

An Invitation to the 2021 BSCM Annual Meeting

by Tim Patterson

PLYMOUTH, MI – We are excited to welcome you to the 2021 gathering of Great Commission Baptists for the annual meeting of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM). The day will be filled with inspiration, encouragement, fellowship, visioning, looking to the future, and preparing for that future by taking care of needed business matters.

We will start with Worship with Convergent Church, and Church Strengthening - Be The Church testimonies, and a Q & A Panel. Pastor Joel Wayne, Chapel Pointe Church, Hudsonville, MI, will be the dynamic speaker.

Lunch will be provided by the SBC Executive Committee. Our BSCM President, Roy Henry, Pastor of Faith Baptist Church Battle Creek, MI, will lead us through the Business Meeting section of our day. We will see video reports from all our State Ministry Directors. The afternoon will be filled with Church Starting/Sending. We'll hear stories, testimonies, and videos of sending from the SEND Michigan, SEND Detroit and IMB Missionaries. The keynote speaker will be Dean Fulks, Send Network Ohio Valley Regional Director.

I want to thank you for making plans to be together on Friday, November 5th with others of our family, and to share what God is up to here in Michigan. It is my prayer that you will catch the vision of the powerful possibilities that awaits us as we seek to be in the very center of God's will.

Please know that as your Executive Director, I count it a great privilege and joy to help catalyze the vision and mission to which God has called you.

Friday, November 5th
8am Registration with Coffee & Donuts from Looney Bakery
9am-4pm Annual Meeting

2021 BSCM Annual Meeting
Mile City Church
13100 Haggerty Rd.
Plymouth, MI 48170

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tim Patterson is Executive Director/Treasurer of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan. Elected unanimously in May of 2015, Patterson formerly served for 9 years as pastor of Hillcrest Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Fla. He also served as trustee chair and national mobilizer for the North American Mission Board.

Leading the church you plant

by Garth Leno

WINDSOR, ON – When we planted The Gathering Church in 2014, I was inexperienced. I was always the lead guy in a larger, been-around-a-long-time, denominationally top-heavy church, but I had never planted a church — nor did I ever want to plant a church!

Now that I've led established churches and planted a new church, I've discovered pastoral leadership in a church planting environment is vastly different from the established church.

What are some of the most common challenges we face as church planters leading the church we planted?

1. Adapting

First-time pastors and first-time church planters often find it difficult to adapt to their new role and take ownership of it.

They just want to be friends with everybody. Most of us plant churches with friends at our side, and it can be tricky leading people who are your friends. We need to learn how to blend friendship, ministry, mission, and leadership.

One way of doing this is by asking for feedback and receiving it gracefully. My friend, Brian Bloye from West Ridge Church is fond of saying, "If I'm humble enough, I can learn from anybody!"

So, humble yourself, pastor, and ask for feedback without pushback (James 4:10). This will empower your people and help you adjust to your new role.

2. Over-managing

One of our roles as church planters is to support and coach our people so they can perform at the top of their game. There's a fine line between leading well and not giving people the space to do their work.

A common misconception when becoming a church planting pastor is that suddenly you must control, micro-manage and oversee everyone's work — double checking what's been done. But this can quickly become stifling for the team. They won't feel trusted, and they will soon disappear.

Explain how to do it. Show them how to do it. Let them do it while you watch. Then let them do it...and don't interfere.

3. Leading as servants

While over-control can be an issue, on the other end of the spectrum is not giving people enough guidance on what is expected of them.

While people may know what individual tasks they're supposed to complete, a pastor's responsibility is to ensure everyone is fully aware of how their work aligns with the mission and vision of the church, and how it contributes and compliments the team. Pastors need to demonstrate humble, servant-leadership (Matt. 20:25-28; Mark 9:35).

4. Communicating

Church planters may find it difficult to openly communicate with their team about expectations, or to bring up issues they are struggling with. However, it's important to keep communication frequent and open so everyone is on the same page.

Rick Warren says, "Vision leaks, so you need to repeat, repeat, repeat."

Ensure the vision and values of your church are clearly communicated at every level. Developing a culture of open communication within a team is essential if you want them to be effective.

Celebrate the wins on your team, however big or small. Make sure your team feels recognized. They will be motivated, and want to contribute more.

Recognize your people with a hand-written thank you note. It's old school, I know, but there's something magical about opening a note that comes in the mail.

Host a team meeting once a quarter and share more information with your leaders. Information is power, and when you share information and communicate frequently and effectively with your core team or leadership team, they will feel empowered and trusted.

One more thing: Always, always, always answer your email, texts and messages the same day.

5. Evaluating

Every staff meeting at our church includes an evaluation of the previous weekend. What went well, where did we fail and what do we need to change? We are honest with each other because we want to be better and do better in the future so we can make more disciples and plant more churches (Matt. 28:19). Evaluation needs to be in your DNA.

You have to assume the people who are "with" you in this church planting endeavor are people who are eager to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ and in the ministry of the church. One way to stimulate and support that kind of exponential growth in kingdom-focused

people is frequent, consistent, loving evaluation. "What's going well?" "What's not going so well right now?" "How can I help?" "How can I pray for you?" If the goal is to present everyone mature in Christ (Col. 1:28), it will require some gospel-centered, grace-infused evaluation.

If you start early in your church planting experience, everyone will get used to it, and they won't take offense when you come alongside them with ideas on how to be better and do better. It becomes part of your church culture.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Garth Leno lives in Windsor, Ontario Canada, with his wife Patty, and one daughter, Jamie. Two more children, Nathan and Kristin, are married with families of their own. Garth is the senior pastor at The Gathering, part of Send Detroit, which he planted with friends in 2014. He is also on the Send Canada Advisory Board. He has an M.A. in church planting from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, and a D.Min from Bethel Theological Seminary.

Reformation and Charlie Brown

by David Jones

TRENTON, MI – In the classic Thanksgiving TV special, from 1973, A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving, Charlie Brown remarks to Snoopy, "We've got another holiday to worry about. It seems Thanksgiving Day is upon us."

Although I don't share Charlie Brown's sentiment with regard to worrying about the holiday, we are quickly approaching that wonderful time of year when we gather with family and loved ones to share food and fellowship, and consider the many ways the Lord has blessed our lives.

Sadly though, meal preparations, sports, and getting the family from point A to point B in a happy and unwrinkled state tends to dominate our thinking when the day arrives. Too often the day is almost spent before we stop to count our blessings, and give thanks to God for His kindness, care and provisions.

On October 31st in the year 1517, Martin Luther nailed his list of ninety-five grievances he had with the Roman Catholic Church on the door of the church in Wittenburg, Germany, igniting what was to become the Protestant Reformation.

At our church, we have dubbed October as Reformation month. We have spent the month celebrating the Reformation, highlighting its significance with regard to the Gospel, and the doctrines that were rediscovered as a result of the Holy Spirit working in the lives of these great

men.

In our worship services we have used the “Five Solas” or “Alone” statements of the Reformation to guide our focus. These five doctrinal statements have guided evangelicalism ever since, and are the basis of what we understand the Gospel to be. Namely, that our salvation/justification is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, according to Scripture alone, to the glory of God alone. The study of these doctrines is yielding a greater understanding of what God has done for us through His eternal Son, Jesus Christ in providing salvation and placing us in a right standing with Himself.

It is easy to recognize the many ways God has blessed us. Family, possessions and jobs immediately come to mind. We are all certainly grateful for our salvation, but a deeper study of the Atonement will increase our gratitude immensely. Over the past several months, I have had the privilege of filling our pulpit many times while my father recovers from his automobile accident. My focus has been an in depth study of the first chapter of Ephesians. During this time my understanding of the work of God in the Atonement has greatly increased, and through this the Lord has impacted me in such a powerful way.

Here, the Apostle Paul explains (1) the work of the Father in planning our justification and adopting us into His family, (2) the work of the Son as He provided for our redemption through His blood, and (3) the work of the Holy Spirit in sealing us and guaranteeing our inheritance. I know we will never fully comprehend the Atonement in this life, but the more we take time to consider it, the more deeply we will fall in love with the Lord.

Many times we have gone around the table during our Thanksgiving feast, sharing the things for which we are grateful. We often express our gratitude for our parents, our children, our jobs, and a plethora of temporal blessings, but beyond all of these tangibles, we find our greatest blessings in what we read in Ephesians 1:3 where Paul exults, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.” Thanks be to God!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David and his wife of 37 years, Pamela (church pianist) have been blessed with six children and eight grandchildren, with three more expected by January. In addition to teaching college level courses in music theory and conducting for the International Academy of Music, Indianapolis, IN (1996-2012), David Jones has ministered on the staff of churches in Michigan, Ohio, Texas and Georgia since 1980. Currently, David serves as Minister of Music/Associate Pastor at First Baptist Church, Trenton, MI and has built a business performing Highland Bagpipes for all types of events.

The church still matters

by Doug Munton

I've never seen the idea of the church so marginalized in all my lifetime. The secular world mocks the church and the Christian world devalues the church. The local church is seen, even by believers, as unnecessary and antiquated and optional.

You can kind of understand the issues perhaps. After all, churches are filled with imperfect people. Churches often have a well-earned reputation for being argumentative. They frequently get sidetracked by secondary issues. They sometimes lose sight of their purpose. Critics can accurately point out all the problems, failures, and imperfections of the church.

But, with all of that said, the church still matters. There is great inherent value in the work of the local church. There is value and purpose and potential in this institution. Here are three reasons why the church still matters.

1. God made the church.

If the church was man's idea, we might rightfully ignore it. But it isn't. God formed the church and he did it for his own reasons. He knew that the church would be made up of imperfect people. He knew every pastor and every small group leader would be "frail as dust and feeble as frail," the hymn says. But he formed it anyway. We ought not easily turn our backs on something God created.

And, I note that God's word admonishes us that we ought not be in the habit of "neglecting to gather together" according to Hebrews. This isn't the word of your pastor or your grandmother. God is the one who calls us to gather. God's command is reason enough to connect with an imperfect church filled with imperfect people. We might not understand why God formed the church, but we can't escape the fact that he did. We may not see the value of the local church, but God apparently can. We need to remember this important truth: the church is a God idea.

2. We need each other.

I don't think every Christian believes that. I think many believe they can be just fine on their own—no need for fellowship or accountability or encouragement from other believers. But the longer I live, the more I see the importance of other believers in my life.

Don't underestimate the enemy. He loves to divide and conquer. He wants you to be spiritually isolated. He knows the Bible says, "Iron sharpens iron, and one person sharpens another." (Prov. 27:17) He tells you that you don't need anyone else because he wants you to be vulnerable and ineffective.

But, the Spirit of the Living God reminds you of the value of other believers. We disciple others and are disciplined by others. We benefit from the wisdom and zeal and encouragement that comes from worshiping and learning with others. Never have believers needed each other as we do now!

3. We are stronger together.

I had a friend who lost his little finger in an accident. He told me how amazed he was at how much grip strength he lost just from that tiny digit.

The church is described as the body of Christ. We all have different gifts and backgrounds and personalities and perspectives. But, we function best when we work together. We are stronger in missions, evangelism, discipleship, and worship when we are connected.

The church separated is weak and ineffective. The church connected is powerful beyond the sum of her parts. The church can prevail against the very gates of hell. You will benefit from others and others will benefit from you. You need the church and the church needs you.

Don't underestimate the importance of a healthy connection to a local church. God will use this institution made up of imperfect sinners who have found the perfect Savior to impact you and your world. Find a church, plug in fully, and participate actively.

The church still matters.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Doug Munton is senior pastor of First Baptist Church in O'Fallon, Ill.

Atmosphere of Change

by Tim Patterson

PLYMOUTH, MI – The month of November always brings with it a change in atmosphere. Of course, the temperatures drop with the onset of those northern fronts sweeping down from Canada, and that “white stuff” begins to accumulate in our region and at times frustrate our population.

The cold crisp air is so refreshing to me, especially after this unseasonably warm and humid October we have experienced. The hunters especially love the change because it will bring “Bambi” out into the open when even the best of scent attractors fail and corn or apple piles

won't entice.

November also brings a change in atmosphere amid the emotions and psyche of the people who inhabit this area. I'm not sure what truly precipitates the change, but I have noticed that we seem to move into a slower, more lethargic mode coming out of the summer months. Things are more relaxed and not as fast paced. Life just seems to slow down.

It could be some internal instinct that is being triggered and as a result, is preparing us for the soon to be present Christmas season with it's maddening rush to celebrate.

Once that season officially begins, the day after Thanksgiving this short season of rest will be long gone. Whatever the reason for the slowing down, I greatly enjoy it, and highly value the season for the opportunity to quietly review the blessings of my life and goodness that God has sent my way.

The cool calmness of November affords me time for perspective and provokes me to a spirit of thankfulness. It helps me to be thankful for the opportunity to share the Gospel with a world that is lost without Him.

It helps me to be thankful for a country in which the freedom of worship and the right to freely express that worship is unimpeded by the laws of man. It helps me be thankful for my immediate family and the extended one with which I am blessed. It helps me to live a life of thanksgiving.

As you know, this month we will officially celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday as a nation. It is interesting to note that it wasn't until we were at war, the Civil War to be exact, that Congress officially recognized our Thanksgiving holiday.

It had started in the small Plymouth Colony in 1621 when the English Pilgrims feasted with members of the Wampanoag Indians, who brought gifts of food as a gesture of goodwill. The custom grew in various colonies as a means of celebrating the harvest.

In 1777, more than 100 years later, the Continental Congress proclaimed a National Day of Thanksgiving after the American Revolution victory at the Battle of Saratoga. But it was twelve years later that George Washington proclaimed another National Day of Thanksgiving in honor of the ratification of the Constitution, and requested that Congress finally make it an annual event.

They declined, and it would be another 100 years and the end of a bloody civil war before President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed the last Thursday in November Thanksgiving. The year was 1865.

It might surprise you to learn that it took still another 40 years, in the early 1900's, before the tradition really caught on. The purpose of Lincoln's official Thanksgiving and its sanctioning was done in order to bolster the Union's morale.

Many Southerners saw the new holiday as an attempt to impose Northern customs on their conquered land, and were recalcitrant toward its acceptance. Many years passed before this particular Thanksgiving was fully embraced by the South. It is apparent that deep wounds do not heal quickly but nonetheless Thanksgiving is now nationally recognized.

The fact is, we do not need a national holiday to tell us to be thankful. Thanksgiving should be the natural outflow of the heart of a people who know ***"from whom all blessings flow."***

I am glad that our forefathers understood the importance of a nation acknowledging God as its source and supply. God does not need our thanks, but we need to be thankful.

Just as the climatological atmosphere of Fall permeates and affects our surroundings and attitudes, I pray the atmosphere of our lives be one of Thanksgiving, and that it has a marked effect on everything about us. It is also my prayer that we maintain this atmosphere all year long.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tim Patterson is Executive Director/Treasurer of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan. Elected unanimously in May of 2015, Patterson formerly served for 9 years as pastor of Hillcrest Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Fla. He also served as trustee chair and national mobilizer for the North American Mission Board.

God's symphony from the past year

by Dr. Tony L. Lynn

PLYMOUTH, MI – Jamie and I attended a local concert and loved it! It was our first, in many months.

The [Michigan Philharmonic](#) is one of our indulgences. I think we enjoy classical concerts because we played instruments in high school, Jamie the clarinet and I played the coronet. The classical rivalry was always there. The brass instruments would drown-out the woodwinds until Mr. J, the conductor, would clack his baton on his music stand while yelling at the brass sections to play in unison with the other sections of the band. We saw Mr. J's baton splinter and break like a baseball batter breaking his bat on a swing and a hit. We pulled those stunts when we

were rehearsing among ourselves, but when concert time arrived, every single person stretched himself or herself to perform the best they could on that day.

During live concerts, the mood of the band members changed. Each member of the band watched Mr. J with his hand movements, even his facial expressions to synchronize our playing with his slightest directions. All of us wanted our family and friends to hear the beautiful music: pop tunes like Elephant Walk by Henry Mancini and Yesterday by the Beatles, or to hear the symphonies, and movements written by the likes of Tchaikovsky and Beethoven.

God has been conducting a symphony this past year and with Thanksgiving just around the corner, I thought I would let you hear some of the music in God's movement so that we could rejoice together.

Total of 17 New Churches in Less than 18 Months that is a Percussion Crescendo

Let me offer you the concert's program so you can see the big picture. Since our last gathering as a state convention November 2020, the Lord added 4 new churches by affiliation and 13 new church plants! That is a grand total of 17 new churches that were not part of our Great Commission family 18 months ago! To me that is as if we are starting the musical piece off with the percussion section hammering out an echoing sound on those large kettle drums. Do you feel that vibration in your chest? A total of 17 new additions to our family.

4 Existing Churches and 13 New Church Plants in Different Sections of Michigan

The 4 established churches are from different locations. One is in Holland, another in South Branch, the third is in River Rouge, and the last one is in Pontiac. The 13 new church plants can be found in Adrian, Port Austin, Kentwood, Owosso, Grand Blanc, Howell, West Bloomfield, Westland, Gaylord, Southfield, Eastpointe, Flint, and Windsor.

When you are at your next concert, watch the conductor's line of vision and you can anticipate the musical section he or she is prompting to enter the musical piece. It may be the oboe or French horn section you will hear next because their sound is a gorgeous contrast to the rest of the instruments. I believe, this past year, we have watched God cueing-up sections of the orchestra for more than two years, even longer. Some of the pastors and planters have been in conversations with us for as long as two years or more; but it was during this most challenging past year that those men decided, by following their spiritual conductor, that it was time to join the music. I am grateful for the obedience and courage those men possessed.

Grateful for Section Leaders

Did you know there are section leaders, or those who sit in what we called first-chair, who are responsible for performance of the rest of their musical section? I look at the established church pastors and new church planters as section leaders who led people who believed in their vision and their leadership enough to join with the Great Commission Baptists of

Michigan. I am humbled by the fact that 17 spiritual leaders said, “Yes, to joining our family.” We can respond by including them, reaching out to them, spending time with them, supporting them, and loving them – because when we do so we imitate our Lord.

What Do I Love the Most About Orchestras?

I love musical contrast the most. My ears and my heart are the happiest at a concert when I hear juxtaposed instruments and rhythms. The staccato of woodwinds against the ambling long tones string instruments are hypnotizing. For me, when I listen and look at what God did in creating a total of 17 new congregations among our family, I see a similar mesmerizing contrast. I do not attend concerts with 60 violins, I attend concerts with more than a dozen instruments with unique sounds.

All the new churches do not look alike, and they do now sound alike. That dissimilarity is a major part of the attraction for me when it comes to our churches. God conducts each one of us stretching us to play our personal best. Imagine the sound of grace and love as the newest churches, in our family, celebrate the Lord in English, Burmese, Bengali, and Spanish.

My Thanksgiving Prayer

As you celebrate Thanksgiving this year with family and friends, would you say a prayer along with me that will sound something like this, “Lord, thank you for blessing us with 17 new congregations, who in their own unique way, under your leadership will help us reach the lost in our region. Lord, direct us to work together in harmony and in unison with your directions.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Tony L. Lynn is the State Director of Missions for the Baptist State Convention of Michigan. Before coming on staff at the BSCM, Tony served as lead pastor for more than six years at Crosspoint Church in Monroe, Michigan. He and his wife, Jamie, also served with the International Mission Board in Africa and in Europe.

Blazing a Trail

by Mike Durbin

PLYMOUTH, MI – Mrs. Sabra was 89 years old when I became her 21-year-old pastor. She was born in 1890 in New York. As a young woman, she moved with her husband about 1200 miles to Deepwater, Missouri in a horse drawn covered wagon. She proudly showed us an old black

and white photo of the wagon that took them to Missouri. She is the only person I ever met who moved halfway across the country in a covered wagon.

Her story intrigued me, so I looked up some information about that time in history. According to the 1910 Census, the population of the United States was just a little over 92 million. Mrs. Sabra would have been 20 years old.

The automotive industry was growing, but in 1908, there were less than 200,000 cars on the road. It was the year Ford Motor Company produced the first Model T. It took 12.5 hours to assemble and cost \$825 - way more than the average person could afford. In the first month of production, they only made 11 Model T's.

In 1913 Henry Ford developed a system of using interchangeable parts and perfected the moving assembly line. By 1925, Ford Motor Company was producing up to 10,000 cars a day and the cost of the Model T had come down to \$260. Henry Ford set out to make a car "so low in price that no man making a good salary will be unable to own one - and enjoy with his family the blessing of hours of pleasure in God's great open spaces."

It wasn't until 1909 that the United States had the first mile of paved cement road in Detroit. The automobile was going to radically change travel in the country, but it hadn't taken off when Sabra and her husband moved to Missouri in a covered wagon.

By the time we met her, Mrs. Sabra's husband was buried in the church cemetery. I remember the first time we went to her home. She had nicely typed descriptions on every piece of furniture she brought with her on that covered wagon decades earlier. There was a note on her dining room table, on her bed, on her hope chest, and on something I'd never seen before - a pump piano.

We had a wonderful meal and a fascinating conversation with Mrs. Sabra that Sunday afternoon. After a while, she asked if we wanted to take a nap before the evening service. The conversation that followed was hilarious, but we didn't laugh in her presence. She wanted Shar and me to rest in different bedrooms. We said, "Mrs. Sabra, you know we're married, don't you? We've been married for a couple of years." After a little more discussion, she put us in the same bedroom, but it was the only bedroom in the house that didn't have a door on it. I guess she thought Shar was going to get frisky!

I was fascinated by the contrasts in Mrs. Sabra's life. She was a woman who left the most modern city in the United States, just about everything and everyone she knew, for a place she'd never been in a covered wagon. It took incredible courage, optimism, and faith to make a journey like that.

I don't remember how many other families made the journey with them. It's easy to imagine them and any other travelers circling the wagons every night. They sat around the fire eating, talking, laughing, singing, and dreaming together of life where they were headed. Then they rested for the night.

Circling the wagons must have felt great after a long, dusty day on the trail. They needed to eat, rest, and take care of the horses, but the journey was never about the circle. The next morning, and every next morning, they broke camp and hit the trail. There were miles to travel.

Finally, they arrived in Deepwater. Sabra and her husband built their home, had children, and raised cattle. This incredible, trailblazing, pioneering, never quitting woman, along with her husband, started life together with a dream and the few things they could pack in a covered wagon. They built an amazing life together.

I'm thankful that God allowed us to meet her. By the time our lives connected, 89-year-old Mrs. Sabra was a little bit more about circling the wagons than blazing the trail. She was looking back, nostalgic, thankful for a life blessed by God, and wanting to tell her story. Her 21-year-old pastor, Mike Durbin, was thinking more about breaking camp and hitting the trail.

The contrasts between us were vast - young and old, rich, and poor, married and not, wise and inexperienced - and yet, Jesus brought us together in the amazing mosaic of His church. And I love it! As we approach Thanksgiving, I am especially grateful for the incredible people I have met in Christ's church and the stories that surround their lives - people like you. Happy Thanksgiving.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mike Durbin is the State Evangelism Director for the Baptist State Convention of Michigan. Before joining the state convention staff, Mike served as Church Planting Catalyst and Director of Missions in Metro Detroit since 2007. He also has served as a pastor and bi-vocational pastor in Michigan, as well as International Missionary to Brazil.

Heroes of faith

by Coye Bouyer

LANSING, MI – Just as the world looks for and needs heroes, at times, God looks for one who is available to be made into a hero. Whether we are talking about something as fictional as the Avengers or DC Comics, or a real-life situation where a person runs into a burning building to rescue someone inside.

People often look for someone to give us the sense of security in a very insecure, and at times chaotic and traumatic world. But what happens when our search yields no one. The chaos,

confusion, and sin in our communities has gotten so bad that everywhere we look, there seems to be no one standing up for righteousness?

THE LORD SAW...

God never acts arbitrarily. He does not run this world amorally as no one receives His divine judgment simply because they are human. But God is moved to anger by man's deliberate violations of the code by which He designed His world to live.

In Genesis 6:5, we see what God saw. God saw the extensiveness and intensiveness of sin. Geographically, the problem of sin had infected the earth as the earth had become infested with the sinfulness of men.

This infection was not just centrally located, rather this infection had gotten so extensive it had spread throughout the entire world. Like cancer throughout the body or an infestation of cockroaches, rodents or ants, not only had sin entered the world, it was taking it over.

The situation is aggravated even further because such depravity controls not only man's actions, but also his thoughts. For every scheme in man's imagination was nothing but evil. For their minds had even become perverted and this kind of malaise **"was only evil continually."**

THE LORD FELT...

Viewing the depravity man lives in, God is grieved, even to the point of experiencing pain in His heart. A peculiarly strong anthropopathic expression, which presents a truth that God, in consistency with His immutability, assumes a changed position in respect to changed man (Ps. 18:27).

He must assume the appearance of hating the sinner in the sin, even as he hates the sin in the sinner. Yet, even in God's grief, somehow, He does not begin to hate man, as understood in the words, *"and it grieved Him in His heart"* (v. 6)

THE LORD DECIDED...

I will blot out man: **blot out** translates a verb meaning "wipe out, erase, do away with." The LORD's decision to eliminate the source of the problem; means He will "erase," or "blot out one's name out of a book" for just as God can erase sins (Psalms 51:3), He can erase sinners.

In translation, there are two parts to God blotting out the people: He will not only eliminate, He will also erase, remove them entirely from the world, **"From the face of the ground."** Moreover, not only will people be erased, but so will all other living creatures, both beast and creeping things.

BUT THE LORD FOUND...

But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord: Most interpreters understand this as Noah won God's favor which would have required some level of moral qualities that would have qualified Noah for the favor in which he had found. However, the Hebrew word for 'favor,' and one who finds it, usually insinuates the grace and mercy of God as opposed to the works or morality of a man.

And while many assume that Noah received God's favor because of his personal righteousness, more than likely Noah was righteous as a result of receiving God's favor. This does not mean God always finds someone; (Ezek. 22:30), however it was not without an intensive search throughout the entire earth.

For just as heroes are being made and heralded by the continual sin and rebellion of angels and men (6:4), God goes to work finding His own hero, for just as the world has her mighty men amongst regular men, the LORD takes regular men and makes them mighty.

CONCLUSION

Within Noah's story we see the sad state of mankind physically, mentally and spiritually. We also see the heart of God as He is grieved, even hurt by the chaos and sin of His creation. And while God will destroy all the earth wiping away and even erasing just about everything, within this story is also the Redemptive and Restorative nature of a God who does not give up on His creation.

Rather, He has chosen to work in and within it by finding men and women whom He might find favor upon. Men and women who will respond faithfully and obediently to Him; men and women whom He will make into heroes of FAITH here on earth as they live like His kingdom down here in light of what we will all experience up there. Will YOU be one of them?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pastor Coye L. Bouyer is the founding pastor of Kingdom Life Church in Lansing, MI where he has served since March of 2010. Pastor Bouyer recently stepped into the Diversity Ambassador role for the BSCM and firmly believes that he was not only called to Preach the Gospel as part of the process of reconciliation of man to God, but also using any platform as a bridge of reconciliation of man to man, and even more so amongst the brethren. Pastor Bouyer and his lovely wife Keturah (Gen. 25:1) have been married four over 20 years and have four children; Sierra, Seth, Cayla and Coye II.

Choose joy

by Mick Schatz

ROSCOMMON, MI – Do you wake up in the morning and say “I choose joy”? I don’t. I should, of course, but being joyful is not on the top of my list in the morning. Nevertheless in a culture that thrives on the misfortunes of others, and is constantly broadcasting sadness and tragedy, we need the power and presence of joy.

James 1:2-4 says “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

Seriously? I should be full of joy when circumstances come against me? My joy should increase as pressures mount? This sounds completely crazy and counterintuitive. My self-nature is not wired this way! Joy is a spiritual response grounded in faith.

One of my favorite sayings is, “People make choices and choices make people”. Choosing joy is a great example of this. When you choose joy in the face of struggle you are choosing hope, faith, and strength. You are choosing reliance on Christ and His power and protection instead of your own. You are choosing to see with His eyes and perspective instead of your own dimly lit vision. By choosing joy you are allowing Christ to form you more and more into His image!

On the other hand, when we choose fear we are saying “yes” to depression, discouragement, anxiety, apprehension, unbelief, disobedience, and on and on. This usually means we made a choice to react out of selfishness and pride. We choose a fleshly reaction grounded in unbelief. Unbelief is a virus capable of causing major life-changing damage.

There have been times in my life when unbelief crept in and began to wreak havoc on my belief system (God’s Word), and my relationship with Christ. Questions began to play on repeat in my mind:

- If God really cares why is this happening?
- Is this all there is?
- I’ve given my life to you God and this is my reward?

Sound familiar? Do you hear a theme in this whining? Selfishness. Me, me, me!

Nevertheless, God has always been gracious to forgive my sinful selfishness, and remind me of His faithfulness even in the middle of my faithlessness. I have discovered when I reflect on the joy of my salvation, the joy of my calling, the joy of kingdom ministry, the joy of marriage and family, the joy of friends and the faithfulness of God, unbelief disappears, the virus is

destroyed. My heart changes, my faith enlarges and I can face any circumstance because the “joy of the Lord is my strength!”.

On a final thought, I have also discovered joy is contagious. Visible joy in difficult times will always provoke questions from those around us. How can you be so optimistic, or why aren’t you a basket case right now, or how can you keep going?

The answer is simple - “I choose joy!”.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mick Schatz serves on the staff of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan. He is the State Director of Spiritual Enrichment and Retreats and lives at Bambi Lake.

Don’t forget to tell God "thank you"

by Roland Caldwell

DETROIT, MI – I have a 2-year-old son in the process of learning to talk. For months now my wife and I have dedicated hours to teaching him simple words to help him explain what he sees, what he wants, and how he feels.

At the moment my son has a long list of words he can say clearly, but like many toddlers his favorite word to say is “NO”. He doesn’t always place the word in the proper place, but he loves to use it when he can.

If you were to come to my house, I’m sure you would hear him chanting it loudly to me or my wife at some point, because my son loves to respond to everything with “NO”. Contrary to my son’s belief my favorite word to hear him use isn’t no. In fact, it’s not a word but a phrase.

My favorite phrase to hear him say is “Thank You”. Now, don’t get me wrong I have taught him to say thank you as a respectful response to those that give, share or provide something for him. However, it’s different when I hear him say it from a place of genuinely feeling thankful.

There’s no greater feeling as a parent or individual than to hear someone tell you “Thank You”, and for someone to show gratitude for something you’ve done, even if you would have done it without recognition.

When was the last time as a child of God, you told Him “Thank you”? Can you recall the last time you evaluated what God has given you, and said, “Father I thank you”? It’s in Luke chapter

17 verses 11-19, where we get a glimpse of what being thankful truly looks like.

In this text, the word of God recounts how Jesus heals 10 people with leprosy. During that time, leprosy meant you were socially cast out, isolated and abandoned. Nobody wanted to be around lepers, nor did they accept them into their home or social spaces.

One day ten lepers cried out to Jesus saying, "Have mercy on us." They cried out for Jesus to heal them from their illness, and without hesitation he did. Jesus did not reject them like the world, or overlook them because of their condition, but he spoke into their lives with grace.

Jesus healed the ten lepers, and sent them on their way healed. They went off to show the priest the miracles that had taken place. While running to the temple one of the healed lepers did something strange and unusual. He turned around and came back to Jesus, fell to his feet, and began thanking Jesus for what he had done.

Out of all ten lepers, only one came back to tell Jesus thank you. My prayer for you is to be strange and unusual during this Thanksgiving season and tell God "Thank You".

Thankfulness, however, is not just shown by what you say, but it is also in what you do. Show God how thankful you are by honoring your family, friends, and neighbors. Show God through your obedience, sacrifice, and willingness to serve others, and revere God by going back and telling him what you're thankful for.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Roland Caldwell Jr is the pastor and church plant of The House Church in Detroit, Michigan. Pastor Roland is married to his beautiful wife Tedi, and they have a son named Noah. While serving the city of Detroit Pastor Roland also holds the position of Vice Moderator of the Greater Detroit Association.

Taste and see

by Karen Blanchard

SHELBY TOWNSHIP, MI – The month of November ushers in a sense of thanksgiving and gratitude. Thanksgiving has always been one of my favorite holidays. Before moving to Michigan, my husband Scott and I lived in Pensacola, Florida. For Thanksgiving we would travel to Alabama to visit his grandma in Muscle Shoals, and then drive over to visit my grandma in Huntsville, Alabama. This was always a special memory for us.

The first year Scott and I visited his grandma on Thanksgiving, she laid out an amazing spread. At that time, I was a pretty picky eater. I would only eat what I knew I liked, and I rarely strayed away from that. Sweet potato casserole never seemed appealing to me before. My mom made it with marshmallows melted on top, and something about the orange potato and white melted marshmallows just didn't seem to go together in my mind.

Of course, being a guest in someone's home I wanted to be polite, so I took a very small helping of Grandma Joyce's sweet potato casserole. Now, Grandma's sweet potato casserole was different from my mom's. She topped her casserole with a nut, cornflake, and brown sugar mix, but I had already decided in my mind I wasn't going to like it. When I took a bite of the sweet potato casserole, to my surprise it was delicious! Sometimes we just have to taste something to realize what we have been missing!

I love the verse in Psalms 34:8 – Taste and see that the Lord is good...

It is one thing to know about God; it is a completely different thing to experience him, and live a life surrendered to him. I accepted Christ when I was a young girl. I grew up in church. I knew a lot about God, but I wouldn't say I knew God.

I think we can get very comfortable in our Christianity and do all the things a "good Christian" would do, but never experience God for ourselves. Many times, we experience God through a pastor's message on Sunday morning, through a speaker at a conference, or through lyrics in a song. Those things are wonderful; however, that shouldn't be the only times we experience God.

In 2016, God got ahold of my heart, woke me up from my spiritual slumber, and now I experience him daily! He isn't just a God I worship on Sundays. I don't read my Bible anymore to check it off my religious "to do" list. I don't just pray when I need something, or bring requests to him. I have now tasted and seen God's goodness. His work in my life is undeniable.

The amazing news is that anyone who is a follower of Christ can experience him in this way. It begins with a daily surrender. We must die to ourselves daily, and invite the Holy Spirit to lead us and fill us with everything we need. When we do this, we become sensitive to his voice. When the Holy Spirit begins to lead us, we will experience God in a whole new way!

Have you tasted and seen that God is good? Or have you been going through the motions of Christianity? Have you ever wondered if there is more to your relationship with God? Today, you can surrender it all to Jesus. Our salvation isn't meant to just be a "ticket" to heaven. God wants us to experience him here on earth and live the abundant life Christ died for us to live. I had no clue what I was missing in my relationship with God until I fully surrendered to him. Just like the sweet potato casserole, I had to taste and see God's goodness for myself. I had to step into my own faith, and not depend on the faith of others.

Can you guess what I bring to all the family holiday dinners now? That's right! Sweet potato casserole.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Karen is married to Scott Blanchard, pastor of Lakepointe Church, and moved from Florida to Michigan in the summer of 2009 to plant Lakepointe Church in Shelby Township. She enjoys mentoring and discipling women and also leads women's life groups through her church. She is passionate about helping women find their purpose in who God created them to be. She is on staff at Lakepointe Church and loves being part of what God is doing in the Metro Detroit area!

Recite or rest: the promises of God

by David Thompson

NASHVILLE, TN – A man took a shortcut home through a lightless cemetery tripping carelessly into a freshly dug grave. After multiple attempts he gave up clawing his way out, he sat down. Soon another unsuspecting gentleman also fell in and attempted to be free of the dirt sarcophagus. About that time he heard a voice from the other side. "You can't get out." Oh! But he did. Fear can be a persuasive motivator— it can sadly be a great immobilizer.

A winemaker in a pit crushing grapes named Gideon was absolutely the least likely candidate for God to use—and he let God know. "Oh Lord, I'm the least of my family," he said. Gideon needed a lesson, not in humility, but a lesson in courage.

Gideon needed to do what, possibly you need to do, get out of your "de facto" P I T! What is a de facto pit? It's a grave with both ends knocked out.

Do not be afraid dear friend to rise up out of your de facto pit, and stand brave by faith in a risen Lord! When "fear" knocks—"faith" answers! These are not naïve cliches—this is hard core truth and dogmatic scriptural principles. 365 times we are told not to fear.

Legendary Coach Lou Holtz is fearless. He has been disavowed for speaking his heart. Just recently he proclaimed, "we have got to stop being silent and start standing up for the truth!"

I've often wondered why some get it and some don't. It's my belief that there is a clear difference between those who are "reciting" and those who are "resting". Some are reciting the promises of God, and some are resting in the promises of God.

Once there was a contest to determine the master orator, where the best deliverer of words would stand alone as the grandest of all: a polished and sophisticated gentleman waxed

eloquently quoting the 23rd Psalm from memory. With incredible diction he drove every syllable home to the anxious hearers. The crowd gave a standing ovation.

Next, a frail and weak old man who could have easily been a centenarian barely made it to the podium—he also quoted each and every word from the same famous psalm, “The Lord is (MY) Shepherd.” But that man spoke with amazing passion and pathos, and incredible intimacy as if had lived every word of David’s hymn. As if he personally knew—that Shepherd. He ended. It was silent, not a clap or ovation. Instead, the entire audience sat in tears and wept in the presence of a fearless child of the King—one who could truly say and mean—“I will fear no evil“!

It is one thing to recite the promises of God, it is completely another to be resting in the promises of God. Resting in God’s promises does not mean you are idle, or silent, or passive necessarily.

Proverbs states—“The wicked flee when no one pursues but the righteous are bold as a lion”! Resting means leaving it at the feet of Jesus and at the foot of the cross, and trusting God completely with all your heart.

Let faith answer next time fear knocks. Dare to let God be God in your life and all you cling to—trusting only Jesus and no one else. He has never let you down and He never will. Fear Not—Have Faith—and REST!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. David L. Thompson holds an undergraduate degree from Belmont University in Psychology and Religion, a graduate degree from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Education, and a doctorate in Counseling and Pastoral Psychology. He has served as a chairman of the Church Planting Group and Executive Committee Chair at the North American Mission Board for 10 years. He has been a Police Chaplain since 1991 and served as a Corporate Chaplain to the Coca Cola Bottling Company in Nashville, Tennessee where he resides with his wife. He has six children and five grandsons.

The attitude of gratitude

by Bill Walker

SOUTHGATE, MI – Did you know there was an instrument gauge in the cockpit of an airplane, called the “Attitude Indicator.” Not Altitude...Attitude! It actually has a significant definition – which can be found in an avionics workbook. Here is the definition as they relay it:

“The attitude indicator, originally called the Artificial Horizon Indicator, is a type of instrument used to reference the aircraft's pitch and bank against an artificial horizon.”

Let me try to sum up in passenger rather than pilot terms. The gauge endeavors to help you keep the nose of the plane just above the horizon, which will keep the aircraft on the best trajectory, and give those on board the best experience and a fair amount of assurance that the plane will land successfully (as much confidence as you can place in a gigantic metal tube catapulting through space).

Put the nose too far above and you wind up in the clouds, and you can easily get disoriented. Fly it below the line, and you could suddenly wind up in a tailspin and have a hard time coming out of it.

It's kind of amazing how this small part of an airplane instrument panel can be an illustration of our lives. Put your nose too high into the air and you're not doing anyone any good, including yourself.

Does it seem like that is the way a lot of people who claim to follow Jesus are headed? Why are so many Christians (not you or me, of course) so judgmental towards so many people? Could it be that we have climbed so far into the clouds we have a hard time seeing anyone or anything with the right perspective?

The only perfect one that ever lived said to a caught-in-the-act-sinner, “Neither do I condemn you” (John 8:11 CSB) And to one on the other side of the law – the religious hierarchy of the day He said, “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him” (John 3:17 CSB)

On the other hand, we also must make sure that we are not allowing our lives to dip below the surface. Negative, disapproving, disparaging, seems to define so much of the dialogue among believers about believers, and non—believers alike.

We can easily allow the disappointments in life (and all of us have them) to spiral out of control and quickly lead to discouragement and even despair. It becomes more and more difficult to pull ourselves, or those we love, out of that plunge.

No matter where we find ourselves on the attitude instrument panel of our lives, is there an adjustment that we can make that would help center us, guide us, and allow us to live our lives to exemplify Christ and be His light in a darkened world?

The answer is a resounding YES! And this month of November is the perfect time for us to make that adjustment. And no, this is not a “think positive” infomercial. This is basic biblical attitude adjustment. The answer is to have an attitude of gratitude.

Maybe it would help if we just made it a new word – have a (GR)ATTITUDE! A grateful mindset; a heart of thanksgiving; a soul filled with praise. Any chance that would give us the adjustment necessary to see people and view life from a new perspective?

Paul spoke of making our prayer life one of thanksgiving when he wrote – “Don’t worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” (Philippians 4:6 CSB). He took it a step further when he wrote to the church in Thessalonica, “Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in everything; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thess. 5:16 – 18 CSB)

Give thanks in everything. Going out on a limb here, but I think God meant more than just a certain Thursday in November.

What if our attitude became one of gratitude? Any chance that thankful heart could pull you up out of a cycle of disappointment you find yourself in? Or maybe it might be enough to help us realize just how much of a difference the incredible grace of God has made in our lives, and it pulls us down just a bit to see from the perspective of those around us.

So, here’s your assignment (wait, there’s homework?). Set aside a few minutes and use your computer, tablet, phone, or wait for it...a couple sheets of paper, and make a list of all the challenges you are facing right now.

Admittedly, it might be a pretty lengthy list considering everything we are in the midst of. But here’s the second part; after that is completed – begin making a list of all of God’s blessings, all that you can be thankful for.

Don’t skip out on the obvious either. A place to live, a bed to sleep in, food to eat, a car (or bike) to drive. We really do need to wake up and smell the coffee as it relates to how much we take for granted. Are you married? Have any children, grandchildren? Any moments that could have been mundane that turned into the miraculous?

If we take the time, we will see how much we truly should be grateful for. Not to mention, God’s saving grace, a life more abundant knowing His Son, and an eternity in His heaven that we get to call Home! That’s enough to move the needle on the attitude gauge of our lives.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rev. Billy Walker is the Lead Pastor of Calvary Church in Southgate, MI, the Vice President of the Billy Walker Evangelistic Association and a leader with the Church Strengthening team for the BSCM. He and his wife Laurie have two daughters and are lifetime residents of the downriver area.

“Lord, I Will Tell Your Name”

by Rob Freshour

HIGHLAND, MI – As is probably true for you and yours, one of the most anticipated and cherished celebrations in our family is Thanksgiving Day. Hours and sometimes days of travel and cooking are dedicated to our annual gathering, and especially to the time we share around the table. Still weeks away from Thanksgiving Day 2021, I am already longing for that sacred time of feast, fellowship, and family.

One moment in particular captures my heart, the moment before we dine when we circle the table with testimonies of gratitude. Those precious few minutes are a tradition that Donna and I long to see kept and treasured by each family member. For those fleeting moments the drawbridges are down, and passage to each person’s heart is happily open to receive the grace, mercy, and love God has so richly showered upon us all. So, I have been asking: “What am I thankful for this year?”

A medical missionary worked among a people with an unusual, but devastating, malady. Seems all the people of that region were afflicted by a disease that caused them to become gradually blind as they matured. The doctor studied the problem, and developed a treatment that stopped the disease. As the people would leave the clinic, assured they were no longer fated to lose their sight, they would express their gratitude saying, “I will tell your name!”

With that refrain, I offer an early draft of my Thanksgiving Day table testimony this year: Because You have forgiven and set me free forever from my sin, “Lord, I will tell Your name!”

Because You have graced me with a godly wife who completes me, a prayer warrior devoted to Your pleasure in my life, our marriage, and Your mission, “Lord, I will tell Your name!”

Because You have given me the greatest opportunity to express what You are like by making me a dad five times, “Lord, I will tell Your name!”

Because You have shown me how great, deep, and full of passion is Your Father-love, and have brought me to wholly new, deeper levels of prayer by my ache for our two prodigal children, “Lord, I will tell Your name!”

Because You have given me a front-row seat in the painful, beautiful work You are doing in our now-divorced, broken, and blossoming daughter’s life, “Lord, I will tell Your name!”

Because You have afforded me the privileged opportunity to show our grandchildren, now growing up in our home, that no matter what trauma they endure, we – their Momma and Bomma and Boppa and You, Lord – will always love them, “Lord, I will tell Your name!”

Because You are never taken aback – not by COVID, not by human insolence and rebellion in all its crass manifestations today or ever, but Your purpose always prevails, “Lord, I will tell Your name!”

Because Your call is irrevocable, Your Plan A (there is no Plan B) is still to invite us with our faith family to partner with You to populate Heaven with our families, friends, neighbors, and the nations, “Lord, I will tell Your name!”

Because You have lavished at least 22,000 new daily mercies on me since my birth, “Lord, I will tell Your name!”

Because we are almost Home, “Lord, I will tell Your name!”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rob Freshour joined the BSCM-Church Growth Ministries Team in 2002. In 2006, he went to pastor one of our Michigan churches. Today, Rob shepherds the Highland Community Church in Highland.

Thankfulness

by Ken Hale

HASTINGS, MI – I once heard someone quote, “Thanklessness breeds bitterness”. That’s an interesting statement. He went on to explain that if we are not grateful for what we have, we will become bitter for what we don’t have.

As I think about the month of November, it always brings a time of reflection and being thankful for all the areas in which God has blessed my life. I have been so blessed by our Creator and all He has done and provided for myself and my lovely bride. So, with that said, I want to share with you my attitude of gratitude and being thankful for what He has allowed to come into my life.

The Apostle Paul said in Philippians 1:3, “I thank my God in all my remembrance of you.” (NASB) – With this verse in mind, I would like to recall moments that have happened in my personal life recently.

This past week I had the privilege of attending a Refocus group at Bambi Lake. All I can say is WOW! How God worked in those sessions and in our meeting was totally radical!

First of all, I am so thankful for the group of men that were there. I saw pastors not afraid to tear down the walls of their lives and share some of the hurts that we go through as pastors and family men. To leave our "Messiah Complex" at the door and not be afraid of what others might think was such a blessing. I am so thankful, that as men would need prayer, we would gather around our brother and lift him up in prayer. There was such a sweet presence of Jehovah.

Second, while I was there, I had a medical issue that required transportation to the E.R. For the folks at Bambi and for Bro. Mike Durbin, I am eternally grateful for you being with me and making sure that everything was alright. It's not easy getting up at 11:30 p.m. to help a pastor brother and then get the call to come at 3:30 a.m. to pick him up. Brother Mike, thank you for your servant heart.

Next, I am so thankful for opportunity I get to pray for our Associational Pastors every Sunday. To be able to pray for these men each week is a blessing. I am appreciative of the fact that these servants of the Most-High God preach the Word each week for His honor and glory.

I am truly thankful for the leadership of the BSCM. Where there has been a need or concern, they have always been there, not only as someone to encourage, but just being a brother in Christ. Thanks guys!

There are so many areas in which I am grateful in how God has blessed but there is one more item of thanks I want to share. Without the love and support of my wonderful wife, Carol, I would not be the man I am today. Proverbs 31:10, "An excellent wife who can find? For her worth is far above jewels." As men in ministry know, serving is just as hard on our spouse as it is on us. My wife is my cheerleader, my coach, my listening ear, but most of all she is my prayer warrior. Yes, I am extremely thankful for my bride and the beautiful times that we share together.

In the end, you could say I am truly blessed of God and give Him thanks for those He has brought into my life to encourage me in the work of the Lord.

May each of you have a glorious time of Thanksgiving this year.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ken is the pastor of Community Baptist Church of Hastings. He also serves as moderator of the South-Central Baptist Association.

Michigan Campers on Mission - November 2021 update

by Rick and Cindy Truesdail

Hello, MI COMers!

Fall Rally is already behind us and the holidays are approaching fast! Do not be so “sale-shopping minded” that you pass up this month to pause each day to be thankful for all that God has blessed you with. “For the LORD *is* good; his mercy *is* everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.” Psalm 100:5. Amen.

We were more than excited to have several newer members of MI COM to come to Bambi Lake Baptist Camp to work and get to know everyone. What a great joy to have young families, retired couples and single adults as a part of our family. We are a well-rounded group of ages and backgrounds, which makes a wonderful fellowship as we share what God has done in our lives as well as what He is doing today.

We were so blessed to have a concert by TJ and Helena Witherell. This young lady has a beautiful voice and as a team, these two people love to minister for the Lord any way they find an open door. Larry and Mary Allen, our newest members, came and he was able to share his testimony of God’s miraculous hand in his medical journey just this year. Jon and Brandi Dyke – and their four lovely daughters – were a joy to work with and see these littler ones participate and enjoy the mission. Terry Simmons joined us here for the first time and worked tirelessly to take care of anyone who would let her do so. And of course, we bumped shoulders all week with SBC MI Disaster Relief Chainsaw Team and got to know many of them better. If you didn’t make this work week, be sure to watch for the Spring Rally 2022 dates and plan to be here then! We could go on and on how wonderful the week was, how blessed we all were, and how thankful we were to meet many needs of Bambi Lake Camp as we worked to clean up and close for the winter. Thanks to everyone who came out!

Sharing Christ as We Go,
Rick and Cindy

MI COM Ladies’ Sewing Event
Saturday, November 13, 2021, at 11:00 am – 4:00 pm
At Heritage Baptist Church, 5199 E Hill Rd, Grand Blanc, MI 48439

Things you can bring:

- Your sewing machine and sewing supplies.
- Cotton, flannel, and fleece materials
- Christmas cotton materials

We will make:

- Youth bags, pillows, Christmas Stockings, ornaments, and non-sew throws for the foster and refugee children at Bethany Christian Services in Grand Rapids.
- Baby burp pads and bibs for mothers who opt to keep their baby at Pregnancy Resource Center in Flint. Lunch will be provided.

2022 COM National Rally June 7-9, 2022 North Florida Fairgrounds Tallahassee, FL

This will be the Golden 50th Anniversary of Campers on Mission. "Renew in 2022" will be the theme. Mark your calendars, start saving your money for travel, and be ready to register when it's available. More information will follow as we get it over the next few months.

Update on Jachin ABC Youth Program

Jachin Baptist Church invited us to an Open House to view the finished project. The house is completed and ready to go to auction at a reasonable price to a family who can enjoy it and help improve this neighborhood.

Article from our MI COM Member Excited to be part of Michigan Campers on Mission family

by TJ and Helena Witherell

We greatly enjoyed our time at the Fall Rally at Bambi Lake Camp, we met so many wonderful brothers and sisters in Christ. One of our favorite things about traveling is all the wonderful people you meet along the way. Helena was able to learn how to sew and what a blessing this was as she has always wanted to learn how to do that. Everyone was so kind as we served, it was a blessing to us to be able to be part of Campers on mission, we are thankful God led us to this group and are excited for what the future may hold.

God Bless
TJ and Helena

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

TJ is a minister, Helena sings. They are fulltime RVers in a 43' tour bus, from the Kalamazoo area. They seek opportunities to minister in churches around Michigan and share the Good News in word and song.

Article from our MI COM Member

Larry Allen: God is so good! I'm here this week with Michigan Campers on Mission helping get the camp ready for winter. I'm so grateful for all of you have prayed for me and those of you who still are. I spent the morning installing new hangers for life jackets at the beach. Also I am thrilled to be getting opportunities to tell God's story.... Having a great time with the Michigan Campers on Mission here at Bambi Lake Campground. Helping get the place ready for winter. Spent the morning removing cattails from lakeshore at the end of the Monster Hill tubing run.

Ruth Farwell: Yes, I'm back at one of my happy places working with Campers on a Mission and Disaster Relief. Monday... Tuesday, finishing touches cleaning and organizing the boat house, getting things ready for winter.

Jerry Pipher: Last week here at Bambi Lake we were blessed with a group from the Southern Baptist Convention Disaster Relief and the Michigan chapter of Campers on Missions. The two groups teamed up and joined the staff here at Bambi to erase a large number of projects on the "Fall clean up" list. These tasks included cleaning the beach and boat house areas, dropping and removing a number of dead / dying trees, winterizing cabins / cottages and the campground, sewing curtains for some of the cabins, laundry and even going to one of the neighboring churches to do some work. One of the other tasks was to feed these fine folks (about 50) during the week. The meals were prepared, served and of course cleaned up with members (who were appreciated more than they will ever know)of the three groups along with myself. Terri, Kim, Gina and Linda were a great help in the kitchen. Thanks again ladies. The one common thing that brings these groups together to serve in whatever manner it might be is Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Not all of the tasks that were completed last week were the most enjoyable to do but they were done with the thought in mind that we were serving Our Lord in hopes that others may have the opportunity to experience the forgiveness, love and grace that Our Lord has shown us through our relationship with Him. Thanks again to Campers on Missions and Disaster Relief.

Note: When volunteer missionaries work for the Lord, it is rewarding and fun! We don't do it for money or fame, but for His glory!

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

I think Campers on Mission is a team sport—well, let's say a team effort. I say this after reading the Book of Nehemiah, where after a little coaxing from the man, the Israelites together said:

“Let us arise and build” (2:18). I like that word *us*, don’t you? It goes right along with *we* and *our*—words representing group action.

And moving along in the chapter we see wonderful phrases repeated over and over again: phrases like *“next to them”* and *“next to him”* and *“after him”*—again, phrases indicating group action with people working together to do something good, specifically, building and repairing the wall around Jerusalem.

And they achieved that amazing goal in only 52 days, baffling all their enemies and naysayers. Why? Because they simply *“had a mind to work”* (4:6). They embraced the task and persevered through every encumbrance.

So, I just want you to know how much I thank God for giving folks like you a mind to work alongside one another to accomplish even little things ...

To the Praise of His Glory,
Chaplain Chip

PRAYER REQUEST & PRAISE REPORT

Prayer Requests

- Pray for Tim and Gayle Jones. Both are hospitalized with Covid and pneumonia. They tested positive and were unable to attend the Fall Rally

Praise Report

- God’s presence was all around us and the Disaster Relief Chainsaw Team at Bambi Lake and we accomplished much to His glory.

“If you point these things out to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished on the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance. That is why we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe.”

1 Timothy, 4:6, 8-10 NIV

If you have a prayer request or a praise report, please share it with us and we will post it on the website and include it in our monthly newsletters.

Send Relief, IMB respond to the Mexico border crisis

by Send Relief and IMB staff

As thousands of families are arriving at the U.S. border with Mexico after fleeing their home countries, many are facing devastating economic crises and violent political unrest.

Because of the current worldwide refugee crisis and global pandemic, it has become more and more difficult for them to find shelter, food and clean water along the border as they eagerly await news about receiving asylum.

The International Mission Board and Send Relief are partnering with the National Baptist Convention of Mexico and local churches near the Southern border of Mexico to help provide food, shelter and showers to thousands of families in Tapachula, Mexico, just north of the border of Guatemala.

As additional needs arise, volunteer opportunities for this location will be posted on [Send Relief's volunteer webpage](#).

Send Relief is also working with the organizations listed below to ensure that refugees have access to essentials and hear the gospel message of Jesus after their grueling journeys:

El Buen Samaritano Migrante

Rooted in [Deuteronomy 10:18](#)'s encouragement to imitate Christ in loving the foreigners among us by giving them food and clothing, El Buen Samaritano Migrante is a nonprofit organization that serves between 150-250 people on the border every single day. In addition to their everyday distributions, staff also rent three homes to families in transit who are awaiting their documentation.

City Church Del Rio

Led by Missions Pastor Shon Young, the border ministry at City Church Del Rio is faithfully serving nearly 100 people a day by providing food, clothes, hygiene kits and the use of a shower trailer to refugee families in need of respite.

Iglesia Bautista Horeb

On a weekly basis, the volunteers from Iglesia Bautista Horeb serve over 600 families through food distributions and senior citizen service projects. Often, these volunteers meet newly arrived families at the bus station as their first point of contact, offering phone calls to family members and prayer over the next steps in their difficult journeys.

El Paso Migrant Center

Launched as a collaborative effort of Baptist churches, the migrant center offers wrap-around services for families in need of physical and spiritual refreshment. Staff offer personalized assistance to help translate paperwork and navigate language barriers in immigration documentation, as well as showers and packages of basic necessities.

If you would like to give to families in need on the border or are interested in serving to help this vulnerable community, you can email sendme@sendrelief.org or visit sendrelief.org for more information.

Few pastors left the pulpit despite increased pressure

By Aaron Earls

NASHVILLE, TN – Pastors faced increased stress during the COVID-19 pandemic, as churches were frequently forced to adapt overnight. More felt their role was overwhelming at times, yet very few pastors decided to actually leave the ministry in recent years.

A new study from Nashville-based Lifeway Research found close to 1% of evangelical and historically Black Protestant senior pastors step away from the pulpit each year—a rate statistically unchanged from a [2015 Lifeway Research study](#).

“COVID-19 was neither a small nor short-lived stressor for pastors,” said Scott McConnell, executive director of Lifeway Research. “Many have speculated that pastors have been opting out of the pastorate as a result. That is not the case. They are remaining faithful to the calling at levels similar to those seen before the pandemic.”

Coming and going

The August-September 2021 study, sponsored by Houston’s First Baptist Church and Dr. Richard Dockins, surveyed more than 1,500 pastors serving in both evangelical and historically Black Protestant churches.

Around 1 in 6 pastors (17%) started at their current church during the pandemic years of 2020-2021. Half of the senior pastors facing the ministry upheaval brought on by COVID-19 were new to their role, as 51% are serving in their first church as senior pastor. More than 1 in 3 pastors (37%) say they were the senior leader of their church 10 years ago. Among those congregations that had a different pastor in 2011, most of the previous pastors are now either retired (30%) or pastoring another church (28%).

In that time frame, some stepped away from the pulpit for a different ministry role (13%) or are working in a non-ministry position (8%), according to the current pastor. Combined, those two groups who leave the pastorate before retirement reveal an annual pastor attrition rate of around 1.5%.

“COVID-19 is not the only pressure pastors face nor is it the most likely reason pastors from a decade ago are no longer pastoring,” said McConnell. “Baby Boomer pastors are reaching retirement age, and while many continue pastoring for years afterward, retirement is still the most common reason a pastor from 2011 is not pastoring a decade later.”

Thinking of their predecessor in cases where that person is working outside the pastorate, current senior pastors are most likely to say the previous pastor left due to a change in calling (32%), church conflict (18%), burnout (13%), being a poor fit with the church (12%), or family issues (10%). Fewer point to a moral or ethical issue (8%), an illness (5%), personal finances (5%), or a lack of preparation (3%).

Regardless of how the previous pastor left, the vast majority of pastors feel confident in their position. Nine in 10 pastors (90%) say they are sure they can stay at their current church as long as they want, including 60% who strongly agree.

Church conflict

While only 15% of pastors a decade ago have left the pastorate and fewer than 1 in 6 pastors say conflict drove that pastor from the pastorate, many pastors have experienced conflict in their church.

Among the pastors surveyed who pastored a different church previously, almost half (47%) say they left their last church because they took it as far as they could. Another third (33%) say their family needed a change. A quarter say there was conflict in the church (25%). More than 1 in 5 points to the church not embracing their approach to pastoral ministry (22%) or having unrealistic expectations of them (21%). Another 18% admit they were not a good fit for the church. Few say they were reassigned (14%) or asked to leave the church (10%).

7 in 10 pastors say they dealt with conflict at their previous church, including 39% who say they experienced a significant personal attack.

Even if conflict didn't cause them to leave their last church, most pastors (69%) say they dealt with some type of conflict there. More than 1 in 3 say they experienced a significant personal attack (39%), had conflict over proposed changes (39%), or were in conflict with lay leaders (38%). More than a quarter ran into disagreements over expectations about the pastor's role (28%) or their leadership style (27%). Fewer experienced conflict over doctrinal differences (12%) or politics (8%).

“Churches are groups of people, and even like-minded people do not always get along,” said McConnell. “It would be naïve to think a church would not experience disagreements. The important thing is whether that church maintains unity and love for each other as they navigate those differences or stoops to personal attacks as many pastors have experienced.” Their previous experience with conflict leads 4 in 5 pastors (80%) to expect they will have to confront it in their current church in the future. As part of this preparation, 9 in 10 say they consistently listen for signs of conflict in their church (90%) and invest in processes and behaviors to prevent it (89%).

Ministry and family stresses

Direct conflict with churchgoers is not the only type of issue pastors face in their ministry. They often feel overworked and overloaded as individuals and worry about the toll their work may take on their family.

Most pastors say they are on-call 24 hours a day (71%) and their role is frequently overwhelming (63%). Half of pastors (50%) say the demands of their job are often greater than they can handle. Many say they feel isolated (38%) and face unrealistic expectations from their church (23%). One in 5 pastors (21%) admit they frequently feel irritated at their church members.

“The impact of the pandemic may be most noticeable in pastors’ increased agreement that the role of being a pastor is frequently overwhelming, which jumped from 54% in 2015 to 63% today,” said McConnell. “But there has also been a shift in how some pastors think about their work. Fewer pastors agree they must be ‘on-call’ 24 hours a day, declining from 84% to 71%. Perhaps even more telling, the majority of pastors (51%) strongly agreed with this expectation in 2015, while only a third (34%) strongly feel this obligation today.”\

Pastors are more likely today than in 2015 to say their role is frequently overwhelming (63% to 54%) but less likely to say they must be "on-call" 24 hours a day (84% to 71%).

Almost all evangelical and Black Protestant pastors are married (95%), and their role as spouse, and often parent, has the potential to conflict with their role as church leader. Most, however, feel that serving in vocational ministry has been good for their family.

More than 9 in 10 pastors say their spouse is very satisfied with their marriage (96%) and enthusiastic about life in ministry together (91%). A similar percentage (94%) consistently protect time with their family. Most pastors have been able to take a week’s vacation with their family last year (83%) and plan monthly date nights with their spouse (66%). As a result, few say their work keeps them from spending time with their family (31%), and even fewer feel their family resents the demands of pastoral ministry (19%).

Still, 2 in 5 pastors say they are often concerned about their family’s financial security.

It is more common for a pastor to be worried about their own finances than to report declines in giving at their church. — @smcconn

“Fewer pastors are concerned about their family’s financial security—41% today compared to 53% in 2015,” said McConnell. “This decrease in the number of pastors stressed over their personal finances may be due to increased generosity in their church or financial stimulus checks from the government. It is still more common for a pastor to be worried about their own finances than to report declines in giving at their church.”

Pastoral encouragement

While families may provide some added stress and responsibilities for pastors, they are also one of the sources of encouragement and support. They are also a channel through which a congregation can care for their pastor. Nine in 10 pastors (90%) say their family receives genuine encouragement from their church.

Close to 9 in 10 (86%) feel their church gives them the freedom to say no when faced with unrealistic expectations. While few say their church has a plan for the pastor to periodically receive a sabbatical (32%), almost 9 in 10 say they have a day to unplug from ministerial work and have a day of rest at least once a week (86%).

“The difficult moments and seasons pastors face require ongoing investment in their spiritual, physical and mental well-being.” — @smcconn

Pastors are also leaning on others for support and encouragement. Most say at least once a month they openly share their struggles with their spouse (82%), a close friend (68%), or another pastor (66%). Others say they are able to speak with lay leaders in the church (42%), a mentor (40%), another staff member (35%), a Bible study group in their church (23%), or a counselor (9%).

“The difficult moments and seasons pastors face require ongoing investment in their spiritual, physical and mental well-being,” said McConnell. “Most pastors and churches have practices that help the pastor in these ways, but there are often missed opportunities to encourage, build up and avoid misunderstandings.”

For more information, view the [full report](#) and the [2021-2015 comparison report](#).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aaron Earls is senior writer/editor of LifewayResearch.com.

Methodology

The study was sponsored by Houston’s First Baptist Church and Richard Dockins, MD. The mixed mode survey of 1,576 evangelical and Black Protestant pastors was conducted Aug. 17–Sept. 15, 2021, using both phone and online interviews. Phone: The calling list was a random

sample, stratified by church membership, drawn from a list of all churches in all evangelical and Black Protestant religious traditions except Southern Baptists. Online: The email list was a random sample drawn from all Southern Baptist congregations with an email address. Invitations were emailed to the pastor by Lifeway Research followed by one reminder. Each survey was completed by the senior pastor, minister, or priest at the church contacted.

The completed sample is 1,576 surveys (1,000 phone, 576 online). Responses were weighted by region, church size and denominational group to more accurately reflect the population. The sample provides 95% confidence that the sampling error does not exceed plus or minus 2.7%. This margin of error accounts for the effect of weighting. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups. Comparisons are made to a phone survey of 1,500 evangelical and Black Protestant pastors conducted by Lifeway Research March 5-18, 2015. The [2015 Pastor Protection study](#) was sponsored by the North American Mission Board and Richard Dockins, MD.

First-Person: Southern Baptists have been here before

by Tony Wolfe

GRAPEVINE, TX – More times than I can count over the past several weeks, I’ve heard talk of frustration and disappointment from my SBC brothers and sisters. Pastors, lay leaders, church members, denominational employees. “In all my years, I have never seen it as bad as this,” one seasoned pastor lamented.

In no way would I pretend to minimize the significance of this delicate hour. Our cooperative mission hangs on the threads of a worn fabric. This fabric has been donned by many a Southern Baptist generation, teased and tried through the decades.

Never has it been as tightly pulled at the seams as it is today. Or has it?

In 1929, the messenger-elected Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, prayed, deliberated and contentiously maneuvered through one of the most trying seasons of denominational life. In the SBC Annual, they reflected with humility and somberness:

“The new Board had but little more than organized and started out with its year’s work when it found itself face to face with a colossal disaster... if in anything we have failed, we earnestly hope that our brethren will be as charitable in their judgment of us as they would wish us to have been to them, if they had been burdened with the responsibility which we have had to carry through this eventful year.”^[1]

The trustees faced the scandalous 1928 defalcation by C.S. Carnes, who embezzled more than \$900,000 from the Cooperative Program. It was a public relations nightmare that threatened the viability of the entire Convention's ongoing cooperative ministry.

"We did our best to serve in this critical hour," they continued. "Furthermore, if we are wise, we will capitalize this disaster, and profit by all the mistakes that led up to it, in such a way as to make our future program more thoroughly intelligent and efficient."

Leaders left office.

Friendships were severed.

Finances were dreadful.

Distrust was high.

Morale was low.

The future was unclear.

For the next 10 years Southern Baptists prayed fervently, gave sacrificially, and gathered hopefully. In the late 1930s, after a decade of continued cooperation through the most disastrous of circumstances, the Holy Spirit saw fit to breathe on the denomination again: the '40s and '50s saw the greatest evangelistic growth the Convention had ever known.

Great Commission Baptists, we have been here before. Not in the exact same scenario, of course, but in the same state of mind: divided, distrusted, disheartened.

God does not, and never did, need this Convention of churches to accomplish His Great Commission. Despite ourselves, He saw fit to invite us into His plan for worldwide Gospel advance. He saw fit to breathe on our method of missiological cooperation so that the nations might know and worship the one true God through repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ.

Our grandfathers and grandmothers leaned on these characteristics during their season of refinement and revision. They are what we need to get us through.

Prayer

We must regain a posture of prayerful humility before God as individuals, as churches, and as a Convention. No one has the answers for the unique trials we face in this season. There are no experts. No proven strategies. No methodological assurances. We are at our best, as we always have been, when we are a praying people.

Humility

Our hearts are stained with sin and pride. The world watches and Satan laughs while we are filled with anger, gossip, manipulation, division, unforgiveness, arrogance, and selfish pride. Social media is a tool we could have used for the advancement of the Gospel. Instead, we have used it for the tearing down of one another. Repentance is in order. God will not despise a broken and contrite spirit. Rather, He will resist the proud and give grace to the humble.

Leadership

In this season we need servant-hearted leading voices who are bridge-builders and peacemakers – such are blessed of God and will be called His sons. Those denominational servants who excelled in their calling have always been those who lived with integrity while undergirding the work of the churches with diligence. They build bridges. They keep peace with an attitude of gratitude that God would consider them worthy in Christ to descend to a denominational office, washing the feet of Christ's Bride across tens of thousands of her local expressions.

Time

To move through conflict and turmoil toward an even brighter day, we must afford each other, and our Convention as a whole, the grace of time. Southern Baptists have made some reprehensible mistakes through the decades. However, given the grace of time, the prayer and humility of the saints, and the long-suffering of servant-hearted leaders, God has seen fit to restore and reignite our Great Commission cooperation again and again. What is tangled takes time to straighten. What is broken takes time to repair. What is divided takes time to heal.

Sacrifice

“We must not lose the things we have already wrought through the mercies and power of God... we must do our best to bring them to a full reward,” wrote L.R. Scarborough, the great champion of Southern Baptist denominational cooperation. He urged the Convention in 1925 to faithfully and sacrificially give toward the missional endeavors to which they had already committed themselves. Missionaries were promised salaries. Seminary students were promised scholarships. Churches were promised assistance. Humanitarian organizations were promised funding.

Even through many years of recovery after the Carnes scandal, Scarborough remained a steady voice for the cooperative funding that undergirded their missional strategy. The First-Century Macedonian churches call to us still with a reminder that when God's people are in their most desperate hours, they are in their most sacrificial disposition.

Cooperation

The Baptist Faith and Message 2000 calls cooperation a “spiritual harmony” by which the churches endeavor to secure “the great objects of the Kingdom of God.” [2]

Now looking back across the bridge of time, let us agree with our brothers and sisters of a previous generation: “If we are wise, we will capitalize this disaster, and profit by all the mistakes that led up to it, in such a way as to make our future program more thoroughly intelligent and efficient.”

Let’s follow their lead. Let’s pray fervently, give sacrificially, and gather hopefully while we work to become the Convention God intends us to be.

[1] *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention Nineteen-Hundred and Twenty-Nine*, accessed October 22, 2021 (Nashville: Southern Baptist Convention, http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1929.pdf), 269-270.

[2] *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, accessed October 22, 2021 (Nashville: Southern Baptist Convention, <https://bfm.sbc.net/bfm2000/#xiv-cooperation>).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tony Wolfe is associate executive director of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention.

To view the corresponding images and links that accompany these stories or to read past stories and issues of the Baptist Beacon, visit BaptistBeacon.net.

The Baptist Beacon is the official newsjournal of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM.org), in association with the Southern Baptist Convention. The mission of the Baptist Beacon is to communicate with Michigan Baptists in our shared mission of punching holes in the darkness through starting, strengthening, and sending churches.

Editor: Tim Patterson - tim@bscm.org

Managing Editor: OneMissionTV, LLC - baptistbeacon@bscm.org