

# BSU Spring Conference overflows with God's faithfulness

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God's faithfulness through 100 years of Mississippi BSU (Baptist Student Union) ministry was on display at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's (MBCB) Collegiate Ministries BSU Spring Conference at Mississippi State University's BSU in Starkville.

From the Friday night of Feb. 23 to the Saturday afternoon of Feb. 24, over 720 students and BSU staff from 29 campuses packed the worshipful walls with full fellowship, faithful service, and fun with friends from across the state.

"We anticipated about 630 students and staff," said Sam Ivy, Director of Collegiate Ministries. "So on that first night, we had put out 650 chairs, and we realized quickly during the first song that was not going to be enough chairs and were pulling out every available chair in the building.

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Over 720 students and BSU staff from 29 campuses across Mississippi attend the BSU Spring Conference.

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Chris James, Pastor of Mill City Church in Lowell, Massachusetts, and guest speaker for the conference, was a graduate of the University of Southern Mississippi and a former BSU student. “Chris did a wonderful job just walking through topics like ‘What does true happiness and joy look like on this side of eternity?’ ‘What does my identity in Christ really look like in a lost world?’” Ivy commented.

Arey Hill, Worship Leader of Bridgeway Church in Starkville and BSU alumni of Mississippi State, led worship throughout the weekend. “Arey is no stranger to us. She has led our conferences the past three years, and her entire band is made up of former BSU students from multiple campuses.”

Friday night kicked off with an opening prayer from Jon Martin, Chief Strategy Officer of the MBCB, and a booming night of praise. After the welcoming session, students explored the exhibit hall presenting opportunities like the camps of Central Hills Baptist Retreat, Mississippi Super Summer, and the International Mission Board’s Project 3000.

The night closed with an Ice Cream Social, serving Mississippi State's famous ice cream, and the Transfer Fair, which gives transfer students from community colleges an opportunity to build connections before transitioning into university life in the fall.

### Summer missionary commissioning

As exciting as Friday was, Saturday started with the highlight of the conference: the Commissioning of the BSU's summer missionaries. The 121 summer missionaries who had signed up prior to the conference were loudly celebrated.



Mississippi State BSU director Michael Ball leads a prayer of commissioning for the 121 student missionaries who will serve this summer.

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“So I think God has used that outwardly reaching statement to move in some of our students’ lives. They’re asking themselves the same question now. I had two texts over the weekend from

students who were on the fence and had not yet committed but had gone through some of the preliminary steps to be a summer missionary, and now they're determined to go live on mission this summer.

"So it really became about both commissioning and also calling out the called, saying, 'There's still a chance for you to serve.' We're still seeing students answer that call for this summer."

In support of summer missions, the students collectively gave a cash offering of \$1,750 by passing offering buckets.

After the commissioning ceremony, the students and staff enjoyed the food and fellowship. "Lunch is always fun because all of our staff get together and bring their families," said Ivy. "We had over 20 BSU Presidents that gathered for lunch to talk about local ministry on their campuses and feed off ideas from each other.

"Then of course, when you're feeding well over 600 students, you have a lot of logistics going. But it's all these different campuses networking together that helps students see that BSU is bigger than just what's happening on their campus."

### **To know Christ and to make him known**

One remarkable aspect of the weekend is the BSU students who take the lead in the organization of the conference. Mississippi State's BSU has almost 100 students who help host the event every year.

"I just want to say the student leaders at Mississippi State, and all the volunteers, did a phenomenal job," Ivy lauded. "We have a state leadership team and state missions team comprised of our students from various campuses who also help program the event.

“Coulter Clement, the Statewide BSU President from Mississippi College, Bradon Epting, the Statewide BSU Vice President from Meridian Community College, Emily Boyd, the State Mission Leader from Mississippi State, and Jacob Plott from the University of Mississippi, were our student emcees for most of the sessions and they were such faithful and humble student leaders in their respected areas.”

“Our vision is To Know Christ and To Make Him Known,” Ivy stated. “That’s happening on all our campuses. We have some campuses that have already confirmed 20 salvations. God is working on our campuses, and it is very exciting to get texts and calls from BSU directors and students about students making decisions to surrender to Jesus and walk as new life. We are thankful to be a part of what God is doing in the lives of the young adults! It is a time to celebrate all that God is doing!”

### **‘Cup filling experience’**

Ivy shared some of the testimonies from the weekend, “One of the Mississippi State students from the service team said this was one of the biggest blessings to be able to serve and wash the feet of friends and new friends that she was able to meet through BSU. She said, ‘I would have never thought that signing up to serve on the leadership team would have afforded me an opportunity like this.’ And what I took away from that was that she was seeing the beauty and the blessing of serving alongside her peers.”

“I loved getting to see our BSU students worship and grow together at Spring Conference!” shared Nick Smith, Campus Missionary at East Mississippi Community College. “Seeing so many college students gathered to grow as they seek to reach their campuses was amazing! Our students minister to a lost campus in Scooba at East Mississippi Community College and being able to share in the light of Christ for a weekend together in worship and mutual growth in their faith is a cup-

filling experience for our students and myself!”

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“We have students that share their notes with others who couldn’t attend and even more important than that, we see attendees living out those truths of how their identity in Christ transforms everything. Couple all of this with the fact that they have a lot of fun getting to know students from other schools and making memories, and this goes down as a favorite event in many of their college careers.”

“We saw many, many students who participated in Christmas in the Delta 2023 at the conference, and they just picked up where they left off,” added Ivy. “Presley Adams, student leader at Delta State University BSU, gave a report on Christmas in the Delta that was an outstanding charge from someone who served on that mission trip last year.

“It really helped students see, ‘This is an awesome opportunity to live on mission right here in our very own state.’ So students were very excited and gave a roar of applause for a young man who said, ‘This is worth doing. It’s worth being a light for Jesus right here where we live.’”

### **On mission**

Now commissioned, the summer missionaries will take part in the Learning Retreat this April at Camp Garaywa. During the retreat, the summer missionaries will connect with their teammates, engage in contextualization breakouts, and learn from former summer missionaries and field mentors.

“God is going to do so much more than what we can prepare for, but we like to give our students the best foot forward that we can,” said Ivy.

Come spring break, over 280 students from 19 campuses will be mobilized for mission opportunities in Pensacola, Florida,

Panama City Beach, all the way over to Lisbon, Portugal, Grantham, England, New York City, New York, Phoenix, Arizona, Fort Worth, Texas, and Arlington, Texas.

Ivy asked of Baptist churches, "Please be in prayer for our student summer missionaries and all of our teams that are going out to share the gospel, to know Christ and to make Him known."

For more information about how to get involved in BSU ministry, contact Sam Ivy at 601-292-3302 or [sivy@mbcb.org](mailto:sivy@mbcb.org), Jennie Taylor, Collegiate Ministries Associate Director, at 601-292-3301 or [jtaylor@mbcb.org](mailto:jtaylor@mbcb.org), or the Collegiate Ministry Assistant, Hannah Mullins, at 601-292-3299 or [hmullins@mbcb.org](mailto:hmullins@mbcb.org).