Meeting.

CHURCH GIFTS: We thank the churches for the gifts you provided to the Sweetwater Baptist Association that supported the 2024-2025 various budget ministries of the Association. Here are the church gifts as reported at the 2025 Annual Meeting. We thank you for your giving for Kingdom work.



SBA Church Gifts for 2024-2025

Church	Total	Church	Total
411 Chapel	1,500.00	New Bethany	4,510.03
Antioch	275.00	New Macedonia	2,400.00
Beaty's Chapel	100.00	New Providence	10,432.68
Bethlehem	6,996.00	New Zion	400.00
Bible	400.00	North Sweetwater	1,186.15
Big Creek	600.00	Notchey Creek	10,106.30
Calvary	1,377.86	Oak Grove	3,542.15
Cane Creek	1,600.00	Oakland	800.00
Cedar Fork	5,917.55	Old Pond Hill	300.00
Cedar Valley	11,903.83	Old Sweetwater	1,000.00
Christianburg	3,059.48	Paint Rock	1,210.00
Citico	3,457.93	Piney Grove	0.00
Clifton	300.00	Poplar Bluff	1,200.00
Community	2,269.54	Reed Springs	1,884.00
Compromise	600.00	Rocky Springs	5,000.00
Conasauga	3,600.00	Rural Vale	6,387.00
Concord	2,748.27	Shady Grove	1,000.00
Delano	3,799.09	Shelton Grove	2,408.11
Druid Hills	1,200.00	Shoal Creek	1,020.54
Ebenezer	758.50	South Madisonville	1,250.00
Fairview (Tellico)	0.00	Sweetwater First	4,200.00
Fairview Tabernacle	15,750.00	Tellico (Ballplay)	1,500.00
Fellowship	1,511.17	Tellico First	5,659.00
Glenlock	4,008.00	Tevis Springs	450.00
Gregory's Chapel	1,200.00	Towee Falls	1,800.00
Hopewell Springs	500.00	Trinity	1,000.00
Howard's Chapel	1,300.00	Union Grove	1,560.00
Island Creek	3,300.00	Union Hall	741.00
Lakeside	2,400.00	Union McMinn	4,800.00
Long Ridge	1,000.00	Unity	300.00
Lower Chilhowee	2,191.65	Upper Shady Grove	500.00
Macedonia	200.00	Vonore	20,342.42
Madisonville, First	4,166.70	Walnut Grove	1,500.00
Maple Springs	0.00	Watson Chapel	1,166.69
Miller's Chapel	1,200.00	Westside	0.00
Mt. Calvary	1,310.58	Williamsburg	492.35
Mt. Isabella	0.00	TBMB	7,512.00
Mt. Zion	8,838.06	Miscellaneous	334.25
Murray's	2,194.00	Total	\$213,427.94



HAITI ORPHANAGE: In 2010, after a devastating earthquake, the Sweetwater Baptist Association of Churches partnered with Pastor Gaetan Alcegaire and the Yahve Shamma Orphanage in Haiti.

Even though the partnership officially ended in 2016, we have continued to correspond with Pastor Gaetan. Last year, when we learned of a great need for food and support for the children in the care at the orphanage, the churches of the Association stepped up and provided monthly support for the children. These funds have now been depleted, but we thank you for your prayers, love and generous giving for the children at the Yahve Shamma Orphanage in Haiti. Please continue to pray for safety and well-being of these children.



ATTENTION CHURCH CLERKS: The *Minutes of the 195th Annual Meeting of the Sweetwater Baptist Association* will be completed and sent to the printers soon after the 2025 Annual Meeting. We will notify the churches as soon as the *Minute Books* are back from the printers and available for pickup in the SBA Office.

This year the 2025 *Minute Books* are dedicated in memory of former pastors Marvin "Bud" Millsaps and Jimmy Hollinghead. Additional copies of *Minute Books* are available at \$8.00 per printed copy on a first-come, first-serve basis by contacting the Sweetwater Baptist Association. The *Minutes of the 195th Annual Meeting* will also be available on our website at www.sweetwaterbaptistassociation.com.



2026 SBA CALENDARS will be available at the Sweetwater Baptist Association Office by mid-November. We will advise when the calendars are available for pickup. We hope Pastors and Church Leadership will use the calendar in planning church events for 2026, and anything we have scheduled will not hinder any of the events at one of the churches. This allows each of us the opportunity to support the ministries that are offered by both the Association and each of our churches.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL: The 2026 **VBS Showcase** will be held on Monday evening, March 9th! This is a great event you will not want to miss!



We will have different VBS themes on display, with sample kits for your review. Pastors and VBS Directors are invited to see the choices that are available for their churches. Ordering information for each theme will also be available. Watch for additional information about Vacation Bible School and the VBS Showcase that will be coming soon!



The **Summit** is the annual gathering of Tennessee Baptists for *Pastors Conference and Annual Meeting*. It will be held **November 9-11 in Jackson, Tennessee**. Additional information is available at www.tnbaptist.org

TENNESSEE BAPTIST MISSION BOARD
Bivocational Ministers
& Wives Retreat, 2026
January 29-31

Phone: 615.373.2255 www.tnbaptist.org



CHRISTMAS BANQUET FOR PASTOR

& WIFE: Just a reminder! Reservations are required for the *Annual Pastor and Wife Christmas Banquet* that will be held on **Monday evening, December 8th at 6:30 p.m.** Highlights for the evening will include the reading of the Christmas story, a Christmas sing-along and guest Gospel singing group, **The Shirah Brothers**. The catered meal/banquet will be held at Union McMinn Baptist Church, in Niota.



Pastors, you should have received information regarding the *Christmas Banquet*. Due to limited space and to help plan the meal, we will need to please receive \$5.00 per person to confirm your reservation. You may also call the SBA Office at 442-6604 or email becky.jones@bellsouth.net or sweetwaterassoc@bellsouth.net the number attending the *Pastor/Wife Christmas Banquet*.



SENIOR ADULT CHRISTMAS SHOW: The *Senior Adult Christmas Show* will be held on **Monday morning, December 8th at 10:30 a.m.** This is a **FREE** event, open to all ages! It will be held at Union McMinn Baptist Church in Niota.

You will not want to miss **THE SHIRAH BROTHERS!** This gospel vocal group will perform well-known Christmas favorites, gospel classics, along with their own songs. Check out their music online at <https://www.shirahbrothers.com/>



Let us encourage you to make this a special time for your Senior Adults! Plan a day! Enjoy the free *Christmas Show* as a church group, then schedule lunch at a local restaurant, or even spend the afternoon Christmas shopping!

We know you will not want to miss this special *Christmas Show!* Bring your group! Everyone is invited (all ages) to this free presentation. We look forward to seeing you at Union McMinn on December 8th.

2026 EAST TENNESSEE MINISTRY SUMMIT & EVANGELISM RALLY:

Please mark your calendar now! The *East Tennessee Ministry Summit* is scheduled for **Saturday, February 28th**. It will be hosted by **Notchey Creek Baptist Church**, 5529 New Highway 68 in Madisonville. Everyone is invited to attend!



WE HAVE SOMETHING NEW FOR THIS YEAR! Two or three breakout sessions for the ladies are being planned during the morning session. Guest breakout speakers are still being confirmed and will be announced as soon as possible. We know our ladies will enjoy the encouraging and teaching morning breakout sessions.

In addition, a joint breakout session is tentatively being planned for the *Men and Women* with Rev. Allan Taylor serving as the conference leader.

- **Rev. Allan Taylor:** is the Executive Pastor of Ministries at First Baptist Concord in Knoxville, TN and founder of *Ember to Blaze Ministries*; he writes Sunday School, leadership, and training materials; and has authored three books, and four Sunday School DVD series.

Guest speakers for the breakout sessions for the men will feature:

- **Dr. Jim Henry:** is the former Senior Minister of the First Baptist Church of Orlando, FL; and one of the most respected Christian leaders of our day; prominent speaker; author; past President of the Southern Baptist Convention; pioneered video training of deacons by teaching the first deacon training course ever produced on videotape 20 years ago.
- **Dr. Roc Collins:** is the Strategic Objectives Director for the Tennessee Baptist Mission Board (TBMB) who oversees TBMB's work related to evangelism, discipleship, church planting, church revitalization, Cooperative Program, and Golden Offering for Tennessee Missions giving initiatives.

Special music will be presented by the **Notchey Creek Praise Band**.

While the final schedule is still being completed, tentative plans call for the Saturday morning session to begin with a light **breakfast at 8:00 a.m.** Then all **breakout sessions** will begin at **8:30 a.m.** and conclude shortly after noon. This will be a great time of teaching, training, hearing, gathering, discipling, and attaining wisdom and understanding for all pastors, preachers, church leaders, men and women.

At **7:00 p.m.**, everyone (especially all pastors, preachers, church leaders and church leadership) is encouraged to gather for the **2026 Evangelism Rally!** This will be an exciting time of worship, with **preaching by Dr. Jim Henry** and **special music by the Notchey Creek Praise Band**. We look forward to seeing everyone at the evening session. We know you will be blessed and will not want to miss this event! We encourage you to please make plans now to attend the **2026 Evangelism Rally**.

Mark your calendars for **Saturday, February 28th** at **Notchey Creek Baptist Church**, invite your whole church, and make plans to attend!





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missionaries to be sent to make disciples and multiply churches among unreached people and places for the glory of God. Plan now to take part in the *Week of Prayer for International Missions* and the *Lottie Moon Christmas Offering*. The suggested date for the *Week of Prayer for International Missions* and *Lottie Moon Christmas Offering* is November 30-December 7. Please remember that 100% of your gifts to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering go directly to the missionaries on the field.

LOTTIE MOON 2024 GIFTS AT WORK: We celebrate these 2024 highlights from around the world.

3,577.....	Missionaries on the Field
68,628.....	Baptisms
84,430.....	New Leaders
2,409.....	Churches Planted
144,969.....	Professed Faith in Jesus
1.6 Million.....	Heard the Gospel Presentation

(Information taken from www.imb.org.)



Church News, Events, & Information

ISLAND CREEK

- Dec 5-6, 6pm-8:30pm **Drive-Thru Nativity**
Live animals and 50+ member cast and crew

LAKESIDE

- Nov 30, 6pm..... **The Hymnsmen Quartet**
- Dec 14, 6pm..... **Christmas in Cricket County,**
Adult/Youth Christmas Play
- Dec 21, 6pm..... **A New Star,**
Children's Christmas Play

LONG RIDGE

- Nov 9, 6pm..... **Colby Goforth, Singing**
- Nov 23, 6pm..... **Stan Shuman, Singing**

MT. ZION

- Nov 9, AM Service..... **Veteran's Day Service**
- Nov 9, After Service **Harvest Lunch**
- Nov 25, 7pm..... **Community Hallelujah Service**
(Finger foods in the Fellowship Hall after service)
- Dec 21, AM Service..... **Children's Christmas Play**
- Dec 21, PM Service..... **Adult Christmas Play**



**SBA
WMU/Ladies
News**

WMU/LADIES MINISTRY: We want to thank Pastor Chris Moore and the ladies of Madisonville, First Baptist Church for the gracious welcome and for hosting our November WMU/Ladies Ministry Meeting.
(The meal was great!)



The meeting began with special music led by Caleb Mathewson,



Worship Pastor, FBC Madisonville, and then our guest speaker for the evening was Russ Mitchell, Manager of the



Tennessee Baptist Adult Homes in Knoxville.

He shared about the TBAH ministry of the Tennessee Baptist Mission Board that provides care for adults with special needs. From everyday routines to special outings, the TBAH provides a loving, supportive, and safe home for residents. The meeting was a wonderful blessing to all in attendance.



We had 11 churches represented and 62 in attendance at the meeting. The total offering received was \$1606.00 and many items were brought to the meeting to share with the TBAH Knoxville Home, as well. Your thoughtfulness, kindness and gifts were very much appreciated.

Thanks so much for all you and your churches do to support missions.
Rachel



Thompson, Associational WMU/Ladies Ministry Director

LOTTIE MOON CHRISTMAS OFFERING FOR INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS: The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering has been supporting missionaries around the world since 1888, and your continued giving makes this work possible. Your offerings enable more than 3500



Happy
THANKSGIVING

NOTCHEY CREEK

- Nov 24, 10am**Second Harvest Food Distribution**
- Dec 7, 6pm.....**Christmas Kickoff/ Adult Christmas Program**
- Dec 14, 6pm.....**Student Songs & Skits**
- Dec 15, 10am.....**Second Harvest Food Distribution**
- Dec 21, 6pm.....**Christmas Night of Worship and Candlelight Service**

SHOAL CREEK

- Sept**Baptized two people**
- Dec 6, 6pm.....**Christmas Play**
- Dec 7, 11am & 6pm**Christmas Play**
- Third Saturday Each Month **Food Pantry**

UNION MCMINN

- Nov 27, 11am-1pm **Come to the Table Thanksgiving Meal for the Community**
- Dec 5 & 6, 6pm-8pm..... **Drive-Thru Nativity**
- Dec 24, 6:30pm **Christmas Eve Program**

VONORE

- Dec 13, 6pm..... **Christmas at Vonore**
- Dec 14, 10am & 6pm..... **Christmas at Vonore**

Merry Christmas

NEW PROVIDENCE

The New Providence Mission Center provides clothing, food, hygiene items, health and beauty items, household goods, children's items and supplies along with children's clothing and toys. We accept donations of these items and monetary donations. We invite our sister churches to join us in this ministry. If you would like to volunteer or take a tour of the center, please contact 423-519-6899, 423-337-1697 or 423-295-4873.

OLD POND HILL

We have recently installed a **Blessing Box** at our church (1286 County Road 250, Niota).

POPLAR BLUFF

Please join Hosts, Roman Hamilton and Paul Chapman on a weekly **podcast** called "**Truth Revival.**" New episodes are released every Tuesday at 10:00 am.

SHADY GROVE

We are happy to announce that **Luke Keller** was recently **licensed to preach**. If any churches need someone for pulpit supply, please consider Luke.



Community Christmas Choir

A *Community Choir* will be performing at the **Lighting of the Square** in Madisonville on Friday, November 28.

All choirs and singers are invited to participate.

Singers can register at:

<https://www.visitmadisonvilletn.com/community-christmas-choir/>

Or for more information, contact Charlie Hicks at 423.442.3528 or ckhicks100@gmail.com.

saturday, march 14 @ 5pm
first baptist church, madisonville

Sweetwater Baptist Association

Youth Rally

in concert

comedy

Rally
Speaker



JACKSON BAILEY



Bean & Bailey
Ministries



3 HEATH BROTHERS

Youth News

SWEET WATER
BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

High School SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION

NOW AVAILABLE TO PICK-UP OR DOWNLOAD
PLEASE ADVISE ANY SENIORS IN YOUR CHURCH

Pick-up at: 696 Anderson St, Madisonville
Download at: www.sweetwaterbaptistassociation.com

Applications Must Be Submitted by
March 1, 2026.

SEC

Student Evangelism Conference

(rebranding of former YEC)

April 10-11, 2026

First Baptist Church, Clarksville, TN

Watch for additional information from TBMB or online at www.tnbaptist.org

Miscellaneous

If your church has used or unused
Sunday School Literature that you'd like to
donate, please contact **Ginger Lloyd**
to make arrangements for donating.
Call or Text: 423-572-2700

The **Good Shepherd Center** offers an electric bill
assistance program through Fort Loudoun Electric.
FLEC customers can choose to make a monthly
contribution (any amount) that will go into a fund
to help other customers struggling to pay their
electric bill. For more information or to sign up to
make a monthly donation, contact the Good
Shepherd Center at 423-420-8888 or visit their
website at www.goodshepherdcenter.net.

Sweetwater Baptist Association

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ASSOCIATIONAL OFFICERS

MODERATOR Gabe Brannon	VICE MODERATOR Rick Harris	Associational Council Officers & Committee Chairmen
Committee on Nominations Steve Strickland, Chairman	Budget/Finance Committee Wendi Stakely, Chairperson	Evangelism Director Shane Johnston
Mission Committee Danny Lingerfelt, Chairman	Personnel Committee Donita Moore, Chairperson	Trustees Albert Graser, Chairman
Music Director Phillip Johnson		WMU/Ladies Director Rachel Thompson

2030 Bicentennial Celebration

Sweetwater Baptist Association

1830-2030 Celebrating 200 years

NEWS FROM AROUND THE ASSOCIATION

Welcome New Pastors

Old Pond HillKenny Keller

Director of Mission Visits/Miscellaneous:

Rocky Springs; Reed Springs; Vonore; Tevis Springs (Revival); Notchey Creek; Community; Antioch; Oak Grove (Revival); Howard's Chapel (Revival); Bethlehem; Ebenezer (Revival); SBA Pastor/Wife Picnic; Tellico (Ballplay); Old Pond Hill; Beaty's Chapel; Big Creek; Calvary; South Madisonville; Citico; Shoal Creek (Revival); Christianburg; Clifton; Compromise; Cane Creek; New Macedonia (Annual Meeting); Fairview (Tellico); Delano; Glenlock

Please pray for our churches without pastors:

Long Ridge, Macedonia

SWEET WATER
BAPTIST ASSOCIATION



Upcoming Events/News

“Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

—Luke 2:14

Nov 3..... *WMU/Ladies Meeting*, Madisonville FBC, 7:00 p.m.

Nov 3-12 Greece Tour

Nov 9-12 *TBM Annual Meeting*, West Jackson

Nov 26-27. SBA Office closed for holiday

Nov 30-Dec 7 *Week of Prayer for International Missions & Lottie Moon Christmas Offering*

Dec 8 *Christmas Show*, Union-McMinn, 10:30 a.m.

Dec 8 *Pastor/Wife Christmas Banquet*, Union-McMinn, 6:30 p.m.

Dec 22-Jan 1 SBA Office closed for holiday

Jan 1 New Year's Day

Jan 29-31.. *TBM Bivocational Ministers & Wives Retreat*, Pigeon Forge

(All meetings and events subject to change)

SWEET WATER
BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

WMU/Ladies Group

Please contact Activities Director at 423-442-3990 regarding Madisonville Health & Rehab – Nursing Home Birthday Cake Schedule



November	Bethlehem	December	New Bethany
January	Vonore	February	Rocky Springs
March	New Providence	April	Oak Grove
May	Concord	June	Madisonville FBC
July	Lakeside	August	411 Chapel
September	Mt. Zion	October	Notchey Creek

SBA Office Hours

Monday-Thursday 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

The Upper Room Christian Counseling
Macy Small, M.A.
112 Key Kile Road, Sweetwater, TN 37874
865.414.3269

During the holiday celebrations, the Association Office will be closed at various times in observance of the Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's holidays. Thank you for this time to spend with family and friends. – The Associational Staff

PLEASE NOTE: Photos are taken at all associational meetings and events. These may be used by the Association in newsletters, on our website or social media sites.

SBA PASTORS CONFERENCE:

Monday Mornings at 10:00 a.m.

- No Pastor's Conference in Month of December
- Pastors Conference will resume on January 12th

The next issue of *The Messenger* will be January/February.