

COLUMNS

Moving Forward

By Tim Patterson

I have discovered that with any journey it's important to know where you have been in order to understand and truly enjoy where you're going. The fact is, if you don't know where you've been, it is very difficult to know where you are and the progress you have made along the way.

Over many years Sabrina and I have had the privilege of traveling across the United States and literally around the world. During our travels, it has been Sabrina's habit to photograph and visually record what we have done and where we have been. The reason being is that we've discovered, it's not so much the destination that is to be celebrated as is the journey itself. I cannot tell you the number of times that I have pulled up digital files of Sabrina's photographs of our trips and/or possibly one of her photograph albums, and just reminisced about the wonderful experiences that we've had. Each picture takes me back to that exact time and place. It amazes me how one picture can bring back so many emotions, and even the very smells of that very location and time.

As we look forward to a new year here at the Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM), it's important for us to know where we have been so that we can truly understand where we are going. This past year has been filled with some great events and wonderful experiences for many of our leaders, churches and pastors here in this great state of Michigan. In January, our state board officially called Michael Schatz and wife, Jackie, to be the new directors at our conference and retreat center at Bambi Lake. Mick began his duties on March 5, and has been working diligently to make a difference at Bambi Lake like never before. I encourage you to check out what's been going on up there over the last few months. Later in the year, we had Dr. Paige Patterson and Dr. David Allen from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary come and lead him an expository preaching conference for us. It was one of the best conferences and training that we have been able to have here in the state for some time. Pastors across the state told me how much they appreciated it, and how God bless them through this event.

As you know, evangelism has been on our heart this year and we have provided numerous opportunities to help prepare our pastors and leaders to do a better job at evangelization. Many revivals, evangelistic events and evangelism training, both personal and corporate have taken place. One of the seminal events that took place this past year was the retirement of our long tenured and well loved employee's, Anne Glissman and Yolanda Chapa. These dear ladies have been the bedrock of our convention for many years and an ever-present stability during some trying transitional times. They are truly missed, but their legacy lives on.

Encouragement, development and training to help strengthen churches have been at the forefront of our efforts as well. One of those events that stand out is our annual Church Equipping Conference. Practitioners from all across our country came here to Michigan

to help us do a better job in our respective areas of ministry. It is one of the finest conferences you will find anywhere. This has been a wonderful year and our future is bright.

As we move into 2018 we will be focusing on the theme, "The Power of One." The power of one is manifested in the power to change lives, communities, churches and the world. One person sharing the Gospel has the unlimited power of the Father behind every word they speak. One person giving of their resources has the potential to impact thousands. One pastor faithfully preaching the Word can be the very hand of God in making an eternal difference in his church and around the world. One person volunteering to help others who have been impacted by disasters can bring hope in the midst of despair. One person loving the hard to love can open doors that have been closed for decades. One person praying can _____, (fill in the blank).

The power of one, when joined with the power of another, results in an exponential and ever expanding force that is unlimited in potential. May the power of one be evident in our midst as we continue to punch holes in the darkness of Michigan.

About the author: Tim Patterson is the Executive Director for the Baptist State Convention of Michigan.

One Constant Prayer

by Tony Lynn

I served 13 years overseas as an international missionary. During that time, I learned to rely more on prayer. As missionaries, my wife and I, analyzed, planned, created action plans; but we did those things only after we prayed. Obstacles would fall down after we petitioned the Father. Opportunities arose that were simply not there, days earlier. Those who once opposed us, finally embraced us. Prayer has proven, for us, to be a powerful, underused practice in Christian ministry.

Here in Michigan, I see similar miracles happening; but more must be done rapidly if we are going to shatter the spiritual darkness with God's light. Jesus said, "Let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father," Matthew 5:16 (NLT). If each one of us did one thing each day to dispel the darkness for Christ, our state would radically change. Prayer!

Below are five areas of our state in which your prayers could make a big difference. Imagine if we prayed for each of these areas, one day each week, every week. Imagine the impact on our prayer lives as God's focus falling on a particular area of our state each workday became reality. The results would be inspiring. We want to see churches planted in rural areas, small towns, suburban sites, large cities, and the urban centers of the state. With our intense, united prayers they will make the change we need in 2018.

The affluence and beauty of our state should not keep us from seeing the lost spiritual condition of millions. An estimated two-thirds of 9.9 million people may not know the Lord Jesus Christ. I love the hope found in Isaiah 35:5 when God moves throughout a

territory. It says, "And when he comes, he will open the eyes of the blind and unplug the ears of the deaf." Are you like me and crave to see that happen in our lifetime?

If you're willing, please join me in asking the Father for:

1. Church planters to rise up to create new churches
2. Launch teams of adults to work alongside the planters
3. Church plants to give birth and guidance to newer church plants
4. Mature, existing churches to spread the Gospel through church planting

I would love to see the Lord create new church plants in the following areas:

Monday - Marquette County

From the Northern Lights to culinary pleasures there is something for everyone. Northern Michigan University, with 9,000 students and 100 academic programs, hosts cultural and sporting events year round. The university is a training center for Olympic athletes. A unique structure called the Superior Dome is the world's largest wooden dome. The city of Marquette's population is approximately 22,000 people with over 67,000 throughout the county due to a 4% growth rate in recent years. There are 77 waterfalls in the county. Inside or outside, the area is like a gemstone in the crown of the Upper Peninsula.

Christ said in Mark 16:15-16, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone. Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who refused to believe will be condemned."

Tuesday - Grand Traverse County

Over 90,000 people call this area and the city of Traverse City home. The greater metropolitan area boasts almost 150,000 residents. The shoreline along Lake Michigan is one of the favorite vacation spots of the state's residents. Many are retiring to the area after years of employment down state. Amusing events or places such as the National Cherry Festival and the Victorian City Opera add style and moments of fun for everyone. People can climb the sand dunes, sail the bay, fish the streams, or play one of the 16 golf courses in the region.

Christ posed one of the most important questions ever uttered in history. In Mark 8:36 (NLT) Jesus asked, "What do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul?"

Wednesday - Ottawa & Kent Counties

The two counties, with outstanding growth rates in Michigan, are identified with the metropolitan area of Grand Rapids and a population of over one million people, making it the second largest city in Michigan. The family atmosphere in the region is remarkable. The number of universities and colleges will overwhelm anyone. The variety of industries and businesses in the area keep people employed and content. Local governments and businesses have created a utopia for their residents. The many year-round, downtown activities are the results of an outstanding tourism strategy. Many are continually drawn to this area of the state with its stronger and diverse economic base.

1 Corinthians 9:22 was written by one of the boldest church planters in history. Paul described in simple words how he reaches a diverse population when he said, “Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some,” (NLT).

Thursday - Ingham County

The state capital of Lansing is located in this county. The metropolitan area of this area has over 464,000 residents with the city of Lansing showing over 114,000 within the city limits. Michigan State University reports over 50,000 students are enrolled at the school. The region is filled with communities of various types: charming rural areas, distinctive small towns, bustling suburbs, and a redevelopment of downtown Lansing.

When we survey the center of legislation we might think, “What’s the use?” But I’m reminded of the words of a prophet in Zechariah 4:6 who learned how God achieves his desires, “It is not by force nor by strength, but by my Spirit,” (NLT).

Friday - Greater Detroit: Oakland, Macomb, & Wayne Counties

This region has a population of 4 million people comprised of residents from Oakland, Macomb, and Wayne counties. Almost half of the state’s population lives in this metro area. All of the major professional sports teams play in Detroit. Major industries and research facilities are scattered throughout the region. The world headquarters of Chrysler, Ford, and General Motors are still icons of endurance in the area. While many outside this area view Greater Detroit as one large metropolitan mystery, locals identify themselves more by their relationships and workday pathways. True Detroiters will boast about their urban connections because they’re proud of the people’s resilience and the renaissance of their community. Those in the surrounding areas will quickly identify where they reside by saying, “I live in Warren.” Or “I’m from Pontiac.” Or “I work in Detroit but I live in Dearborn.” Regardless of their mailing address, the people are making the most out of the relationships and resources in this world-class city.

Motown needs to hear the Psalmist say once again loud and clear, “Unless the Lord protects a city, guarding it with sentries will do no good,” Psalm 127:1 (NLT)

Be forewarned, the power of a year-long prayer vigil, over the state, might frighten us as God releases His Spirit. It would be something larger and more powerful than we could control; but isn’t that what we want? Let’s ask the Lord to do more than He has ever done so that others become devoted followers of Christ.

About the author: Tony 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.

Mi-Moment and the Mackinac Bridge

By: Mike Durbin

Two of the largest freshwater lakes in the world separate the Upper and Lower Peninsulas of Michigan. We are the only state in the nation to have two peninsulas completely disconnected from each other. It is impossible to get from one peninsula to the other by land from anywhere in the state. Before the Mackinac Bridge was built, traffic could back up for 16 miles and people waited as long as 18 hours for a ferry to take them from one side to the other.

The Mackinac Bridge united Michigan and is an iconic image known around the world. At the time, the Mighty Mac was built, it was the longest suspension bridge in the world. Contractors brought together the largest collection of maritime construction equipment ever assembled in peacetime to build the bridge. It was a massive four-year construction project that makes it possible for approximately 11,000 vehicles a day to cross from one side to the other in minutes.

As you approach the Straits of Mackinac, the majestic towers of the Mighty Mac can be seen from every direction. They rise 552 feet above the water and descend 210 feet into the depths below. As massive as the bridge looks above the water, 75% of it lies under the waves. It has been described as a “man-made mountain.” One of the most fascinating features of the Mackinac Bridge is its flexibility. It moves with the wind and changes in temperature. A strong wind can move the bridge up to 35 feet to the east or west. The temperature can lift it up or down by 10 feet and the towers can move toward each other by up to 15 feet. It’s flexible, but strong enough to withstand the waves, ice, and wind of the harshest Michigan winter.

The Mackinac Bridge united the divided state of Michigan.

This unique Michigan reality is a powerful illustration of the Gospel. The separation between the Upper and Lower Peninsulas dramatically illustrates the Biblical truth that our sins have separated us from God. It is as though God is on one peninsula and man is on the other. The two are separated from each other by our sin. The Apostle Paul captures the reality of what sin does to us and the hope of the Gospel in Romans 6:23, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Wages, sin, and death paint a dramatically different picture than gift, God, and eternal life. The difference between living in one reality or the other is Jesus Christ and our relationship to Him. The free gift of God is His Son Jesus. Jesus dies on the cross, is buried, and rises again to reconcile us to God. He is the bridge that unites us with God. He makes eternal life possible when we turn from our sin and place our trust in Him as Savior and Lord.

The cross pales physically in size to the Mackinac Bridge, but there is no comparison to the scope of what Jesus does on the cross. (See the full illustration on the following page.) There are limits to how far the Mackinac Bridge can move up and down, side to side, and inward, but there are no limits to what Jesus does through His death, burial,

and resurrection. He descends from the heights of heaven to become Immanuel - God with us. His grace reaches beyond our greatest failures, and He leans in so close that He is an ever-present help in time of trouble. Receiving Him is, and forever will be, MI greatest moment!

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.

Difference Makers

By Mick Schatz

This is a year of change and fresh vision for Bambi Lake Retreat and Conference Center. With 240 acres of land, much of which is wooded and rustic, located in the beautiful setting of northern Michigan on the I-75 corridor, there is amazing potential for expansion and growth of our existing facilities. Thanks to the Francis Brown State Mission Offering being designated solely for Bambi Lake, the camp's potential and expansion can now begin to be truly realized. Our vision is great, but our God is greater!

The renovation and expansion of Bambi Lake will focus on three areas: people, programs and property. All three of these areas integrate and flow together so when we improve one area we are improving all three. Over the last nine months much progress has already been achieved in each of these areas. Bambi Lake strives to intentionally encourage, disciple and empower Christians and non-Christians of all ages in their relationship with Jesus. Whether it's their first time to experience Jesus, the living Gospel, or if they have been a believer for years, Bambi Lake can play a special role in one's journey with Christ. As Bambi Lake continues to expand we are excited to engage more and more people with the gospel. With every retreat or summer camp we are privileged to witness the Holy Spirit work in the lives of young and old, boys and girls, men and women. We are excited to see campers answer the call to serve in ministry. God loves people and so does Bambi! Helping people have a "difference making" moment with Jesus Christ is the motivation behind everything we do at Bambi Lake. This is why the Francis Brown State Mission Offering means so much - it gives us the much-needed resources to build upon the heritage Bambi Lake already has as a place where you can experience God.

As we endeavor to encourage, disciple, and empower our attendees over this next year, we are exploring new programming options for our retreats and summer camps. We are also adding in some exciting one and two-day events to the calendar. Striving to provide high quality, relevant speakers and ministry equipping events, we are inviting The Smalley Institute, Ken Freeman, and Dr. Paige Patterson to be with us in 2018. Bambi will be hosting two gospel music weekends featuring "The Martins" and "Karen Peck and New River" along with other regional gospel groups. The funding provided by the State Offering will allow us to construct a stage and amphitheater so Bambi can host concerts and big outdoor events. To enhance our summer camps, we are adding activities such

as paintball, archery and archery tag. A forty-foot water slide and water trampoline will be welcomed sites to the lakefront by campers, creating unforgettable summer camp memories. The tremendous variety of retreats and camps we offer at Bambi Lake truly provides something for everyone of all ages.

Improving and upgrading the landscaping and facilities at Bambi Lake are essential to our vision and mission. We are committed to Bambi Lake being well-maintained, clean and refreshing. Minor repairs and paint have already improved the exterior look of the lodge. While there are still some upgrades needed on the exterior one major area we hope to address inside the lodge is the flooring. The first floor still has some of the original carpet. We are excited about the possibility of installing new flooring in the lodge to give it a fresh, new look. One of our guest rooms has been upgraded already and serves as a template for how we want to enhance and renovate the rest of the guest rooms. All of the chalets and cabins need a fresh coat of paint on the exterior, as well as complete renovating on the interior. In the Wilson Building, the dining room and worship center need new flooring and a fresh coat of paint. The gym needs a heating solution to make it usable in all seasons for indoor basketball, volleyball, field hockey, soccer, etc. This will expand the number of activities available for retreats and camps when the weather is not conducive to outdoor play. Funding from the Francis Brown State Offering will help us in remodeling, repairing and expanding the usability of our facilities.

Landscaping upgrades are already in process. People who have come on the camp in recent months have noted many improvements and we are just getting started. Overgrown shrubs have been removed. Low maintenance shrubs, flowering shrubs and trees, perennial plants that are suited to the conditions at Bambi will be added in 2018. More clearly defined roads and driveways are also part of our landscape vision. State Mission Offering funds will be used to purchase new, maintenance free signs that show ½ mile from the entrance on Old 76 coming from the east or west. If you are approaching the back entrance, we hope to add a sign there to tell you to stay on the paved road and follow it to Old 76 and then turn right to the camp.

As if that weren't enough, another improvement we are looking forward to adding is in our campground facility. It is essential that all of our sites are sufficient to accommodate large motor homes or small pop-up campers. We also have plans to accommodate families and groups who love to camp, but don't have a camper and don't like tents. We are planning to build cottages that provide electricity and sleep four to six comfortably. A remodeled bathhouse will be essential to provide bathroom and bathing facilities.

Our vision is large: More buildings with more beds for more people to come. More rooms equipped for couples for married/family events. More activities to do when people are here. Maybe even a boardwalk by the beach with water features. Through the generous giving of Michigan Southern Baptists to the Francis Brown State Mission Offering many of these plans and renovations will become reality. Through the power of the Holy Spirit the generous giving of Michigan Southern Baptists will impact present and future generations to come. Amen!

About the author: Mick Schatz arrived in 2017 to serve on the staff of the BSCM as the State Director of Spiritual Enrichment and Retreats. He spends the majority of his time at Bambi Lake, where he and wife, Jackie, along with their three children reside.

STARTING

One Friendship

by Tony Lynn

For most of their early lives, only thirty miles of Michigan roadways separated Travis Whittaker and Shea Prisk from one another. Travis Whittaker grew up in South Lyon. Shea Prisk grew up in Highland. The two of them did not know one another until 2009 when their first meeting took place at a conference in Ohio. The two of them began to collaborate on some projects. Their initial interactions were casual yet intermittent. The two men are somewhat different from one another.

Travis has a smooth, calm voice. He appears dressed to go on stage. He inquisitively visits with people asking questions about their life. It's no surprise because in his earliest ventures Travis was part of a band called Station2. He and his band were performing national and international concerts before God redefined Travis' calling to become a church planter in Michigan along with his growing family.

Shea is quick and witty in his conversations. He seems most comfortable in caps, t-shirts, and jeans. There is an intensity in Shea that explains why he made a great DJ and emcee for big events in his early years. Shea describes himself as a troublemaker back in his youth. Yet, today his boldness and sales experience has provided well for his young family.

Though only thirty miles separated these men most of their lives, it's obvious that God intentionally brought them together in 2009 to create an unstoppable divine initiative. One day, Shea took it upon himself to call Travis. The two men teased one another as they often did until Travis with a more serious tone explained to Shea that his phone call was no accident. Travis shared his call to start a new church and he asked Shea to join him on the adventure. As a result, just over two years ago, Travis and Shea started Mile City Church in Livonia, MI.

Everyone remembers the launch day when Shea and his wife were introduced to the members of Mile City Church. They were expecting their first child. Travis said something like this to the congregation, "Shea and Andrea are expecting their first baby!" Everyone busted out in applause thinking that was the big announcement. Travis continued, "They're pregnant and we're planting pregnant as a church. Shea and Andrea are going to be the first leaders of the first church plant out of Mile City!" Again, the crowd clapped but even louder in response to this bold assertion. Many throughout the gathering that epic morning probably asked, "We're not only starting a new church but we are already starting another church?"

Mile City's two-year growth has been shocking! Many have come to know Christ. Baptisms occur often. Home groups have created deep friendships. People are bringing friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers to church. The members of the church have given back financially to the Cooperative Program and other special offerings setting records through their generosity.

While Mile City continues on its increasing trajectory, Shea has stepped out into faith to start a new church in Grand Blanc, MI. Its name is Grumlaw Church. This year, the church will boldly launch their initial services at the Genesys Athletic Club in Grand Blanc, MI. Initially, more than 50 adults have committed to be part of the launch team. Other churches have come alongside the effort sponsoring the new church plant in practical and meaningful ways.

To top it off, Travis announced late in 2017 that one of Mile City's newest undertakings in 2018 will be a new church start in Lyon Township, MI. Travis will preach in two locations in two church plants while Shea and his launch team create a new church in Grand Blanc.

That is the power of one. Within three years, there will be three new church plants coming from one friendship that was started in 2009: Livonia, Grand Blanc, and Lyon Township.

About the author: Tony 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.

One New Beginning

by Tony Lynn

When you meet Garth Leno you just like him. His conversations are purposeful. He connects warmly with people and he makes others feel comfortable in his presence. His appearance is crisp. Even wearing jeans and casual shirts, he looks dressed up. If the Lord had not called him to the ministry decades ago, Garth most likely would have become a successful executive with a fat retirement account; but that is not his story and that has never been his purpose.

In 2013 Garth was bouncing back from a devastating experience. The non-Southern Baptist church Garth had led for ten years in Windsor, Ontario, Canada rejected his leadership after a fruitful ministry. Garth had taken a public stand against denominational doctrinal drift, and during his three-month sabbatical in 2013 some people endeavored to end his ministry as the senior pastor. He was terminated "without cause" in August 2013.

In the aftermath of that shattering setback, a remnant from that earlier congregation gathered in Garth and Patty's home for Bible study, fellowship, and prayer. No one could have foreseen what God was going to accomplish over the next four years. Consistent growth caused the group to move from that home, to a meeting room at a local golf

course, to a banquet hall, to a remodeled warehouse, and now to a 12,000 square foot facility on 6.2 acres of land.

Equally inspiring, during these past two years Garth and the new congregation lovingly known as “The Gathering” sponsored the start of two new church plants in Ontario, Canada. One church plant is located in Sarnia, Ontario and the other is in Goderich, Ontario.

The church in some ways reflects the border city of Windsor and the surrounding county of Essex. Diversity is more common than most churches. There are young adults passionately pursuing careers serving alongside retirees who have more time to devote to serving the Lord through the church. There are church members from China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Mexico, S. Africa, Europe, and North America volunteering in many roles in the busy church. Yet, despite their diversity, everyone focuses on the mission of bringing glory to God through lives changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Gathering’s intentionality and pursuit to do everything with excellence draws more and more people to join them each month.

How did Michigan Baptists share in all of this? One day, Garth met Wayne Parker, the North American Mission Board’s Send City Missionary, at a regional meeting. Wayne is also the lead pastor at Merriman Road Baptist Church, Garden City, MI. It was through the friendship that developed between these two men that every mission resource of the Southern Baptist Convention was extended to Garth and The Gathering. The weekly contributions from churches to the Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM) supplied important resources for the new church start during its early days.

As a result, people have come to know Christ. Many have been baptized. Members in the church have found vibrant ways to serve God corporately as a congregation, and personally in their daily lives. Furthermore, in order to express their gratitude to those who believed in them during their early years, The Gathering has been overwhelmingly generous when it comes to contributions to the Cooperative Program and the special annual offerings. Some recall hearing Garth say something like, “How can we do otherwise? All of you came alongside us when we needed encouragement. We want to do likewise for others.” That is the power of one. One new beginning for Garth and The Gathering is giving life to more new beginnings.

About the author: Tony 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.

SEND Detroit: Our Mission

By Wayne Parker

We must constantly remind ourselves that Jesus is on the throne and that He rules and reigns today. I say this because, everything around us reports on the activity of the enemy. Every time you turn on the TV or read the paper you are confronted with the reminder that Satan is alive and at work. If you listen to Christians talk among themselves, you could quickly be led to believe that we are on the losing team. Friends, that is a lie from Hell. God is at work in our day and in the state of Michigan and we need to point one another to His activity.

During the Baptist State Convention meeting in 2014, we were given the opportunity to invite Michigan Baptists to join us in Detroit, praying that, “the Lord of the Harvest would send out laborers into the harvest,” (Luke 10:2). In that meeting we reported the work of the Send Detroit Strategy Team and the recognition of 72 neighborhoods that we believed needed a Gospel-centered New Testament church. That revelation begged the question, “Where are we going to find all those church planters?” Our only strategy was prayer.

I am thrilled to report that God has been answering your prayers. We have seen 23 launches and are working with another 30 men that are at different levels of preparation for the launching of new churches. But that is not all. Of these 53 men that God has raised up, 48 are from here. Several have launched churches in their home town and some in the High School they attended. This is evidence that God is moving among us. He is raising up laborers from the harvest!

In September, we saw three new church launches in the Send Detroit area. Alin Patularu launched Life-giver Church in Windsor on September 24th at the Forest Glade Arena. Here is a couple that literally launched pregnant. Alin and his wife, Shelly, recently announced that they are expecting twins next spring. On September 17th, City Church launched under the leadership of Corey Parker at Ypsilanti high school with approximately 300 in attendance. Another plant, Journey Church, launched in Mount Clemens. This new church is meeting in the historic Emerald Theater and had 145 in attendance as they opened their doors to the city.

As we celebrate these new beginnings, please understand that we cannot afford to become complacent. God’s kingdom is advancing. We can see the movement of His hand, but our enemy has not given up nor is he asleep. Therefore, we need to be all the more diligent in our prayers. These church planters are under attack. They need our encouragement and our support. If you could hear directly from them, you would be encouraged by story after story of life change, salvation, transformation as entire families who have been restored by the life-giving power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But, you would also hear about the hardships they are facing. Often these challenges are simply attacks from the evil one and they need our prayers.

We also ask for continued prayer because we know that the task is not complete. We need to persistently pray that God will raise up more laborers for the harvest. We must continue to tell the story of how God is at work. At the same time, we are reminded that

Jesus is ruling from His Throne today. He may not need us, but wants us to be involved, serving Him, and crying out for the lost and dying all around us.

About the author: Wayne Parker grew up in metro Detroit. He graduated from Eastern Michigan University with a degree in education and received his Master of Divinity degree from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. Parker now serves as the senior pastor for Merriman Road Baptist Church in Garden City, an inner-ring suburb of Detroit. Wayne and his wife Cindy have five children. Together they enjoy skiing, hiking, hunting and fishing.

STRENGTHENING

Healthy Pastors, Healthy Churches

By: Mark Dance

Pastors not only want to succeed at church and home, we are required to. Is there any profession on this planet besides ours that requires you to win at work and home? Not that I am aware of.

Having been a pastor and husband for thirty years, I realize the challenges that come with the territory and enjoy helping pastors win through our initiatives at LifeWay Pastors. You are blessed to belong to a state convention who also understands what is at stake. Last April, the Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM) and LifeWay co-hosted two Pastor Date Nights in metro Lansing and Detroit for about 80 couples. My wife, Janet, and I moderated a panel discussion with Executive Director Tim and Sabrina Patterson, and Southgate pastor Billy and Laurie Walker. Those date nights typically involve a meal or dessert and a conversational Q&A centered around helping pastors win at home and church. 2018 event dates are:

July 15-16 The Shack Lodge Inn & Hotel <http://shackcountryinn.com>

July 17-18 Bavarian Inn Lodge <https://bavarianinn.com>

July 19-20 The Kensington Hotel <http://www.kcourtaa.com>

I am encouraged with how Michigan Baptists are taking pastoral health seriously. The BSCM website and events have been designed to equip pastors to lead their lives, homes, and ministries in a biblically intentional way. When state director of evangelism Mike Durbin asked Janet and me to speak at their marriage conferences this coming July, we jumped at the opportunity. These events will be regional, which will make it easier for you to attend and build your ministry marriage. Stay tuned for more details, and when they come, please save the date and inform your spouse.

LifeWay just released a groundbreaking study in September about the lives of Protestant pastors' spouses. "The representative study of 720 spouses found their lives are

complicated and filled with blessing and stresses,” said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research.

Among the findings:

- 93 percent believe their spouse is a good fit for the present church.
- 90 percent think ministry has had a positive effect on their family.
- 85 percent say, “The church we serve takes good care of us.”
- 83 percent enjoy their ministry work.
- 79 percent are satisfied with their role in ministry.

Still, there are many challenges. Conflict in a church and a sense of loneliness are commonplace. Among the issues:

- 72 percent say their spouse has experienced resistance in the church.
- 69 percent say they have few people they can confide in.
- 68 percent worry about having enough money for retirement.
- 59 percent say church commitments limit family time.
- 49 percent say, “If I were honest at church about my prayer needs, they would just become gossip.”

Why is investing in your marriage so important to your ministry? Because your ministry will never be stronger than your marriage. The last two pastors I followed ended their ministry with a marriage meltdown. You already know that prevention is less painful, and less expensive, than intervention.

Everyone is equal in God’s sight, but you and I are not God, so let your convention and LifeWay invest in your most important discipleship group—your family, starting with your spouse.

About the author: Mark Dance served as a pastor for nearly three decades before becoming the Director of LifeWay Pastors in 2014. Mark is a graduate of Howard Payne University, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary as well as The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Janet, live in Nashville, TN.

Note from a thankful pastor

By Roy Henry

Aryn and I were blessed to be able to participate in the Pastors and Wives date night at FBC DeWitt. With three younger children, having opportunities to get away with just each other – even for a few hours in the evening for dinner – is a challenge. It can be even more difficult when you factor in the uniqueness of pastoral ministry, where, as much as we may not like it or try to lessen its impact, we are “on the clock” 24/7.

The organizers and volunteers put on a lovely evening that included child care. Our youngest child has some severe food allergies (dairy and tree nuts) that can complicate meals and snacks, but the child care team went out of their way to ensure he not only had food that he could eat, but that he was included in all the

events. We were thankful not only for the opportunity to enjoy dinner with each other, but also to spend it with dear brothers and sisters in Christ who know and understand the pressures of serving in ministry. The gracious gifts and presentations were much appreciated and helped to make it a relaxing and refreshing evening! Thank you! Roy Henry serves as Senior Pastor at Faith Baptist Church in Battle Creek. He and wife, Aryn, have been married for 13 years and they have three wonderful PKs.

I Love Preaching!

Dr. David Allen

There isn't a preacher among us who doesn't desire to become a better preacher. At least, there shouldn't be! A pastor wears many hats, but the one that fits him the best is preaching the Word.

I was a pastor of two churches for 21 years and have been an interim pastor of 13 churches. I've also taught preaching for the past 30 years. I am the Dean of the newly launched School of Preaching at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. *I love preaching!* That's why I am excited to be in Michigan on April 20-21, 2018 at Cedar Street Baptist Church in Holt, MI, to lead the Preaching Workshop sponsored by the Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM).

This will be a time of practical instruction as I speak on "How to Preach 1 John". Other topics we will cover include: What is the structure of 1 John and how would you preach a series of sermons from it? How do you move from text to sermon? How do you outline a paragraph for preaching? What about illustrations? Finally, how can I be creative in my sermon preparation and delivery?

You will walk away from this workshop with 20 sermon outlines, one for each paragraph in 1 John. You will also receive a copy of my book 1-3 John: Fellowship in the Family, in the "Preaching the Word" series published by Crossway. This book contains complete expository sermons, including exposition, illustration, and application, on every paragraph of 1 John.

When I was a pastor, 1 John was one of my favorite books to preach through. It is all about fellowship within the church centered around Jesus. It is a message the church today needs to hear. Studies continue to demonstrate that the number one reason people choose to attend and join a particular church is the preaching. Other factors play a role, but nothing is more important than the pastor's sermon week by week. People continue to be hungry to know what the Bible says.

That is why we must preach today with excellence and faithfulness to the Word of God. Spurgeon said, "Bible hearers will become Bible lovers." Our people certainly won't be doers of the word until they are first hearers of it. "And how shall they hear without a preacher," as Paul asks in Romans 10:14?

None of us should be attempting to carve out our niche in the preaching hall of fame. But each of us should be attempting to become the best communicators of God's word we

can possibly be. I'm excited about this opportunity to join with pastors from all over the great state of Michigan to spend some time honing our skills in preaching.

About the author: Dr. David L. Allen is Dean of the School of Preaching and Distinguished Professor of Preaching, George W. Truett Chair of Ministry, Director for the Center of Expository Preaching, at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, TX.

Igniting Generations

By Sue Hodnett

How are you providing missions education to the next generation? Great question. Missions is a lifestyle! Learning begins at a very young age so the WMU missions education starts with a very simple foundation.

It is important to see a child learn and understand the ways of our Savior, accepting His gift of eternal life. Then, as the student continues to learn about missions, their foundation is build up. As this young person enters high school and grows into their young adult years the Holy Spirit does a work in their hearts leading them to be open and obedient to the call of God on their life and to the mission field they are to serve. This is how we are providing mission education to the next generation and the next and the next.

One young woman who had the opportunity to learn in the WMU missions education program, "AJ" now serves as an IMB missionary. For security reasons, we cannot share her name. For AJ it all began at GA camp (Girls' Mission Camp). Here is her story:

I was the child that would rather have a book in my hand than playing with the other kids on the playground. I was not a talker, and that kept me from sharing my faith with others.

GA camp at Bambi Lake was the place where I learned that God's heart is for all the Nations of the World to know Him. GA camp was where I met real world missionaries. They told awesome stories and shared amazing pictures, including some with them riding camels. They were rock stars to me! At that time, I had never thought that God wanted me to go to some faraway place and talk to people about Him. I had trouble talking to people at my middle school so, to me, the idea of going to a place to talk to people was probably the scariest career choice ever. Even so, I felt God tug at my heart telling me that one day I was going to be the one going to some far-off place to share the gospel. SAY WHAT?!!!

However, scared as I was, I determined to follow what God had called me to do. With each passing year talking with people got easier and easier until it became natural to share my faith with strangers. Now whenever I meet a new person I am looking for a way to begin to tell them about the greatest, most life changing story ever. It began small by me going on short term trips in America, and then I got to spend a summer working at Bambi Lake. From there God called me out of my Jerusalem and to the ends of the earth. I signed on with the International Mission Board (IMB) and spent 6 months in France and England and then two years in South East Asia as a Journeyman.

The country I was in was mostly Muslim. It is a place where most people have NEVER heard the story of Jesus. I constantly had young women over for dinner and they would continue to ask questions about Jesus far into the night. I was even able to give a few girls Bibles. We began a Bible study and would meet regularly to read through the Gospels together. I prayed God would give these young women a dream or vision to reveal His truth to them. It became routine to ask Nita, a local girl, if she had any dreams since we last saw her. In Islam, they believe that Allah speaks to his people mostly through their dreams. Most Muslims who end up converting to Christianity will say they had a dream where Jesus revealed who He is to them.

"Nita, did you dream about Jesus last night."

"No... but I did have a dream." She then describes a very vivid dream where she confronts a snake and a baby boy. After Nita woke up she went to look up what her dream meant. Teachers of Islam have published many books used for dream interpretation. Nita said the interpretation was "Someone will come to me and give me Good News." After a moment of shock, I slide over a Bible that was on the table and placed it right in front of her so she could see it had the words "Good News" printed on the cover in her local language. I told her, "Well that just came true."

A closer look into her dream brought us to the book of Isaiah chapter 11. Not only does this chapter talk about a baby playing over the hole of the cobra, the chapter itself is a prophecy of the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. God has allowed me to do some pretty amazing things and to be part of something so much bigger than me. I am constantly humbled by it all. I would like to thank the WMU and other women who have supported the IMB and making programs like GA camp possible. Thank you for helping me find my voice and sending me out.

"So as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God."

Colossians 1:10

We are thankful to the home church AJ attends. They understand the importance of providing WMU missions education for their members. If you are interested in learning more about WMU missions education for your church, life group or home schooling program, send me an email at wmu@bscm.org. I would love to share the many resources and passion we have for missions.

About the Author: Sue Hodnett is the Women's Ministry & WMU Consultant for the BSCM as well as the Executive Director for WMU of Michigan. She attends Lakepointe Church in Macomb, MI.

RENOVATE: Coming in 2018

By Tom Cheyney

Do you have a passion to see your church revitalized? Then the Michigan Renovate Church Revitalization Conference is for you!

The Renovate National Church Revitalization Conference is coming to Michigan for two One-Day strategic conferences across the Baptist State Convention of Michigan March 22 & 24, 2018. The Renovate Annual Conference launched in 1997 and now is the largest gathering of pastors, church revitalizers, and laity meeting on church revitalization and renewal anywhere in the country. Beginning in 2014, Dr. Tom Cheyney the Founder and Directional Leader of the Renovate Group began offering additional conferences all across the United States as one-day events, and the response has been incredible. In conjunction with Mike Durbin, the State Director of Evangelism who focuses on Strengthening Churches, the Renovate Conference will partner with the convention to help churches all over Michigan. The two Renovate One-Day Conferences are a great place to start your church revitalization efforts and get the tools you need for revitalizing your church. In a day where it is reported that more than ninety percent of protestant churches in North America are in decline, the time for such a conference across Michigan is urgent.

Church Revitalization is a movement within protestant evangelicalism, which emphasizes the missional work of turning a plateau or rapidly declining church around, and moving it back towards growth. It is lead through a Church Revitalization Initiative, which is when a local church begins to work on the renewal of the church with a concerted effort to see the ministry revitalized and the church become healthy. Church Revitalization means that the local church knew how, at one time previously, to renew, revitalize, and re-establish the health and vitality of the ministry. One of the challenges for the laity in the days in which we live, is that they have lost the knowledge of church renewal and no longer want to cultivate the skill sets necessary to see their church experience revitalization. Even sadder is when a congregation does not have the corporate memory that there was a day when the local church was reaching people for Christ Jesus and active as evangelistic witnesses into their community.

Renovate is more than a conference, it is a movement of church revitalizers, both laity and ministerial, committed to learning, growing, changing, and leading change. This church revitalization conference is designed to connect, inspire, equip, and challenge church revitalizers.

About the author: Dr. Tom Cheyney is the Founder and Directional Leader of RENOVATE National Church Revitalization Conference. Cheyney also serves as the Executive Director of Missions, Greater Orlando Baptist Association. Tom is a nationally recognized conference leader in church revitalization. He has taught all over the world and is the author of: *Slaying the Dragons of Church Revitalization: Dealing with the Critical Issues that are Hurting Your Church*, as well as countless others. Dr. Cheyney lives in Orlando with his wife Cheryl, Florida.

The Great Outdoors

Dr. Mike Ritchie

I will make you fishers of men~ Jesus.

Like many people who move to Roscommon County I love to hunt and fish. This affinity continued when I came to Christ. At times, I felt guilty because I enjoyed them too much. Still the Lord said he would give us the desires of our hearts. He never took the desire to hunt and fish away from me. Like the disciples who went fishing after Jesus left the earth I told Jesus that if he wanted me to give more time to evangelism and not hunting I was willing. Instead he did something even more miraculous, He made me a fisher of men.

Twenty-three years ago, Roscommon Baptist Church (RBC) started a wild game dinner to share the gospel with sportsmen who may never darken the door of any church. We feed them all kinds of wild game, and homemade desserts. We give out amazing door prizes and we earn the right to share the gospel with these hard-core outdoors men, women and children. It is important to try to get the best speakers available, and this past year we asked Chuck McAllister the former host of Adventure Bound Outdoors TV and the Evangelism director for the Kentucky Baptist Association. Working with the Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM) we saw an opportunity to get Chuck here, and have him speak at the March men's retreat and stay over for the Wild Game Dinner at Bambi Lake Baptist Retreat and Conference Center. More than 400 people attended this year's event. Fourteen men made decisions for the Lord during the men's retreat and 79 people during the Wild Game Dinner. What is the key to such results?

Affinity evangelism! Chuck McAllister who used and taught this form of outreach in Kentucky and many other states says, "Affinity Evangelism is a strategy to help churches find exciting, innovative ways to share Jesus with the "people groups" in their communities. These groups aren't necessarily ethnic in nature; the groups are made up of people who have a common affinity—a similar interest, hobby, need, or concern. When churches design appealing ways to connect with people according to their affinities, they find an open door to building friendships and helping people encounter Jesus."

McAllister continues, "Jesus and His disciples used Affinity Evangelism, meeting people where they were, and sharing the good news using parables and illustrations the common man could understand. When Paul visited Athens (Acts 17:16-34), he preached boldly in the marketplaces and to the community leaders, connecting with those listening to him by starting with what was important to them. He found a way to use their interests as an "in" for the Gospel."

To extend relationships with outdoors people the "Outdoor ministries program" at RBC has joined a youth archery program called "Centershot Ministries", a hunter safety program, "hooked for life" fishing program and a Kicking Bear Camp weekend retreat at Bambi Lake for families. We also do youth hunts to give youngsters a chance to enjoy the great outdoors. Each event has had varying degrees of response, but we are focused on the outdoor affinities because 2 of 3 people in our area recreate in the out of doors. We will be doing another dinner March 10, 2018 and Big game hunter and

President of Southern Seminary, Paige Patterson, will be share his hunting stories and his first love Jesus Christ.

What's cooking at your church? I think I smell the muskrat stew!

About the author: Dr. Mike Ritchie attends Roscommon Baptist Church in Roscommon, MI where he serves as the Director for Outdoor Ministries as well as the Sunday School Director. He also runs the local chiropractic office in town along with assistance from his wife, Laurie.

The Legacy of Bambi Lake

By: Nancy Spears

It is not by chance as Bambi Lake nears its 60 year anniversary that people are being drawn back to the roots of their faith experiences. Only God can orchestrate such events that bring meaning to those from the past, while instilling God's grace and design for those working in the present.

We wonder what God is doing here. What is drawing so many people from past to come to Bambi Lake? They come to walk where they walked as a young child. "It has been a strange few weeks," says Janice Fuller. "I can't remember any time that this has happened so frequently."

These are the early steps of their Christian walk; as a GA, as a college student on mission for the summer, as a boy watching his father build the new Cafeteria, as a previous employee, as a volunteer who spent the summers helping at camp, and on and on. Their memories are so vivid and bring such delight as they walk around sharing how things used to look, and how much the camp has grown and changed.

With tears in her eyes, one lady reminisced of being in the original chapel. She was reminded of cool days and needing to grab a sweatshirt. More memories triggered as we walked out the door. How many pictures of groups at camp have been taken on the steps of the Hubbs lodge by the water? There is excitement as they see the Wilson Building with its Worship Center and Cafeteria, the cabins and chalets, the changes to the lodge as it has evolved since the beginning days of camp. They love the new water slide that is underway. As the vision is shared to make the gym into a multi-season activity center, to renovate the cottage for a center for a small group retreats, to put café tables in JB's for a casual "shake shop" feel, to build small cabins in the campground to house families, and more. The anticipation grows. The potential of Bambi Lake is growing.

Events need to be great, too. So, looking forward, Bambi has scheduled some fabulous events for 2018. A Comedy of Love Retreat for married couples will be held in April with Michael Smalley from the Smalley Institute. With the addition of an outdoor stage to be built in the area near the Lodge parking, there will be outdoor gospel concerts. On Saturday, May 26, during the Memorial Day Camping Weekend, the gospel concert day will be topped off with The Martins in concert at 7:00 pm. On the Fourth of July, Karen

Peck and New River will be performing in the evening as well as many local gospel groups.

Our other scheduled events include the men's retreats, women's retreats, youth retreats, summer camps, all with excellent, featured speakers and new amenities. Linens-sheets, blankets and towels will be provided no matter where you are staying. Guests will be pleased with the new approaches in the dining room, too. Event planners are being encouraged to choose the menu and serve family style dinners when possible. Registration is easier with online deposits. If you cannot register online for any reason, call the office for assistance. And when you arrive, stop by the Coffee Bar for coffee and a cookie as you check in.

The staff is anticipating your arrival with many preparations and prayer. The best success is when visitors come with minimal distractions, and hear God speak.

Bambi Lake has a great heritage. God is moving in some very special ways. The camp is changing and improving because of the gifts and support of Michigan Baptists. The legacy of Bambi Lake is and has always been transformed lives.

About the Author: Nancy Spears is a ministry assistant for the Baptist State Convention of Michigan and serves on the council for Michigan's Women's Missionary Union (WMU). She is member of Anchor Community Church in Grand Rapids where she has served as event coordinator for ten years. God has blessed her with an understanding and supportive husband of 42 years, children and grandchildren.

Church Security and Safety

by Rev. Timothy Jones

The threat to Christianity runs rampant across our globe. From Christian genocide in the Middle East to threats and acts of violence in America, each day's news brings word of another attack to the Church. In the wake of the recent shootings, churches across America are beginning to see the need to protect their congregations during church functions.

Yet our greatest threat is our own denial. We cannot continue to deny that we live in dark and wicked times; sin, immorality, racism, terror and violence is on the rise. Of course, it is. Biblically it is clear the devil will stop at nothing to continue persecuting Christians, and that he will use any method that he can. However, this does not mean that we should lock our doors and huddle within the four walls of church buildings. Jesus said that we are to *"go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation"* (Mark 16:15 HCSB). He also said that we should not hinder others from coming to Him (Matt. 19:14). As leaders of the church we have been given a great responsibility to protect the flock without sacrificing the mission. We must have a way to anticipate and handle situations that may arise in the church; this is called Crisis Management.

"Crisis Management" is defined as a process by which a business or other organization deals with a sudden emergency situation."

For the Church, *Crisis Management* is the process by which we deal with disruptive and/or an unexpected event that threatens to harm the worship experience of people, the building(s), and/or property by identifying threats and using methods to handle the threats. The group that handles this in our Church is called the “Security Team”.

As I look to scripture that supports the mission of church security and safety I am reminded of Nehemiah who, after finding out the walls of Jerusalem were destroyed, prayed and fasted. It must be said that your security team should operate as a ministry of the church and always begin in prayer. Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem, assessed the current situation; the damage and what was needed to complete the renovation. He gave the people a vision and plan to rebuild the wall. He recruited help who brought tools and armory items necessary to build and to defend against the attacks. Nehemiah gave instructions to all those working on the wall what they must do if an attack was to occur. Nehemiah implemented God’s plan and reassessed as they built the wall and gates, restoring safety to Jerusalem (Nehemiah Chapter 1-6).

In our Church Security Training Program, we have outlined nine steps resulting in a successful church security team.

1. Assessment.
2. Create a mission or purpose statement.
3. Make child safety a priority.
4. Create policies to operate by.
5. Invest in equipment.
6. Develop a “Use of Force” policy to protect you and your team.
7. Recruit your team.
8. Training.
9. Implement and always reassess.
- 10.

Nehemiah also did something that all pastors must do, he devoted himself to working on the wall (Neh 5:16). Church security and safety is the pastor’s responsibility and you, fellow pastor, should lead from the front to have a great Security and Safety ministry. It is my prayer that you or your security team will find the time to attend one of our Security and Safety Workshops hosted by the BSCM and that you implement a security team for the safety of God’s flock.

About the author: Timothy D. Jones is senior pastor at The Road Church in Allen Park, MI. theroadbyfaith.org

VBS Institute Training at Ridgecrest

By Bob Wood

Seven Michigan Baptist leaders attended a national Vacation Bible School (VBS) Institute at the Ridgecrest Conference Center on January 5-6, 2018. Along with Southern Baptist Leaders from across the eastern United States, they received training to improve planning and preparation for conducting VBS. Commenting on the event, Megan Line said, "It was a blessing to be surrounded by men and woman at Ridgecrest who not only love VBS but had a passion to make it better, to reach children for the Glory of God! It was great to get pumped up, trained and equipped to teach others how to provide an amazing VBS for their communities!" Another team member, Betty Ward, observed, "I enjoyed being at Ridgecrest and seeing people from other states getting as excited as I am about VBS. It was encouraging to see their willingness to take time out of their busy lives to come and learn and go back to their states to teach others."

This exceptional training equipped the team to return to Michigan and lead VBS Institutes for our local church leaders across the state. Shar Durbin commented, "VBSI gives a huge boost of excitement and an urgency to prepare for VBS. Although it is in the dead of winter, and VBS will be in the heat of summer, it is not too soon to get our hearts and materials ready. This year 's songs are super loaded with Scripture and catchy tunes designed to stay in the hearts of children and leaders for years to come. They are already in mine."

The Michigan VBS leadership team members, who took this training, come from churches across Michigan. The team includes Shar Durbin, Megan Line, Nickol Mearnic, Carla Saunders, Debbie Turner, Betty Ward and Bob Wood. Michigan VBS Institutes will be held April 29, 2018 at Merriman Road Baptist Church, Garden City and again May 5, 2018 at Bambi Lake Retreat and Conference Center. VBS Institutes are on Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. A LifeWay VBS bookstore will be available at both locations. You can contact any of the team members, or call the BSCM office, for VBS information, training or assistance. Register online at <https://www.bscm.org/event-registration>.

Each VBS Institute starts with a worship / pep rally and includes core leadership workshops for all VBS leaders in the morning. After lunch, which is provided, breakout enrichment workshops are offered. Carla Saunders described from her experience with the breakout, Gospel-centered Children's Ministry, "We learned the Bible stories we read and teach are truly centered around Christ." Core leadership workshops will all feature LifeWay's VBS theme. Most of the breakouts are curriculum-neutral; they are applicable to VBS no matter which curriculum you choose to use. Vacation Bible School continues to be one of the most effective outreach and evangelism tools your church can use. VBS Training enhances your evangelistic effectiveness. Research has shown that on average we baptize one person from VBS for every worker we train for VBS. Receive inspiration and training for your VBS leaders at one of the Michigan VBS Institutes sponsored by the Baptist State Convention of Michigan.

About the author: Bob Wood is pastor of Heritage Baptist Church in Monroe, Michigan. He also serves as a VBS consultant for the Baptist State Convention of Michigan. Before coming to Heritage Baptist Church, he served as a state missionary for the BSCM.

SENDING

Michigan on Mission to St. Croix

By Stan Parker

LANSING, MI - Michigan Baptist churches have been sending mission teams to minister at home and abroad for decades. Unfortunately, many of these teams lacked representation from the African-American community. Today, we praise God that this no longer true. The Michigan African American Fellowship, a group of African-American Churches sent their first mission team to St. Croix earlier this year. The team was made up of individuals from various churches and was multi-generational. They were on mission for seven-days, serving others who were in need.

Kamyra Thomas, a student from Michigan State University was part the team. She says, "Being my first mission trip, and being able to share Jesus Christ was truly awesome and a life changing experience for me." Kamyra has already signed up to go back to St. Croix in 2018. The mission team provided ministry in the form of backyard Bible clubs, sports, face painting and skits at the Harbourview Housing Complex. Harbourview is one of the largest housing complexes on the island. The children and adults who live there opened their arms and welcomed the team with smiles and love. The residents were happy to see visitors who looked like them.

Prior to leaving for St. Croix the team was provided with mission training. The training helped the team understand the Island's needs, and how the culture, while similar, is different from the United States. Upon arrival the team was hosted by Missionary, John Smith, a native from Pontiac, Michigan, and a North American Mission Board (NAMB) church planter. Pastor Smith is the only Southern Baptist church active on St. Croix Island. Serving with Pastor Smith was indeed a joy as the team was able to help him with planting Shepherd Fold Church, while also serving the residents at Harbourview housing complex.

The mission trip became a reality due to several Fifth Sunday Fellowship Services which are sponsored by the Fellowship. The churches were challenged by the Fellowship President, Dr. Stan Parker, to become more involved with missions. Parker and Faith Fellowship Baptist Church have been involved in mission field ministry for more than twenty years. He brought his hunger for mission work to the African American Fellowship, and they answered the call. The recent trip to St. Croix provided spiritual growth for all who were part of the team, and has served to wet the appetite for others. Therefore, the Michigan African American Fellowship is making plans to return in August of 2018.

The Fifth Sunday Fellowship services also provide for training and great preaching. The Fellowship hosted a Pastor Shift Conference in April, and Pastor Mark Croston was the keynote speaker. There were seminars of evangelism, financial stewardship, missions, and a special session for pastor's wives. Parker says, "Those who attended left with a strong urgency to be part of what God is doing in Michigan as we work together to stamp out darkness in our state."

About the author: Dr. Stan Parker serves as senior pastor for the Faith Fellowship Baptist Church of Lansing, MI. He has a passion for communicating the Gospel with people of all races and in every corner of our world.

Send Relief

By Bob Kiger

Michigan Disaster Relief (DR) responded to two major events in 2017 - one in Michigan and the other in Texas. In July and August, Michigan DR assisted Midland residents with help cleaning out their homes after the most devastating flooding event in that city's history. The DR teams worked tirelessly helping the flood victims get back into their homes and see life return to normal, all in Jesus name.

In September, after one of the most destructive hurricanes of all times devastated the greater Houston, Texas area (Hurricane Harvey), two Michigan DR volunteers, Bob Kiger and Fritz Kinsey, were asked to establish a Send Relief site in Galveston. Once the site was operational, they continued managing the site for two months while several other Michigan DR volunteers heeded the call, traveling to Texas so they could respond by preparing food and cleaning out homes. The Texas devastation will continue to need help to recover for months and years to come. We are thankful, as Michigan Baptists, serving through Disaster Relief to help the people of Texas in their time of need. We are the hands and feet of Jesus before those in need.

2018 A Look Ahead

Michigan Disaster Relief will continue in 2018 to facilitate the integration of Disaster Relief services and Send Relief. The next generation of Michigan volunteers will be prepared by building on the successful training completed in 2017. If you and your church are not participants of this amazing hands-on ministry, it's not too late. We will have training opportunities throughout the year and the needs are always there. Come join us in representing the Lord with our hard work and love for others.

About the author: Bob Kiger serves as the Michigan Disaster Relief Director for the BSCM. He has been involved in Disaster Relief since 2008. Bob brings a wealth of diverse experience to the State Director's position. His first major call out was in 2012 when he went to New York to help prepare meals for displaced residents after Hurricane Sandy. He was raised in a Christian home and accepted Christ when he was twelve years old and has been a Baptist all his life.

A Volunteer “In Her Own Words”

I like being a servant of the Lord. Being a Chaplain, serving through the Michigan Disaster Relief (DR), just adds to the glory that I get to give back to God. Most often we are working with desperate people that have lost their homes and everything in it. It is moving when you go to their door and tell them you’ve come as a volunteer to help; to be God’s hands and feet.

As a DR Chaplain, my main task is to spend time with the homeowner. I work to build trust and encouragement. I help them go through precious items that have been ruined by flood waters, tornados or other natural disasters. Item by item we go through pictures and Christmas boxes, especially Christmas decorations, as they lead to open doors for sharing the Gospel of Christ.

Over the course of the day, I pray with homeowners about the unimaginable difficulty they are enduring. As the owner watches the DR team clearing the house, the tears flow down their already tear stained faces. It is my joy to take their troubles to God and seek wisdom and strength these people. We leave the homeowner, who has been devastated physically and emotionally, with a cleared-out home and a copy of Eternal Hope, God’s Word. A hard day’s work makes for eternal differences in many of their lives. Jeannie Dolson, Disaster Relief volunteer since 2005. She lives in Jackson, MI and attends Grace Baptist Church.

Sending Church

By Dan Russell

How Short-Term Mission Trips Can Make Our Churches Healthier

As Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM) churches across our great state seek to be healthier, the short-term mission trip can be one way to make that happen. There’s nothing quite like teams from our churches taking the Gospel to another place. There’s something very Biblical about it. There’s something very transforming about it. There’s something very healthy about it.

Our church, Calvary Baptist of Southgate, has taken five short-term mission trips in the last seven years and the positive impact on the church has been very evident. We’ve been to Honduras, New York City, the Philippines, Los Angeles, and Peru. Those on the mission teams have experienced tremendous blessing from serving Jesus beyond the walls of the church and beyond the borders of their communities. And, the church family has been blessed by praying, supporting, and sending the teams.

What are some healthy outcomes of sending mission teams from our churches to other parts of the country or other parts of the world? Here are just a few:

1. Short term mission trips can produce the satisfaction of fulfilling the Great Commission

Healthy New Testament churches are to be “going into all the world to preach the Gospel” and the short-term mission trips are one way our churches can be obedient to this Commission. In the Gospel accounts, Jesus sent His disciples on short trips to other parts of Samaria and Galilee to share the good news of His kingdom (Luke 10:1-2). And, in the early church, Paul and Barnabas were led by the Holy Spirit to go on the first of three mission trips into Asia Minor and beyond (Acts 13:1-3).

So, “sending” churches are being collectively obedient to the Lord of the harvest and are, therefore, healthier because of doing so. I recall when our church was “on mission” in Honduras, Central America, some years back and we made a conference call back to the church in Michigan. As we utilized technology to speak with the congregation over the church’s PA system during a morning church service, one of the closing comments to our team from a Deacon of the church was, “Thanks for representing all of us there in Honduras. It’s like we are there with you!” That statement was evidence that our whole congregation was healthier as they experienced the mutual joy of fulfilling Christ’s Great Commission into the “uttermost”.

2. Short term mission trips can produce longer term missionaries from within our churches

Studies have shown that many of those that go on short-term mission trips will go on to consider being full-time career missionaries. In fact, most mission agencies, including the International Mission Board (IMB) encourage potential missionary candidates to go on a short-term mission trip before making their final decision about missionary service. This can be the way Jesus confirms to people that He wants them on a mission field for the rest of their lives.

Could the apostle Paul have caught the vision for more missionary journeys after his first one? What if he would not have gone on the second and third journeys? There may have not been any Macedonian call and, thus, no Gospel witness to the continent of Europe and, thus further, no Gospel eventually going from England to America. Mere conjecture, indeed, but something to think about. Jesus could have used that first missionary journey to motivate Paul to keep going, and to keep making trips further out into the world. This phenomenon of short-term mission trips being “sparks” that light a “fire” in someone destined to be a career missionary is very real.

And, while we may not want to lose the brightest and best from our churches to a distant mission field, we must admit that this very thing can make our churches healthier. It engenders a sense of deep joy that young people, as well as older people, in our churches who are spiritually healthy enough to receive the call of Jesus to the mission field. That means our churches are healthy, because it is a place where people come to know Jesus as Savior, grow in faith in Him, and are open to hearing His call to the mission field. And, as more and more people are called to missions, it continues to produce a healthy environment in our churches. This type of multiplication seems to have happened in the early church (Acts 9:31). May the churches in our state convention multiply in this way. And, for sure, mission trips can help facilitate that very multiplication.

3. Short term mission trips can produce more giving in our churches and to the Cooperative Program

No discussion about the health of our churches can omit the mention of money. And, while “the love of money is the root of all evil”, the love of using money for missions is anything but evil. When our churches partner together to send a team of their own people on a short-term mission trip, it reveals the value of the money they are giving. They see the passion of the team. They see the adventure of the mission. They see the resulting souls saved, saints edified, and mission projects accomplished. It can give our churches a renewed desire to be faithful in the giving of their tithes and offerings to their own local church, as well as revive their loyalty to the Cooperative Program.

So, these are just a few ways that short-term mission trips can increase the health in our churches. Feel free to come up with others. Let’s be bold to declare these things in our churches! Let’s be ready to go on a mission trip. Let’s challenge our people to get a passport, pray over it, asking Jesus to lead them on a mission trip beyond Jerusalem and Judea to Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth.

About the author: Dr. Dan Russell is the Executive Pastor at Calvary Baptist Church in Southgate, Michigan, a NAMB Coach for church planters, and an adjunct professor for Spring Arbor University. He has 37 years of pastoral experience, including lead pastorates in Missouri, Kansas, and Michigan. Dan and his wife,, JoLinda, live in Brownstown, Michigan, and have three adult children, along with seven grandchildren.

The Power of One Reaching Women

By Sue Hodnett

'The Power of One'

I am blessed to work with a team of women dedicated to serving Jesus and the women of Michigan. I am thankful to God for these women and their support and commitment to building our team Jesus-style, and their focus on the needs of the women in our churches and across our state. The development, equipping, and commissioning of the Women’s Ministry Team continues to be an exciting process. The advancement of the ministry will continue to reflect what we believe to be the vision and direction of God. Our objective is to build relationships and networks to assist in resourcing and supporting women leaders in ministry at churches of like-minded faith throughout our convention and state. The importance of developing and equipping new women leaders and the next generation will not be overlooked. Not on our watch! We will not permit a generation to lose the knowledge and understanding of the Cross of Jesus Christ. Reaching women in communities that need to know of the hope found only in Jesus is a commitment we intend to keep.

Jesus is the builder of the team and a leader is only as good as her dependence on the Lord.

Administration

The resources to help you raise awareness for the special mission's offering and weeks of prayer will be provided by the women's ministry team. Offering envelopes, prayer guides, and posters are free to our churches for each of the offerings, Annie Armstrong Easter Offering (March 4-11), Frances Brown State Missions Offering (September 9-16) and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering (December 2-9). To order, simply email wmu@bscm.org.

Special Events

Are you ready for some girlfriend time? Are you ready for some "just you and God time"? When is the last time you sat before God without a To-Do list hanging over you, a pile of laundry you need to fold or transfer from washer to dryer, or family members pressing in on all sides? If you can't remember, you need to attend a retreat, an intentional time away from it all so your soul can focus on being fed by the Lord.

"To retreat" means to leave our normal routines and go to a place of safety, quiet, and seclusion. By going to a retreat, we physically remove ourselves from life's distractions, the call of chores, and the demands of people in order to make space for God. If you think you're less spiritual because you struggle to hear from God in the distractions of your daily life, be encouraged. Even Jesus recognized the value and need to get away, regularly stepping away from the crowds, sometimes even His disciples.

In 2018, women's ministry will offer several opportunities "to retreat". Three day weekends at Bambi Lake, overnighters or one day conferences close to home, and three-hour evening sessions. All retreats will focus on bringing you closer to God and building ministry partnerships. Continue to check for retreat and conference information on our page at: BSCM.org, Strengthening, Women's Ministry/WMU Missions.

Care Support

Life is hard. We all need encouragement and support. Life isn't meant to be lived alone. As women in ministry we can come to a point of exhaustion quickly, if we are not careful. **Care Support** offers all women in leadership an opportunity to deepen their understanding of how much Jesus loves them. We provide safe and secure settings with other leaders who are available and willing to coach and mentor. We want to love on our leaders the way Jesus would.

We know that pastor's wives and church planters (wives) carry a heavy load of responsibility as they care for their families, their husbands, and people in the church. We provide care groups to remind them that they are appreciated and loved. **Care Support** offers opportunities for new leaders and encourages younger women with a desire to get started in their ministry roles with a safe place to ask questions. Our desire is to make sure they have the resources and training needed to be our successful leaders of the future.

'The Power of One' = Coach, Mentee, New Leader, Pastor's Wife

Social Concerns

The purpose of the Social Concerns group is to bring together leaders working in ministries so they can share their successes, concerns, and difficulties, network together and assist one another to better serve our churches and those in our communities. We serve to share information, communication, and network with many of our churches who are already doing social concerns ministries. This allows pastors, and leaders, the opportunity to gather with the many social concerns ministries, to encourage them, support them, and help them to better serve those in need.

Social concerns ministries that are now in place include: Multi-Cultural Relationship Building, fighting against Human Trafficking, Abortion Care, Addiction Care, Adoption Care, and Grief/Crisis Care.

'The Power of One' = Rescued Victim, Healing Addict, Adoptive Parent, Valued Person

Pathways

You know God has called you to ministry, but where do you start? Looking for more resources to take your missions ministries to the next level? **Pathways** will provide, or can direct, you to foundational, advanced, and expert-level training within specific ministry areas. Whether you're looking to train volunteers, teachers, or missions leaders, we can direct you to resources to equip all individuals within your church. There are limitless ways to serve on mission. All you know right now is God has called you! Come, let's discover all the various and exciting opportunities awaiting you.

If God has called you to it, there are resources out there and we will help you find them!

'The Power of One' = Bible Study Leader, Discipleship Shepherd, Evangelist, Missionary

Missions / Women's Missionary Union

This year, Michigan WMU (Women's Missionary Union) celebrates 60 years of serving in our state convention. How inspiring and encouraging to know that we continue a legacy of many who had a heart of passion and excitement to serve God. The women of WMU have always been there with prayer support and encouragement. Bringing together tools and resources that help churches realize the importance of the necessity of mission education, continues to be our focus. Awakening leaders by sharing insight into the social issues and what is happening around them, provides information to start much needed ministries in their communities. Opening doors to the world of mission whether the focus is local, national, or international, and creating a passion and a desire to be on mission and to go, wherever He leads. With knowledge, comes power.

'The Power of One' = a Church with a Missions Mindset (Preschooler, Child, Student and Adult)

Don't ever underestimate ***'The Power of One'***! Take your place in God's plan, be the ONE!

Seriously, as you read this article, I know God has been speaking to you and this hasn't been the first time He has tried to get your attention. What is He asking you to do? Where is He asking you to serve?

Everyone who is saved by the power of His grace has ‘The Power of One’. You also have the choice to use that power. How will you use that power for His Glory?

'The Power of One' = YOU !

About the Author: Sue Hodnett is the Women’s Ministry & WMU Consultant for the BSCM as well as the Executive Director for WMU of Michigan. She attends Lakepointe Church in Macomb, MI.

When Disaster Strikes

By Tony Lynn

When disaster strikes, “gold shirts” move. Some wear blue caps and others wear white caps as a distinction. Sometimes they stage themselves in advance of the catastrophe and danger. At other times, these generous heroes are instructed to stand down and arrive in waves, relieving one team after another, because the recovery in the hard hit region is going to take months. Regardless of the requests or directions, team members assist strangers because their faith in Christ drives their response to those in crisis. The Southern Baptist Disaster Relief teams have been around for fifty years. Throughout the nation over 80,000 trained volunteers respond when troubles come.

One member’s pick-up is laden with relief tools because of his burden to be ready at a moment’s notice. A chainsaw swims in the bed of the pick-up while he drives. Unopened water bottles are wrapped in plastic and covered from dust from a previous relief effort. Volunteers always hydrate on the job. Rubber boots and leather boots, stained and scarred with evidence of previous missions, tell stories of long days, sore muscles and hearts of gold.

In particular, Michigan Southern Baptists have a tested and performance-proven Disaster Relief (DR) team. They provide hot meals, clean water, childcare, laundry, and structure repairs. Many of them know how to safely cut 4-foot thick trees with chain saws. Others know how to remove the mud, filth, and water from a family’s basement while comforting the grieving family members. Married couples, sons and fathers, and teams from various churches form the brotherhood known as Michigan Disaster Relief. They are an elite group who find the balance between practical, rapid assistance and emotional, spiritual care. They work hard and show their compassion for others in the tears that stream over their soiled and exhausted faces.

Michigan residents have benefited repeatedly from this army of volunteers.

Years ago when a tornado followed highway M-50 across two counties in southeastern Michigan, trees were uprooted and thrown on top of homes and cars. House exteriors were ripped off and scattered miles away like debris from a tossed trash can. Finally, after the tornado had passed, residents exited the safe haven of their basements only to learn that their roof had vanished, or some other disaster has befallen them.

Within hours, volunteers from Michigan, established their base of operations at Dundee Baptist Church. They spent weeks assisting those in need. Sawing, praying, feeding, counseling, their work was never-ending. They reminded residents that even in the aftermath of chaos that God is there to calm their fears.

Floods

One week in recent years, a storm dropped so much water in Warren that the infrastructure could not move or absorb the rain fast enough. Basements of homes were flooded. Bedrooms were destroyed. Within days, personal belongings were covered with mildew and stench. Mold grew from the floor toward the ceiling in mere days. The catastrophe was unmatched.

Volunteers slept in the gymnasium of Warren Woods Baptist Church. Daily, they carried brown-bags lunches to their work sites scattered throughout the city. They walked many miles up and down slimy staircases carrying water-soaked, heavy belongings out of the basements to the yard where the resident would decide whether to save or discard the personal possession laying in front of them. Frazzled and exhausted, the resident would look to the Disaster Relief Chaplain for encouragement and wisdom to make the best decision. On occasion the chaplain responds with, "We have safe chemicals that we can use to wash that down. We can save it." At other moments, the Chaplain will say, "Mold is likely growing inside that. It will cause you respiratory problems if you keep it." Regardless of the option, the DR volunteer reminded residents that God had not forgotten them in their times of trouble.

Poisoned Water

More recently, lead in Flint's water made international news. Fortunately, Michigan's Disaster Relief team was there throughout the crisis. Team leaders coordinated the call-out for volunteers as well as the delivery and distribution of water during the coldest months of winter.

Some volunteers distributed water from icy parking lots where residents would gather while others installed water filters inside homes. Westside Baptist Church and Mount Carmel Baptist Church, in Flint, partnered with DR providing places for volunteers to sleep, eat, and recover after long, cold days of service.

Michigan Disaster Relief members are eager to serve. The next time disaster strikes remember that someone from their fraternity is rapidly responding. When their phone or a text message calls them into action. The mail is stopped. The pets are entrusted to family members. Their homes are secured. They grab their go-bags and their suitcases are filled. The vehicle is fueled and they are ready to work.

If you want to know more about how to support or join the Michigan Disaster Relief Team you can find the information you need at www.bscm.org/disaster-relief.

About the author: Tony 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.

MICHIGAN NEWS

SEND Detroit: Our Mission

By Wayne Parker

We must constantly remind ourselves that Jesus is on the throne and that He rules and reigns today. I say this because, everything around us reports on the activity of the enemy. Every time you turn on the TV or read the paper you are confronted with the reminder that Satan is alive and at work. If you listen to Christians talk among themselves, you could quickly be led to believe that we are on the losing team. Friends, that is a lie from Hell. God is at work in our day and in the state of Michigan and we need to point one another to His activity.

During the Baptist State Convention meeting in 2014, we were given the opportunity to invite Michigan Baptists to join us in Detroit, praying that, "the Lord of the Harvest would send out laborers into the harvest," (Luke 10:2). In that meeting we reported the work of the Send Detroit Strategy Team and the recognition of 72 neighborhoods that we believed needed a Gospel-centered New Testament church. That revelation begged the question, "Where are we going to find all those church planters?" Our only strategy was prayer.

I am thrilled to report that God has been answering your prayers. We have seen 23 launches and are working with another 30 men that are at different levels of preparation for the launching of new churches. But that is not all. Of these 53 men that God has raised up, 48 are from here. Several have launched churches in their home town and some in the High School they attended. This is evidence that God is moving among us. He is raising up laborers from the harvest!

In September, we saw three new church launches in the Send Detroit area. Alin Patularu launched Life-giver Church in Windsor on September 24th at the Forest Glade Arena. Here is a couple that literally launched pregnant. Alin and his wife, Shelly, recently announced that they are expecting twins next spring. On September 17th, City Church launched under the leadership of Corey Parker at Ypsilanti high school with approximately 300 in attendance. Another plant, Journey Church, launched in Mount Clemens. This new church is meeting in the historic Emerald Theater and had 145 in attendance as they opened their doors to the city.

As we celebrate these new beginnings, please understand that we cannot afford to become complacent. God's kingdom is advancing. We can see the movement of His hand, but our enemy has not given up nor is he asleep. Therefore, we need to be all the more diligent in our prayers. These church planters are under attack. They need our

encouragement and our support. If you could hear directly from them, you would be encouraged by story after story of life change, salvation, transformation as entire families who have been restored by the life-giving power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But, you would also hear about the hardships they are facing. Often these challenges are simply attacks from the evil one and they need our prayers.

We also ask for continued prayer because we know that the task is not complete. We need to persistently pray that God will raise up more laborers for the harvest. We must continue to tell the story of how God is at work. At the same time, we are reminded that

Jesus is ruling from His Throne today. He may not need us, but wants us to be involved, serving Him, and crying out for the lost and dying all around us.

About the author: Wayne Parker grew up in metro Detroit. He graduated from Eastern Michigan University with a degree in education and received his Master of Divinity degree from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. Parker now serves as the senior pastor for Merriman Road Baptist Church in Garden City, an inner-ring suburb of Detroit. Wayne and his wife Cindy have five children. Together they enjoy skiing, hiking, hunting and fishing.

The Legacy of Bambi Lake

By: Nancy Spears

It is not by chance as Bambi Lake nears its 60 year anniversary that people are being drawn back to the roots of their faith experiences. Only God can orchestrate such events that bring meaning to those from the past, while instilling God's grace and design for those working in the present.

We wonder what God is doing here. What is drawing so many people from past to come to Bambi Lake? They come to walk where they walked as a young child. "It has been a strange few weeks," says Janice Fuller. "I can't remember any time that this has happened so frequently."

These are the early steps of their Christian walk; as a GA, as a college student on mission for the summer, as a boy watching his father build the new Cafeteria, as a previous employee, as a volunteer who spent the summers helping at camp, and on and on. Their memories are so vivid and bring such delight as they walk around sharing how things used to look, and how much the camp has grown and changed.

With tears in her eyes, one lady reminisced of being in the original chapel. She was reminded of cool days and needing to grab a sweatshirt. More memories triggered as we walked out the door. How many pictures of groups at camp have been taken on the steps of the Hubbs lodge by the water? There is excitement as they see the Wilson Building with its Worship Center and Cafeteria, the cabins and chalets, the changes to the lodge as it has evolved since the beginning days of camp. They love the new water slide that is underway. As the vision is shared to make the gym into a multi-season

activity center, to renovate the cottage for a center for a small group retreats, to put café tables in JB's for a casual "shake shop" feel, to build small cabins in the campground to house families, and more. The anticipation grows. The potential of Bambi Lake is growing.

Events need to be great, too. So, looking forward, Bambi has scheduled some fabulous events for 2018. A Comedy of Love Retreat for married couples will be held in April with Michael Smalley from the Smalley Institute. With the addition of an outdoor stage to be built in the area near the Lodge parking, there will be outdoor gospel concerts. On Saturday, May 26, during the Memorial Day Camping Weekend, the gospel concert day will be topped off with The Martins in concert at 7:00 pm. On the Fourth of July, Karen

Peck and New River will be performing in the evening as well as many local gospel groups.

Our other scheduled events include the men's retreats, women's retreats, youth retreats, summer camps, all with excellent, featured speakers and new amenities. Linens-sheets, blankets and towels will be provided no matter where you are staying. Guests will be pleased with the new approaches in the dining room, too. Event planners are being encouraged to choose the menu and serve family style dinners when possible. Registration is easier with online deposits. If you cannot register online for any reason, call the office for assistance. And when you arrive, stop by the Coffee Bar for coffee and a cookie as you check in.

The staff is anticipating your arrival with many preparations and prayer. The best success is when visitors come with minimal distractions, and hear God speak.

Bambi Lake has a great heritage. God is moving in some very special ways. The camp is changing and improving because of the gifts and support of Michigan Baptists. The legacy of Bambi Lake is and has always been transformed lives.

About the Author: Nancy Spears is a ministry assistant for the Baptist State Convention of Michigan and serves on the council for Michigan's Women's Missionary Union (WMU). She is member of Anchor Community Church in Grand Rapids where she has served as event coordinator for ten years. God has blessed her with an understanding and supportive husband of 42 years, children and grandchildren.

Send Relief

By Bob Kiger

Michigan Disaster Relief (DR) responded to two major events in 2017 - one in Michigan and the other in Texas. In July and August, Michigan DR assisted Midland residents with help cleaning out their homes after the most devastating flooding event in that city's history. The DR teams worked tirelessly helping the flood victims get back into their homes and see life return to normal, all in Jesus name.

In September, after one of the most destructive hurricanes of all times devastated the greater Houston, Texas area (Hurricane Harvey), two Michigan DR volunteers, Bob Kiger and Fritz Kinsey, were asked to establish a Send Relief site in Galveston. Once the site was operational, they continued managing the site for two months while several other Michigan DR volunteers heeded the call, traveling to Texas so they could respond by preparing food and cleaning out homes. The Texas devastation will continue to need help to recover for months and years to come. We are thankful, as Michigan Baptists, serving through Disaster Relief to help the people of Texas in their time of need. We are the hands and feet of Jesus before those in need.

2018 A Look Ahead

Michigan Disaster Relief will continue in 2018 to facilitate the integration of Disaster Relief services and Send Relief. The next generation of Michigan volunteers will be prepared by building on the successful training completed in 2017. If you and your church are not participants of this amazing hands-on ministry, it's not too late. We will have training opportunities throughout the year and the needs are always there. Come join us in representing the Lord with our hard work and love for others.

About the author: Bob Kiger serves as the Michigan Disaster Relief Director for the BSCM. He has been involved in Disaster Relief since 2008. Bob brings a wealth of diverse experience to the State Director's position. His first major call out was in 2012 when he went to New York to help prepare meals for displaced residents after Hurricane Sandy. He was raised in a Christian home and accepted Christ when he was twelve years old and has been a Baptist all his life.

When Disaster Strikes

By Tony Lynn

When disaster strikes, "gold shirts" move. Some wear blue caps and others wear white caps as a distinction. Sometimes they stage themselves in advance of the catastrophe and danger. At other times, these generous heroes are instructed to stand down and arrive in waves, relieving one team after another, because the recovery in the hard hit region is going to take months. Regardless of the requests or directions, team members assist strangers because their faith in Christ drives their response to those in crisis. The Southern Baptist Disaster Relief teams have been around for fifty years. Throughout the nation over 80,000 trained volunteers respond when troubles come.

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In particular, Michigan Southern Baptists have a tested and performance-proven Disaster Relief (DR) team. They provide hot meals, clean water, childcare, laundry, and structure repairs. Many of them know how to safely cut 4-foot thick trees with chain saws. Others know how to remove the mud, filth, and water from a family's basement while comforting the grieving family members. Married couples, sons and fathers, and teams from various churches form the brotherhood known as Michigan Disaster Relief. They are an elite group who find the balance between practical, rapid assistance and emotional, spiritual care. They work hard and show their compassion for others in the tears that stream over their soiled and exhausted faces.

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If you want to know more about how to support or join the Michigan Disaster Relief Team you can find the information you need at www.bscm.org/disaster-relief.

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Michigan on Mission to St. Croix

By Stan Parker

LANSING, MI - Michigan Baptist churches have been sending mission teams to minister at home and abroad for decades. Unfortunately, many of these teams lacked representation from the African-American community. Today, we praise God that this no longer true. The Michigan African American Fellowship, a group of African-American Churches sent their first mission team to St. Croix earlier this year. The team was made up of individuals from various churches and was multi-generational. They were on mission for seven-days, serving others who were in need.

Kamyra Thomas, a student from Michigan State University was part the team. She says, "Being my first mission trip, and being able to share Jesus Christ was truly awesome and a life changing experience for me." Kamyra has already signed up to go back to St. Croix in 2018. The mission team provided ministry in the form of backyard Bible clubs, sports, face painting and skits at the Harbourview Housing Complex. Harbourview is one of the largest housing complexes on the island. The children and adults who live there opened their arms and welcomed the team with smiles and love. The residents were happy to see visitors who looked like them.

Prior to leaving for St. Croix the team was provided with mission training. The training helped the team understand the Island's needs, and how the culture, while similar, is different from the United States. Upon arrival the team was hosted by Missionary, John Smith, a native from Pontiac, Michigan, and a North American Mission Board (NAMB) church planter. Pastor Smith is the only Southern Baptist church active on St. Croix Island. Serving with Pastor Smith was indeed a joy as the team was able to help him with planting Shepherd Fold Church, while also serving the residents at Harbourview housing complex.

The mission trip became a reality due to several Fifth Sunday Fellowship Services which are sponsored by the Fellowship. The churches were challenged by the Fellowship President, Dr. Stan Parker, to become more involved with missions. Parker and Faith Fellowship Baptist Church have been involved in mission field ministry for more than twenty years. He brought his hunger for mission work to the African American Fellowship, and they answered the call. The recent trip to St. Croix provided spiritual growth for all who were part of the team, and has served to wet the appetite for others. Therefore, the Michigan African American Fellowship is making plans to return in August of 2018.

The Fifth Sunday Fellowship services also provide for training and great preaching. The Fellowship hosted a Pastor Shift Conference in April, and Pastor Mark Croston was the keynote speaker. There were seminars of evangelism, financial stewardship, missions, and a special session for pastor's wives. Parker says, "Those who attended left with a strong urgency to be part of what God is doing in Michigan as we work together to stamp out darkness in our state."

About the author: Dr. Stan Parker serves as senior pastor for the Faith Fellowship Baptist Church of Lansing, MI. He has a passion for communicating the Gospel with people of all races and in every corner of our world.

AROUND THE STATE

READ IT!

READ IT! Is a ministry of Eastside Community Church. It is a kids reading program and the children in our community love it. The program is designed to help with reading skills, especially for families with little help, no money and no time. READ IT! Focuses on getting children to read the Bible and grow in confidence both in the Word and in their reading skills. Last week 20 students attended. Eastside Community Church is providing this tool free to churches seeking ways to be part of the community. Contact Pastor Mathew Vroman for more information and to get started. Call (313) 657-1100 or email pastor@eastsidecommunitychurch.com.

CLASSIFIEDS

Classified Ad Submission Guidelines

1. Baptist Beacon classifieds are posted free of charge.
2. All classified posts will run for 2 consecutive months. Longer or shorter times may be requested. Publication of classifieds correspond with the monthly publication of the Baptist Beacon.
3. Classifieds must be from a BSCM church.
4. Be sure to include thorough details of request, name of church, contact information as well as a point of contact.
5. Submissions must be made no later than the 10th of the month prior to publication.
6. Submit all classified ads to beacon@bscm.org

ABOUT US

The Baptist Beacon is the official newsjournal of the **Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM)**, 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.

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