



pacific connector



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Building the Kingdom



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About the Cover

National Park of American Samoa. The only US National Park in the Southern Hemisphere. (Licensed Adobe Stock Image 575460200)



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Learning to Rest Under His Authority

Aloha Hawaii Pacific Baptists,

I'm writing this introduction more than a month before you'll read it — because by the time this edition lands in your hands, I'll be somewhere in the middle of my first real sabbatical in forty years of ministry.

The sabbatical was already planned. But as I was processing how much I was looking forward to it — how depleted I realized I'd let myself get — I found myself in a conversation with my thirty-year-old son. I was trying to put into words how much I needed this extended rest, and he listened for a moment and then said, "I guess you're trying to make up for not taking so many Sabbath rests." That. Was. Convicting.

There's something particularly humbling about being out-discipled by your own children. Somehow, all three of my adult kids developed a healthy rhythm of weekly Sabbath rest that I never modeled for them. God apparently taught them what I was too busy to learn.

And that brought me right back to our theme.

Since our Annual Meeting in November, I've been carrying this message everywhere I go: we are called to live under Christ's authority and in Christ's presence. The bookends of the Great Commission — "All authority has been given to me" and "I am with you always" — are meant to be the frame for everything we do.

But here's what I had to ask myself: Do I actually believe that when I rest?

When God commanded a rhythm of Sabbath, He wasn't making a suggestion. He was exercising His authority. And when Jesus promises to be with us always — that "always" doesn't pause when we step away from our desks, our inboxes, or our ministry responsibilities. His presence doesn't require our constant activity to remain real.

If I truly believe Christ holds all authority, then I can trust Him with the convention while I'm away. If I truly believe He is with me always, then rest isn't abandonment — it's an act of faith.

I'm still learning that. But I'm trying.

As you read through this edition — the pastors' retreat, the baptisms at Valor Church, the new church plants, the disaster relief work, and so much more — I hope you're encouraged by what God is doing. None of this depends on me. It never did.

And if you're a pastor or ministry leader reading this: when did you last truly rest? Not a day off spent answering emails. Not a vacation interrupted by church business. A real rest — the kind God commands and Christ's presence makes possible.

If your church doesn't have a sabbatical policy for your pastor, it might be time to talk about that. Your pastor is not the source of your church's strength. Christ is. Give your pastor permission to remember that.

I'll be back in the office at the end of July, grateful and, God willing, renewed. Until then, I'm trusting the One with all authority to keep doing what only He can do.

By His Authority and In His Presence,

Craig

P.S. — The stories in this edition remind me why this work is worth every sacrifice. Read them slowly. Then pray for the people in them.



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Renewed, Refreshed, & Refueled: The 2026 HPBC Pastors' Retreat

Forty-one pastors from across the Pacific gathered at Pu'u Kahea for three days of rich fellowship, practical teaching, and much-needed rest.

From May 4–6, 2026, pastors serving churches across the Hawaii Pacific Baptist Convention gathered at Pu'u Kahea Conference Center on O'ahu for the 2026 HPBC Pastors' Retreat. Forty-one men registered for the event, coming from every corner of the HPBC: the Big Island, Maui, Molokai, O'ahu, and Kaua'i, along with one pastor from American Samoa, two from Okinawa, and one from South Korea. For several attendees, it was their first HPBC pastors' retreat.

Organized by HPBC's Robert Miller, Dawn Akutagawa, and Craig Webb, the retreat centered on the theme "Cultivating a Faithful and Fruitful Ministry." Four sessions led by guest speaker Dr. Mark Hallock provided the theological and practical heart of the gathering, while intentional margin in the schedule offered pastors something they rarely receive: unhurried time to simply rest, play, and breathe.

Sound, Practical Teaching by Dr. Mark Hallock

Mark Hallock serves as the Lead Pastor of Calvary Church in Englewood, Colorado, and as President of the Calvary Family of Churches, a network devoted to planting and revitalizing congregations across the Denver metro area and beyond. He brought to Pu'u Kahea a pastor's heart and a



practitioner's clarity—and the men felt it.

Hallock's four sessions covered the full arc of faithful pastoral ministry. He opened with Pursuing Personal Renewal, reminding pastors that Spirit-empowered renewal in our churches begins with Spirit-empowered renewal in each of us as leaders. Drawing from Proverbs 13:4, he identified five signs of a "sluggish soul"—coldness in prayer, apathy toward God's Word, a drift toward compromise, declining love for the body, and self-centered ambitions—and called pastors to fight spiritual drift with what he described as three essential ingredients: diligence, dependence on the Holy Spirit, and the sustaining power of Christian community.

Session two, Caring for God's People, offered a comprehensive framework for intentional shepherding. Hallock walked pastors through the four biblical functions of a shepherd—knowing the flock, feeding the flock, leading the flock, and protecting the flock—and gave practical handles for carrying out each one with presence, wisdom, and care. He emphasized that effective shepherding requires both macro-level vision for the congregation and micro-level relationship with each individual sheep.

In his third session, Forming Faithful Disciples, Hallock challenged pastors to move beyond church busyness toward





intentional discipleship clarity. He introduced a simple four-part framework—Worship, Connect, Grow, Go—and led the group through exercises to map their current ministries against that grid, identify gaps, and clarify next steps for every stage of a disciple's journey. His central conviction: a healthy church is not a room full of spectators but a family of equipped disciples helping one another follow Jesus and helping others do the same.

The final session, Raising Up Leaders, grounded leadership development in Ephesians 4:11–12 and presented a six-step process—Identify, Invite, Train, Deploy, Coach, Multiply—that every church can adapt. Hallock closed with a personal challenge: “Don’t leave this training simply with a notebook full of ideas. Leave with names.” The church, he reminded pastors, does not need celebrity leaders. It needs faithful servants, humble shepherds, and teachable disciples willing to help others do the same.

Pastors expressed their appreciation for Hallock’s humility, passion, and sound, practical teaching throughout the event.

Fellowship, Rest, and a Warm Welcome

Ask any pastor who attended what stood out most about the retreat, and three things rise quickly to the surface: the rich fellowship, the strong teaching, and the gift of free time. The schedule was intentionally designed to give pastors unhurried afternoons for hiking, beach time, cornhole, bucket golf, and simply doing nothing—a rhythm that many admitted they rarely allow themselves.

For first-time attendees, the warmth of the gathering made a lasting impression. Pastors who had never been to an HPBC retreat commented on how welcomed they felt by their brothers—men from different islands, different



Erik Naylor from Lahaina Baptist in Maui shares his testimony with attendees at the 2026 HPBC Pastors’ Retreat.

cultures, and different contexts, but bound together by the same calling and the same Lord. That spirit of “one another” encouragement, modeled in Hallock’s sessions and lived out between them, became one of the retreat’s most meaningful gifts.

Testimonies from Pastors Erik Naylor, Shaw Okawara, and Nasa Sete added personal depth to the teaching, connecting the themes of renewal, shepherding, discipleship, and leadership to the real ground-level experience of ministry in the Pacific. Powerful worship was led throughout by Carter Sgambato, with help from Daniel Grewatz and John Kaneshiro.

The 2026 HPBC Pastors’ Retreat was a reminder that pastors, too, need to be shepherded. HPBC is grateful for every man who made the journey and for the faithfulness of those who planned it. We look forward to gathering again.

This retreat was sponsored by grants from The North American Mission Board and the Sue Nishikawa Offering for Hawaii Pacific Missions.



**Sue Nishikawa
Offering**
for Hawaii Pacific Missions





WMU Missions Celebration on Two Islands in April

by Diana Ventura

The Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) Missions Celebration was held on Saturday, April 18, at Olivet Baptist Church on Oahu, and on Sunday, April 18, at Valley Isle Fellowship on Maui. The purpose of these annual celebrations was to worship together and to hear testimonies about how Jesus is being shared in the various spaces and places to which God has called us.

This year's theme, "You Are Meant for the Mission," affirmed that God created us in His image with a purpose: to do good works that glorify the Father. As ambassadors of Christ and the light of the world, we

are reminded that each day presents an opportunity to participate in God's mission.

Connie Dixon, WMU National President and storyteller, served as the keynote speaker. Drawing from her personal experiences, Connie described the ways in which God has invited and orchestrated opportunities for her to shine the light of Jesus wherever she goes.

The celebration also included focused prayer for missionaries with birthdays on the event date. Shane and Maela Tanigawa, representing Harvest Family Life, shared how God is moving through foster care



Photos:

Top: WMU Hawaii Leadership Team
(left to right): Ivy Capinpin, Gay Williams,
Hazel Capinpin, Ten Jocson,
Diana Ventura, Betsy Barr, and
Melanie Hom

Bottom (left to right): Jennifer Rudin,
Women's Ministry Valley Isle Fellowship of
Maui, Diana Ventura, HBPC Director of
Women's Ministries, Connie Dixon, National
WMU President, Jennifer Bagoyo, Women's
Ministry Valley Isle Fellowship of Maui, and
Ten Joscon, Hawaii WMU President

ministry across Hawaii. Trisha and Cinnamon Lee then offered insights into discipleship within their home, where a new generation is being formed to share Jesus. Bob and Gail Geihart offered reflections on their service with the International Mission Board, their years in pastoral ministry, and their continued engagement in retirement. These moments represented just a few highlights from the gathering.

During the annual meeting, Gay Williams, Co-Director of Hawaii Pacific Baptist Disaster Relief, was elected as the next Hawaii WMU President. Gay has been active in WMU for many years and brings professional experience as a mental health counselor and chaplain. She is poised to provide effective leadership.

Mark the Date!

2027 WMU Missions Celebration

April 17
Saturday

Hosted by
Nuuanu Baptist



SEPTEMBER 13-20

Sue Nishikawa WEEK OF PRAYER AND OFFERING *for Hawaii Pacific Missions*

Hawaii Pacific Missions
Offering Goal
\$130,000

ALL
AUTHORITY
in CHRIST
Matthew 28:18



Hawaii Pacific
Baptist Convention

Learn more about these ministries at
hpbaptist.net/suenishikawa



May 2026

Executive Board Report from President Shane Tanigawa



by President Shane Tanigawa

The HPBC Executive Board met on May 15, 2026, at our Honolulu offices with members joining both in person and via Zoom.

Financial Health & Stewardship

The board received and approved HPBC's 2025 audit, presented by CW Associates. The audit resulted in a clean, unmodified opinion on all financial statements, reflecting faithful stewardship by Monica Kang, the executive director-treasurer, and the staff team. An encouraging financial report also showed Cooperative Program giving through the first four months of 2026 tracking ahead of last year.

Strategic Ministry Advancement

Executive Director-Treasurer Craig Webb reported encouraging ministry progress across HPBC, including nine active Send Network church plants, a well-attended Pastors Retreat with Mark Hallock, and several upcoming opportunities. These include Church Health Conferences in Oahu and American Samoa, the launch of Hawaii Pacific School of Theology classes this fall, and the 84th Annual Meeting in November themed, "To Christ Be Glory — To Every Generation" (Ephesians 3:20–21).

Board Committee Work

Board committees shared updates on several key initiatives, including seminary scholarships and the Hawaii Pacific School of Theology partnership, facility maintenance and improvement projects, communication and abuse prevention efforts, disability and special needs planning, and administrative work related to leadership evaluations, board nominations, and committee assignments.



2026 Executive Board Officers

left to right:

Karla Jennings (secretary)

Kaunakakai Baptist, Molokai

Pastor Hanale Lindo (second vice president)

Kaunakakai Baptist, Molokai

Pastor Larry Hale (first vice president)

Eleele Baptist Church, Eleele

Pastor Shane Tanigawa (president)

University Avenue Baptist Church,
Honolulu, Island of Oahu

Craig Webb (executive director-treasurer)

Central Baptist, Honolulu

Personnel Policy Handbook Update

The board approved a revised HPBC Personnel Policy Handbook, marking the first comprehensive update since 2010. This important revision strengthens organizational health and provides clearer guidance for staff and leadership.



Updates are posted quarterly
at hpbaptist.net/executive-board.

A Baby Comes Home: Disaster Relief Teams Restore More Than a House

by John Williams, Co-director of Hawaii Pacific Baptist Disaster Relief

In the aftermath of two Kona-low storms, and after local and mainland volunteers, including a California Southern Baptist Disaster Relief (DR) team, had completed work focused on Oahu's North Shore, we began responding to requests in rural inland sections of Waianae. One particular family home and property were devastated by the storms and flooding. Four days of cleanup were required simply to get back into the home and prepare it for rebuilding.

The family was overwhelmed and considered demolishing their home and starting over. At the same time, they needed a place to bring their newborn baby home to in a matter of days. Each day we worked, the family was given hope as they saw progress.

The grandfather watched us throughout our time there, observing the home's transformation. Each day, he warmed up to us a little more. On the third day, he joined our team for lunch, and we spent time together talking. It was encouraging to see the change in him over those few days, knowing that a seed had been planted.

In the middle of the work, Malama Christian Fellowship's Pastor Eddie Hunt and his wife, Faleiva, visited our team and met this family. We were grateful to see the local church connecting with its community, and our team was also blessed by the generosity of his church.

Our role in disaster relief is to step into difficult situations and give of ourselves, trusting God for the results. It is a blessing to serve God by sharing the love of Christ with others in times of need.



Clearing the Way: Chainsaws for Christ on O'ahu

A "Chainsaws for Christ" team traveled from the East Coast of the mainland to O'ahu in May to partner with John Williams and our Hawaii Pacific Baptist Disaster Relief to help flood victims on the North Shore community and assist with cleanup at Pu'u Kahea Conference Center. Brent Allmon, the team leader, shared that "Chainsaws for Christ is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to providing disaster relief through tree work, debris cleanup, and environmental restoration to communities and families impacted by natural disasters." The team consisted of eleven highly skilled men from multiple states who worked together to serve communities across the island.

Not only did the team help North Shore families clear large fallen trees after the flooding, but they also assisted Pu'u Kahea Conference Center in restoring its grounds after the recent winter storms. They cut down and processed 10 large Keawe trees across the campus that were causing problems, several of which were near buildings.



Mike Proctor Presented the California Baptist Lifetime Achievement Award

California Baptist University presented a Lifetime Achievement Award to Mike Proctor, Transitional Pastor at the First Baptist Church in Haleiwa. The award recognized that Proctor's life of ministry has been marked by a steadfast commitment to mentoring, teaching,

and equipping the next generation of ministry leaders. Mike retired from serving as executive director of the Alaska Baptist Convention and since then, he and Rebecca have been great HPBC partners, serving as a Transitional Pastor on Oahu and Hawaii Island.



(left to right) Dr. Ronald Ellis, president of California Baptist University, Rebecca Proctor, Mike Proctor

Jeff Buchholz Earns DEdMin

Congratulations to Dr. Jeff Buchholz on Earning his Doctorate of Educational Ministries from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary on May 1, 2026. His studies focused on missions and evangelism, and his doctoral project explored the use of digital ministry as a tool for evangelism. Jeff and his wife, Debi, expressed appreciation for the scholarship support from the Hawaii Pacific Baptist Convention and the Shiraki Foundation. Dr. Buchholz is the pastor of Cornerstone Christian Fellowship in Kailua-Kona.

Dr. and Mrs. Jeff Buchholz



Aloha Nani, Seeing Growth in Evangelism and Outreach

By Jamie Kidd, Pastor

We started an evangelism team of seven and worked through Thom Rainer's 30-day challenge, Pray & Go. From there, we challenged one another to prayer-walk our neighborhoods, be gospel-intentional in our conversations (armed with gospel tracts), and get back to inviting people to church. Those simple steps have led to other opportunities. We began serving through food and clothing outreach for the homeless in West O'ahu, built stronger relationships with veterans in housing communities at Barbers Point, and are hosting community events in our local neighborhoods. I'm hopeful these ministries bless others, but I know they have blessed us as we seek to do what Jesus commanded.

At a recent outreach event, nearly two-thirds of our church came to serve, helping to feed, clothe, pray for, and share the gospel with our neighbors. Our evangelism team has grown from seven to about twenty-five people. Christ's words compel us to go and make disciples, knowing He has promised to be with us.



New Beginnings at Valor Church Pearl Harbor

God is moving at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam! Valor Church, launched in August 2025 by church planters Craig and Maggie Coppenbarger, celebrated a milestone on April 19, when eight new believers were baptized during its first-ever Baptism Sunday.

The Coppenbargers bring two decades of military and ministry experience to Hawaii, and their focus on discipling those who serve is bearing fruit. Since public services launched last August, Valor has found a home in Aiea,

partnering with LIFE Christian Church for Sunday evening gatherings, while small groups multiply throughout the week in homes across the community.

This exciting new work is made possible in part by Hawaii Pacific Baptists, whose faithful giving through the Cooperative Program and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering plants churches like Valor in communities that need the gospel.



Corem Deo Baptist Launches in Moanalua Valley



The Kaneshiro Family

Left: Coram Deo Baptist Church Church Plant core group.

John Kaneshiro and his wife, Erica, both grew up on O'ahu. After finishing their time at Southeastern Seminary, they knew that God was leading them back home. God placed a burden on their hearts to see more churches on O'ahu, making disciples for the glory of Jesus Christ. "With the help of Pastor Dalton Slavens, and Central Baptist Church, we were able to seek God's guidance on the possibility of planting a church," Kaneshiro shared. He added, "Over time, and with the help of many other godly men and women, God made it clear to us that there was a need for a church in Moanalua Valley. In response to that need, Corem Deo Baptist was established."

Coram Deo Baptist Church is a Reformed Baptist church that meets at Moanalua Middle School. Central Baptist adopted Corem Deo Baptist as its sending church, and the North American Mission Board/SEND Network endorsed it earlier this year.

Pastor Kaneshiro explained that Coram Deo is a Latin phrase meaning "before the face of God." Luther popularized this phrase, which describes the eternal reality that believers now live in Christ. "Everything we do is before the face of God," and should be lived accordingly. This means every aspect of our lives should be done for His glory, under His divine authority, and by His Spirit, said Pastor Kaneshiro. The church's desire is to see the gospel advance and change lives, beginning in our valley, extending to the rest of Oahu, and reaching the ends of the earth.

HPBC Executive Director-Treasurer Craig Webb shared, "Barbara and I attended Coram Deo's inaugural service at Moanalua Middle and were greeted in the parking lot. A wonderful group of young families and children gathered for powerful worship and a strong message from Pastor John Kaneshiro. I am so proud of my home church, Central Baptist, and of Pastor Dalton Slavens for serving as their sponsoring church."

Thank you, Hawaii Pacific Baptists, for your support through the Cooperative Program and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, which provides the support for this new church and the other seven active SEND Network/HPBC church plants. Your gifts through the Sue Nishikawa Offering for Hawaii Pacific Missions will provide grants specifically to support this and other church plants.



**Sue Nishikawa
Offering**
for Hawaii Pacific Missions

Send Network
**Annie Armstrong
Easter Offering®**
FOR NORTH AMERICAN MISSIONS

Church Health Conference American Samoa

**Hawaii Pacific
Baptist Convention**

**CHURCH HEALTH
CONFERENCE**
September 22-24, 2026

The Hawaii Pacific Baptist Convention, Practical Shepherding, the North American Mission Board, and the South Pacific Baptist Association are partnering to host the first Church Health Conference in American Samoa, featuring Craig Webb and Brian Croft. Prayer for the planning and preparation of this important event is greatly appreciated.

**Practical
Shepherding**





Equipped To Go: How the BCM Residency Is Shaping the Next Generation

By Julia Haggard, Campus Missionary

The Baptist Collegiate Ministries Residency program is an 8-week to 2-year leadership pathway that enables missionaries to learn through an immersive experience. The program is designed for 18- to 29-year-olds who wish to serve cross-culturally. This leadership pathway sharpens skills and provides practical ministry experience. Campus Missionary Residents participate in strategic, biblical mission efforts alongside BCM teams while being discipled as followers of Christ and ministers of the gospel. The ministry focuses on developing the next generation in three areas: theological development, leadership development, and mission mobilization. This pathway was developed to address these three areas, with the goal of producing the next generation of leaders for Kingdom work. These foundational skills can be replicated and adapted to wherever they are called to serve in the future.

The Residency program was founded in 2024 by Arjay Gruspe, Director of NextGen Ministries and BCM. Passionate about developing the next generation, he formed a leadership pipeline for those seeking to understand what it means to be part of the bigger picture by serving cross-culturally. Julia Haggard, a former student and current Campus Missionary, serves alongside

Arjay. BCM currently has five Residents serving in various roles—Bridget Watson, Joel Sovea, Ryan Pacris, Rhysa Lee, and Emily Bell—with Celeste Caudill joining in July for a condensed residency experience. Please be praying for this new crop of leaders as they learn and experience what it takes to reach their generation with

Campus Missionary Residents participate in strategic, biblical mission efforts alongside BCM teams while being discipled as followers of Christ and ministers of the gospel.

the gospel. If you know someone who would benefit from this type of experience, we would love to connect with them.

Through your prayers, faithful giving to your church's Cooperative Program, support through the Sue Nishikawa State Mission Offering, and partnerships with the North American Mission Board, the Hawaii Baptist Foundation, and the Shiraki Foundation, we are able to make a lasting impact on the next generation of leaders.

Hawaii Pacific School of Theology Launches Fall 2026 Classes Across the Islands

by Craig Webb

We're thrilled to announce that the Hawaii Pacific School of Theology is now offering classes this fall at three island locations! This exciting development brings accredited theological education home to our Pacific region for the first time.

Classes Now Available

Beginning this fall, we're offering courses on O'ahu, Maui, and the Big Island (Hilo). Our flexible schedule is designed to fit your life and ministry:

O'ahu Campus features New Testament I and Bible Teaching classes, with Friday evening and Saturday intensive formats throughout the fall semester.

Maui and Hilo each offer Bible Teaching courses on alternating weekends, enabling pastors and leaders to participate without extensive travel.

Each class combines evening and full-day Saturday sessions, allowing working ministers to deepen their theological education without leaving their ministry field or families.

Getting Started Is Straightforward

▶▶ Apply to Gateway Seminary at enroll.gs.edu/apply using code "GOGATEWAY" to waive the \$50 application fee.

Dr. Paul Kelly has served at Gateway Seminary since fall 2009 as chair and professor of educational leadership. He is relocating to Oahu in August to be the director of the new Hawaii Pacific School of Theology.

▶▶ Register for your preferred classes before July 15 if you are applying for Shiraki Memorial Foundation scholarships.

▶▶ Explore financial aid options. Shiraki funds are available for Hawaii students, plus Gateway financial aid for those who qualify.

The July 15 deadline is important for scholarship consideration, so we encourage you to begin the application process soon.

Get Connected

Dr. Paul Kelly, Director of the Hawaii Pacific School of Theology, is ready to answer your questions and help guide you through the enrollment process. Reach out at paulkelly@gs.edu.

This is a remarkable season for theological leadership development in Hawaii. Whether you're a pastor seeking advanced training, a lay leader seeking deeper biblical knowledge, or someone sensing God's call to ministry, the Hawaii Pacific School of Theology offers an accessible, flexible pathway to grow theologically without leaving home.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Learn more about seminary scholarships from HPBC at hpbaptist.net/initiatives and from the Shiraki Foundation (Hawaii-based students) at shirakifoundation.org.

A historic moment: Gateway Seminary launches its first new campus in 30 years.



GATEWAY SEMINARY

Biblical • Missional • Global



Hawaii Pacific Baptist Convention

CHURCH HEALTH CONFERENCE

Developing a Healthy Church



September
18-19



Olivet Baptist
Church



Registration
begins 5:30pm

Is your church thriving or just surviving? Join pastors and church leaders for two days of biblical encouragement and practical ministry tools. Gain a clear framework for building a healthy, Great Commission-focused church and leave with a unified vision and practical next steps for church health.



Brian Croft

Founder/Executive Director
Practical Shepherding



JimBo Stewart

Associate Director of Replant,
Send Network (NAMB)



Audrea Stewart

Speaker and
Pastor's Wife



**Matthew
Spandler-Davison**

Ministry Director, Practical
Shepherding



Register
Here



**Hawaii Pacific
Baptist Convention**



**North American
Mission Board**

EPHESIANS 3:20-21

TO CHRIST BE GLORY FOR EVERY GENERATION



Hawaii Pacific
Baptist Convention

Annual Meeting

NOVEMBER 19-20, 2026 // Thursday-Friday

Olivet Baptist Church, Honolulu



Shane Pruitt
National Next Gen Director,
NAMB



Dr. Jeff Iorg
President/CEO,
SBC Executive Committee



Dr. Adam Groza
President,
Gateway Seminary

NEW FOR 2026

Saturday, November 21

Next Gen Equipping
Conference