

STARTING

Marriage and Ministry

By Michael J. Howard II

Detroit, MI - After four long years, I walked across the stage of Truett-McConnell University believing that I had just finished the most challenging period of my life. As I began to work towards planting Greater Hope, I realized the challenges I faced in college were only the beginning. Nothing in life comes easy, but life's challenges make everything worthwhile. Eight months ago, Emma Leigh and I embarked on a new challenge called marriage and soon will face the greatest challenge - parenthood.

In college, we were taught how to parse Greek verbs, exegete Hebrew scriptures, and contextualize the Gospel, but there were no "How to be a Great Husband" or "Fatherhood 101" classes. Unlike filing your taxes, you cannot hire someone to fulfill those roles. You can read books on the topic, but I find examples from growing up speak the loudest.

Emma Leigh and I come from radically different worlds. She is from a small farm town in Illinois, grew up with both parents, and is from a relatively small family. I, however, am from the large city of Detroit, Michigan, primarily grew up in a one parent household, and have a relatively large family. Our upbringings differed racially, politically, economically, and even denominationally. Yet, God saw it just to allow our paths to cross. Two summers ago, we met at Kids Across America Kamps in Golden, Missouri. That same summer as the sun began to fall upon our first date, something unbelievable had begun. A year later, I got on one knee to "tie my shoe." Now we are married and expecting our first child! Over the years we have seen numerous examples of amazing parents, especially our own, but we could be no more excited to undertake this new, and still upcoming challenge in our life.

Years before ever meeting Emma Leigh, I prayed for my wife to be called to the same ministry as me. While on a mission trip, I saw firsthand what happens when a couple has diverging calls. The result left the church where they were serving broken and without pastoral direction. Prior to meeting my wife, God gave me a vision to equip and establish urban Christian leaders to impact their communities spiritually, educationally, and economically through continuous church planting. When we met, Emma Leigh had a passion to start a nonprofit organization to equip and impact communities in the same manner. In more ways than one, Emma Leigh was exactly what I prayed for.

Being a few months into marriage and being in the pre-launch phase of the church, we are only about 20 years from writing a book on these topics. However, this amazing challenge has been extremely educational. Emma Leigh and I being so different, at times we mix like water and oil. Our communication has had ineffective results, we do not express love in the same manner, and we've had several other challenges. Scripture teaches, that "iron sharpens iron" and that sharpening requires friction.

Just as Emma Leigh and I have faced several challenges in life and in marriage, so has the Church. At times the Church fails to communicate effectively, display love generously, and often creates an “us versus them” atmosphere. Marriages ought to reflect the relationship between Christ and the Church. Towards the closing of his letter to the Ephesians, Paul wrote about this profound mystery of marriages, but finished by directing us to the cross of Christ. Everyone will face many challenges in marriage, family, and ministry, and Jesus Christ is our only hope.

Author Bio - Michael J Howard II studied Christian Studies and World Missions at Truett-McConnell University. Upon graduating, he finished his fourth summer on staff at Kids Across America Kamps, where he met his wife, Emma Leigh. She is from Greenville, Illinois and studied Urban and Intercultural Missions at Indiana Wesleyan University and Cincinnati Christian University.

The Gathering Windsor Celebrates 3 Years!

By Garth Leno

Windsor, ON - On May 7th The Gathering celebrated its third birthday with a worship service and three baptisms. The house was filled with excitement and praise for what God has done in and through the church in three short years. Pastor Garth Leno preached another installment in the "Endangered Species" series, talking about qualities and characteristics that are in short supply in culture these days.

After the service everyone was invited to the birthday party which was held at Talbot Trail Public School. The public school board gave permission to distribute "Kids' Safety Day" invitations to more than 1,100 students in two nearby schools. A large number of guests from the community, most of whom had heard about the event through the invitations, joined The Gathering members. A myriad of languages could be heard on the playground as children played the games, filled out their "passports," and collected many prizes. There were giveaways for guests who had registered including; a bicycle, a new laptop computer, bicycle helmets, a chiropractic treatment, a spa day, Tim Horton's gift cards, and much more. Pastor Garth Leno said, "It was fun giving gifts to our community guests with no strings attached! It created opportunity for more conversations."

Because of the generosity of The Gathering family and friends, a free week of SURGE Sports and Arts Camp was given to five children and others were signed up to be a part of this summer event. Leno says, "Our plan is to build on our friendship with these families, pointing them to the God of hope and salvation." The SURGE camp will be partnered with a mission team from First Baptist Church, Mt. Juliet, TN.

Many families also took an invitation to the Free Park Event in August where The Gathering will sponsor several days of park games and activities for children SK-Grade 6 in the city-operated park located right next door to the school.. College Acres Baptist Church from Wilmington, NC, will be on hand to support that event.

Windsor Fire and Rescue came with a big red fire truck, and they welcomed kids to climb aboard and explore. A local detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police also sent a representative in full uniform in one of the police cruisers. It was a big hit.

A dedicated team of coworkers from The Gathering will follow up with every guest, calling them and delivering door prizes to people who had to leave the park before the draws were made. They also received important contact information to be added to an invitation list for future family events like Harvest Festival and Christmas services.

Leno adds, "We are so grateful to Jesus for opening the door to this community that he has laid on our hearts! We are committed to engaging the Walker Gate neighborhood this year with several special events, and we are praying that God will go before us by his grace and for his glory!"

Author Bio: Garth Leno is Senior Pastor at The Gathering in Windsor, ON

STRENGTHENING

A Work In Progress

By Diane Garza

My husband, Eli, entered the ministry after working as an engineer for 20 years. He became the Associate Pastor at First Spanish Baptist Church of Detroit and served in that role for nine years. Recognizing the need to be properly trained, Eli became a full-time seminary student. We believed God was calling him to the ministry, but were uncertain of where and in what capacity. After seeking the Lord and the counsel of others upon graduation, he accepted the call to become the Senior Pastor at First Spanish Baptist. God was calling him back to where he had started!

During the early years of ministry, I was a stay at home mom and homeschooled our two children, Cristina and Daniel, through elementary school. While Eli was in seminary I had gone back to work full time as a nurse and have continued to work full-time. Over the years, my role and level of involvement in ministry has changed depending on my stage of life, our family needs, the needs of the church and how God was leading me to serve Him. Being a Pastor's wife has been a work in progress for me, and these past 18 years I have learned and continue to learn some valuable lessons. There are times I have to revisit the lessons I thought I had already learned. If nothing else, I've learned I must always be learning.

Setting priorities

My relationship with God is my number one priority. I must be about growing in my relationship with Him by being in the Word and praying; depend on him for guidance, wisdom and the power to do life, including ministry, all while striving to become more like Jesus. Everything else flows out of my walk and obedience to the Lord. My husband and my children are my next priority. Eli and I have to work at making time for our marriage

and our relationship. We try to make time each week to do something together. It may be as simple as taking a walk together or going for coffee. At times we have planned day trips and an occasional weekend get-away.

When our kids were growing up, we had a weekly family day to do something fun together. We took family vacations in the summer. We encouraged and supported our children to participate in outside activities that interested them, both at school and in the community. We wanted them to know that they could be who they were and that Dad's calling was not what defined them.

Be Yourself

I also learned I am not called to do Eli's work, but to love and support him and use the gifts and abilities that God has given me to blend and harmonize with his calling as pastor. As a pastor's wife, there are expectations people have of who I should be and what my role should be in the church. I remember some wise advice someone gave me when I started this new role as pastor's wife, "just be yourself". These three small words have continued through the years to encourage me and challenge me. God loves me and accepts me so I need to accept myself as God has made me, with a unique personality, gifts and abilities. I believe God uses me just as I am. I don't have to change who I am or become someone else. God has a plan and purpose to use me just as I am as I serve God's people where He has placed me.

Be Flexible and Be Open

We can become very comfortable in certain roles in ministry. We find our niche and become very comfortable there. I had worked with children and youth most of my time in ministry, but when I was asked to speak at a Women's Bible Study I was very unsure of myself. It was a new experience, teaching in this type of ministry. I prayed about it and accepted reluctantly. However, God used me to speak to the women there and God used it as a stretching experience in my life, taking me out of my comfort zone. I learned to allow the new experiences to come, trust God and He will guide the direction of how He wants me to serve in ministry through new challenges and experiences.

In life we each have a calling. Our Creator has made us for a specific, divine purpose, and we should first and foremost be whom He has determined, not others. Seeking to serve God first in all things frees me of worry and struggles with worldly expectations. May you discover this same freedom as you seek to live for the Father, just as He has created you.

Author Bio - Diane was born and raised in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. She is an LPN and currently works at Beaumont Hospital Dearborn Campus in Dearborn, MI. Diane and her husband, Pastor Eli Garza, were married in 1990 and have two children: Cristina, who is 25 years old, currently a senior attending Wayne State University and Daniel, who is 22 years old, recently graduated from Spring Arbor University. Diane has been a pastor's wife since 1999 when her husband Eli left his engineering career to become Associate Pastor at First Spanish Baptist Church.

Association pioneers church revitalization model

by David Roach

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ST. LOUIS (BP) -- Two years ago, First Baptist Church of Affton, Mo., knew it was dying. So it sought help from the local St. Louis Metro Baptist Association. In a process facilitated by executive director of missions Jim Breeden, First Baptist decided to replant itself in March 2016 as Church at Affton, led by replanter Jason Helmbacher. During its first year, the replant baptized 15 new believers and has come to average just over 100 worship attendees -- about 40 of whom were First Baptist members before the replant.

Helmbacher described the church as being "reborn for the sake of the Gospel," according to a video on the association's website. Within the St. Louis metro area, Church at Affton is not alone in its testimony of revitalization. Among the 140 congregations that cooperate with the local Baptist association, more than 30 have participated in an association-led revitalization process over the past seven years, Breeden told Baptist Press, with more than a dozen opting to replant as new churches.

The replants have experienced a collective 400 percent increase in worship attendance, Breeden said. That success has led the St. Louis Metro Association to partner with the North American Mission Board in publishing resources for church replants -- including the Associational Replant Guide -- that it hopes will spur sister associations to similar success. The resources are available at www.churchreplanters.com.

Revitalization process

In St. Louis, church revitalization begins when a congregation that is plateaued or declining requests help from the association. At times a church initiates contact, and at times the association does. Citing data from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Breeden estimates 90 percent of churches -- both large and small -- may be candidates for revitalization. Each revitalization effort is led by the association's church revitalization team (CRT), which comprises pastors who have revitalized or replanted congregations in St. Louis. The CRT evaluates the church under consideration. Then a series of meetings culminates in recommendations the church must accept or reject in a business meeting.

The recommendations are always customized, Breeden said. "There's not a one-size-fits-all or a cookie-cutter approach," Breeden said. "Every church is unique, and every situation is unique. Every part of St. Louis, for that matter, is unique and needs a church that's healthy and fits their culture."

The association's church revitalization manual notes six potential courses of action that may be recommended to a congregation:

- Change "systems, structures and strategies that need to be changed to effectively fulfill the Great Commandment and the Great Commission in the church's current context." This course of action is the least drastic and "may or may not require new leadership," the manual states.

- Partner with a stronger church as a mission or satellite campus.
- Replant the church.
- Merge with one or more sister churches.
- Transition the facility from housing one church to serving as "a center for many ministries to reach a community. This could include multiple churches meeting in one building and/or several types of ministries to be started or invited to join at a single location."
- Sell the building and start a church planting fund.

In every case, Breeden said, associational leaders "don't do things to churches" but "with churches." If a church does not affirm the CRT's recommendations, the association exits the revitalization process and seeks to support the congregation in other ways.

Replicating the model

One key leader in helping other associations launch revitalization ministries like that of the St. Louis Metro Association is Bob Bickford. Called in 2012 as pastor of declining Sherwood Baptist Church in St. Louis, he led the congregation to replant as The Groves Church and began to dialog with other replanters in the process. Within months of launching the replant, he joined the CRT and currently chairs it. As Bickford's passion for church replanting increased, he launched churchreplanters.com in 2015, with testimonies, forums and other resources for replants. This year, Bickford joined NAMB's replant team as associate director, and his website has been incorporated into NAMB's church replanting strategy.

"Our prayer," Bickford told BP in written comments, is that the St. Louis Metro Association's approach "will serve to further the work of replanting by equipping directors of missions, associations and churches to envision what God can do when a church determines to make courageous decisions and changes necessary to see their congregation move from decline and near death to life."

Johnny Rumbough, associational missions emphasis coordinator for the Southern Baptist Conference of Associational Leaders, echoed that sentiment. Breeden "is a seasoned and skilled leader on the topic of church health and revitalization," Rumbough, executive director of missions for the Lexington (S.C.) Baptist Association, told BP in written comments. "He understands the necessity to have the right leaders equipped and available to customize the revitalization process for each church requesting assistance, which is the key to the association's effectiveness. "The St. Louis Metro Baptist Association has created a church health culture," Rumbough said, "and a process for assisting that is a model for associations today."

David Roach is chief national correspondent for Baptist Press, the Southern Baptist Convention's news service. BP reports on missions, ministry and witness advanced through the Cooperative Program and on news related to Southern Baptists' concerns nationally and globally.

Being a “Great” Grandfather is a matter of choice

By Jimmy Jones

Waterford, MI - The Lord in His wisdom and grace gave Adam a free will. And every one of his descendants has the same gift. Throughout the day we are constantly making choices, some simple and some very important.

I am going to suggest some very important choices in seeking to be a Great Grandfather.

1. You have to start right to end right. The most important choice you will ever make is to receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. This decision will influence every other choice you make during your whole life, including your preparation for being a Great Grandfather. Matt. 6:33
2. Your second most important choice is your mate for life. I was blessed of the Lord that just as I was starting to date, I committed my life to Christ. My pastor shared in a sermon, “God gives the best to those who leave the choice to Him. And it worked, in three months Kay and I will celebrate our 60th anniversary. Proverbs 18:22 Ephesians 5:25
3. As you grow you find that you constantly have to choose priorities in your life. Your first priority must always be to put the Lord first. Seek and follow His will daily. Prov. 3:5-6. Your second priority must be to your family. Many have placed their priority on their ministry and lost their families. This is tragic. Paul in I Timothy 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6; and Ephesians 5:25, 6:6:4 expresses that a prerequisite for ministry is to love and be faithful to your wife and minister to your children. And this is accelerated when grandchildren come into your life.
4. You make a choice concerning your role as a grandfather. I read a quote from a book written by Steve Farrar, “Do you have a one-hundred year vision of anchoring your children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren in Christ?” Wow! What a challenge! Especially for me since I have children, grandchildren and great-grand-children living within 40 miles of my house. I had to examine my record.

We have loved them:

Kay and I have made it a priority to pray for them. We have prayed for the Lord’s will in their lives concerning spiritual growth, marriage, vocation, education, health, mission trips, safety, and many other concerns across the years. We have bought children’s Bibles, Christian videos, and devotional books for them. We have sought to model what following Christ is in own lives.

We have made it a priority to be involved in their lives. We have driven all across the country to celebrate birthdays, holidays, weddings, graduations, and special events in their lives. We have taken them with us to Ridgecrest NC and the Great Smokey Mts., Glorieta NM and the Grand Canyon, and of course Bambi Lake. We have visited them in Ohio, Georgia, and Texas as they were growing up.

We have tried to be helpful in finances: buying cars, going on mission trips, educational expenses, gifts, and other opportunities where help was needed. Let me share one example of a great time together. It was in the mid-nineties. I was serving as State

Evangelism Director and travelled all over the country. Every time I saw the grandchildren, Erin, the oldest would ask, "Where have you been Pawpaw? I would answer Atlanta, Fort Worth, and Ridgecrest. She then ask, "Did you fly?" I would answer, "Yes". Then she would say, "Pawpaw, we never flied". After several times of repeating those words, I decided to do something about it. I saw an ad in the paper that Northwest Airlines had a special one-way fare from Bishop Airport in Flint to Midway Airport in Chicago for \$19.00. I immediately bought 4 tickets. David and the three oldest flew to Chicago, while Kay, Pam, and Caleb rode with me in our van to meet them at the airport. What a glorious time. Erin was still in the air when we met them, explaining how high they were. "We couldn't see the people or even the houses", she exclaimed. We stayed a couple of days in a downtown hotel and visited the museums, the aquarium, and many good restaurants. I have visited 28 foreign countries, including a trip around the world. I have been involved in mission trips to Australia, Botswana, South Africa, and the Philippines. I have visited all 50 states, but ask me my most enjoyable trip and I will answer, "It was to Chicago with my grandchildren in 1995."

Now we have great-grandchildren, three boys and two girls. The last two were twins, a boy and a girl. I want to join my son to give them a legacy of following the Lord. As I questioned other grandfathers I was convicted that I had not done more to prepare my grandchildren. One grandfather writes a letter to one of his grandchildren every week to encourage them. He has six grand-children so each one receives a letter every six weeks. Another grandfather keeps a daily journal, to leave a record of his personal journey with the Lord for his grandchildren. Still another asks each of his grandchildren to spend a day with him every year to just do whatever they want to do. I am sure that if you choose to be a great grandfather the Lord will direct you to be creative in your relationship to your grand children who are already great. I personally have made a commitment to be the grandfather the Lord wants me to be. I remember what Dr. Edman, president of Wheaton College told us 60 years ago, "It's always too soon to quit."

All our grandchildren and their families know they are always welcome at Mimi's and Pawpaw's house. There will always be love, prayer, a hug, acceptance, encouragement, support, a good story, and something good to eat. I am a Great-grandfather, my goal is to be a Great Grand Father and leave a legacy for the next 100 years. How about you?

Jimmy Jones lives in Waterford, Michigan. He is the pastor of First Baptist Church in Trenton, MI, part of the Greater Detroit Association. He was born in Detroit, Michigan and lived there as well as in Garden City and Westland. He was saved during VBS at the Springwells Avenue Baptist Church in 1943 and later baptized at New Hope Baptist in Dearborn. Jimmy accepted the call to preach at First Baptist Church of Wayne, MI before being ordained at First Baptist Church Trenton, MI. Jimmy and Kay were married in the summer of 1957 just before starting seminary. He has been serving the Lord in full time ministry ever since, including positions of leadership at the BSCM, SBC and LifeWay.

Chaplain's Sacred Moments

By Chaplain Bob Dennis

Fenton, MI - My office is alongside the entrance to our beautiful Grand Rapids Home for Veterans Chapel which has a vaulted ceiling with stained glass imbedded. The members living at our facility find it a place of worship, and often a quiet meeting place with God.

Whenever possible I leave my office door open to make myself available should someone want to see their pastor-chaplain.

One afternoon a tall well dressed man walked through the door with his shiny shoes and urban dress hat. He asked "is Chaplain Poston here I need to talk to him." I explained to him that I was the chaplain that took his place when he went Home to be with the Lord at the age of 61.

His facial expression dropped, and so did he as he flopped into the chair beside the door. In a very sacred moment the bewildered gentleman explained that he was a "drunk" living in the Grand Rapids Home for Veterans domiciliary, and Chaplain Poston took him along side and explained that God had a better plan for his life than the one he was living. He explained that through the Biblical teaching of Chaplain Poston, and the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, he is now a successful urban pastor with his own flock to watch after. He had made the trip on this day to thank Chaplain Poston in person for helping him find a much better life of happiness in Christ.

This young urban pastor said he will teach his congregation the same things Chaplain Poston had taught him; the fear of God, the love of God and the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ who has a better plan for our lives than sin.

The man left as quickly as he came, never telling me his name. While only a brief encounter it was a very sacred moment that set in on me as I started to ponder this message from God. I had just made it 90% of the way through my day doing busy work like meetings, trainings, lining up programs and services, yet had not shared the Saving Grace of our Lord Jesus with anyone. God sent a messenger to me from the legacy of my "late" mentor. I had worked with Chaplain Poston for many years, but he needed to give me one more training posthumously.

This sacred moment was a "wakeup call" for this chaplain to not wait until Sunday's Alter Call to share the Amazing Grace of our Lord Jesus. I need to look, listen, and share Jesus all along the trail to Sunday. We never know whom God may have to cross our paths. Be ready and be willing.

CONTACT INFORMATION: If you have been called by God to be a chaplain or to be of support to our chaplains in prayer please feel free to contact me at (bdennis@bscm.org).

You can also see more information on our BSCM website at bscm.org and look under "SEND" to find the Chaplaincy page.

2017 BSCM EVENTS FOR CHAPLAINS: The first annual BSCM Chaplain Training will be at the Church Equipping Conference on September 16, 2017. We have a great key note speaker and meaningful topics selected.

Commitment, compromise, and Christ

By Jim and Cozee Warner

Onaway, MI - August 21, 2017 will mark our 46th wedding anniversary. 46 years... seems like 46 days at times. Honestly, sometimes it does seem longer.

We are flattered that we were asked to write a short article about marriage, and specifically, about our Christian marriage, one that has endured. Marriage is a marathon, not a sprint; and couples looking to “tie the knot” this summer would do well to seriously contemplate the sanctity of marriage, the solemnness of their vows, and the seriousness of their promise. For us, marriage is a combination of three key factors – all under our control. We avoid the blame game, and particularly avoid looking at circumstances as being the controlling factors to our joy and happiness.

Commitment

First of the factors is Commitment. The promises we made to each other, before God, to stay together in “sickness and in health” and until “death do us part” were important and we meant them. Genesis 2:24 describes marriage as a “leave and cleave” arrangement. We understood the “leave” admonition quite well; by August 1971 we were both living independently of our parents. So, the “cleave” portion was what we focused on. We understood that the old Hebrew word “cleave” literally means “stick-like-glue”. We, still today, when counseling a prospective bride and groom, ask them to glue two paper dolls together and set them aside while we talk. After a few minutes, we ask them about their thoughts on divorce and then ask them to pull the two paper dolls apart. Of course, it makes a mess. The one paper doll “sticks-like-glue” to the other, and the dolls tear and parts of the boy doll are even stuck to the girl doll and vice versa. This picture of divorce is telling and sobering. We agreed, even before our wedding ceremony, that divorce was not only off the table, but banned from our vocabulary and thus, divorce was never a factor in our decision making.

Compromise

Our second marriage focus was on Compromise. By compromise, we mean that we see marriage as a holy union of two souls that God loves without measure, and our interaction in that marriage should mirror the love of God. Of all the issues, arguments, and disagreements we have weathered; each and every one was resolved by love – given and received in humility. The Bible tells women to submit; yet warns the husband against being harsh and arbitrary. The Bible requires that husbands love their wives (Ephesians 5:25) and that wives love their husbands (Titus 2:4). Wives are to honor their man as we treat our wives as a fragile and precious people (I Peter 3:7).

Christ

The last point in our three-pronged view of marriage is Christ. Christ is the head of the church and the head of the family. Early in our marriage we discovered the benefit of worshipping, studying, and praying together. Proverbs 3:6 (NKJV) says, “In all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths”. We can give testimony that God is faithful and His Word is sure. God has directed our paths.

Immediately after we were married, we applied to two different missions' agencies, volunteering our services in foreign fields. As house parents, teachers, or administrative helpers; we were open to God's call. Our applications were summarily rejected. Yet our hearts burned to "do God's will". Over the next 10 years God grew us, moved us, and prepared us; we believe He directed our paths. In January 1981, we were accepted to full-time employment in Europe ... with the US Government! During the next 26 years, we lived and served in England and Germany for the Lord. We taught, counseled, ministered, and even pastored bi-vocationally in our own God-ordained mission; including being involved in a mission/church-plant in eastern Poland.

Commitment, compromise, and Christ are still the key factors to our Christian marriage.

Jim and Cozee Warner are now retired from US Civil Service and have been serving as Pastor and wife at Onaway Baptist Chapel, Onaway, Michigan since January 2012. They have two grown and married children and eight grandchildren.

Countdown to Marriage Bliss

By Dr. Larry Q. Allen

Warren, MI - By the time you read this I will have celebrated twelve years of wedded bliss to my wonderful wife Mary. It's actually been forty-two years, but I'm just not sure bliss describes them all. Don't get me wrong, there are no regrets, at least from me, it's just that bliss doesn't describe it all. According to dictionary.com, the definition of bliss is, supreme happiness; utter joy or contentment. So, I figure out of the last forty-two years, we've had at least twelve years of bliss and thirty years that were really good.

One thing is for sure, over the last forty-two years I have learned a few things. While I am not really an expert in all things marriage, I am a doctor and Mary tells me often that I am "certifiable." So, I guess I might have some credibility in this area. Here are some things I have been learning so in David Letterman style I will countdown the top ten.

10. The union of marriage is the blending of two cultures. The blending of cultures is a real adventure. Every family has its own culture and marriage brings those cultures together. Sometimes it's like bringing together a vegan and a cannibal and that's exciting. Enjoy the thrill!
9. Marriage takes practice. Once the wedding is behind you and the honeymoon is over the real thing begins. As a newlywed, you may think you are God's gift but the truth is you are clueless. Marriage is kind of like the climbing rope back in Junior High School gym. We were required to climb the rope to the top of the gym. It took me several tries over the entire span of my ninth-grade year. But finally, I was able to haul my big self up that rope. When it comes to marriage - keep climbing. You are going to have to practice a lot to figure out how best to be married.
8. Never lie to your spouse. One lie leads to two and two leads to three. You get the idea. You are not smart enough to keep track and you will get caught. When you

- get caught in a lie your spouse is going to find it difficult to trust you. Believe it or not, trust is important in marriage, so, don't lie.
7. Don't always be honest. This may seem like a contradiction it's not. Guys when your wife asks "Does this make me look fat?" and it does, you cannot, must not, tell her the truth! Instead try this: "Honey your beauty transcends everything. Your beauty is so complete that nothing you wear could ever add to or take away from it!" Not only have you avoided a catastrophe you have scored some serious points. So, note number nine above and practice your lines so you'll be ready when you need them.
 6. Always practice the Pence Protections (as in Vice President Pence). No this is not some new type of birth control. Well, I suppose it could be. Simply stated; guard your virtue by never being alone with the opposite sex in person or online. It may seem prudish but it will guarantee that you will never compromise your vows.
 5. Your kids are a danger to your marriage. Kids are a positive side effect of marriage but they can also put a strain on it. The good news is they are temporary. Well, sort of. They should eventually get out of your house. Don't buy that business about "empty nest syndrome." It's really empty nest celebration. When the kids leave your spouse will still be there. Be sure your kids haven't gotten between the two of you.
 4. Pay attention. When your spouse changes their hair color, or gets a new hairdo, or shaves their mustache you should let her know you noticed. Note to wives; If your husband trims his nose hair and toenails (or after 42 years his ear hair) you should let him know you noticed.
 3. Don't forget. Special days are important. Birthdays, anniversaries, when you first met, the last time the Tigers won the world series, these are all important days that should be remembered and appropriately commemorated.
 2. Forget about it. 1 Corinthians 13:5 says that love "does not keep a record of wrongs." Guys, all those things your wife said to you during childbirth, forget about it. Wives, all those dumb things your husband has said to you because, well, they're just not that bright, forget about it. It's not worth holding a grudge.
 1. Paul said it best in Ephesians 5:33; "each one of you is to love his wife as himself, and the wife is to respect her husband." Men, love your wives with a self-sacrificing love. Wives, give your husbands your unconditional respect. Paul summarizes everything he taught about marriage with those two ideas. These two things will lead to wedded bliss. Husband, love your wife. Wife, respect your husband.

That's a few of the lessons I've been learning over the past forty-two years. I still have much to learn. But, I know this for sure it keeps getting better all the time.

Bio: Larry Q. Allen is Senior Pastor of Warren Woods Baptist Church, in Warren, MI. He and Mary have been married for 42 years.

“Don’t Stay Home”

By Ian Minielly

The Devil Wins, When People Stay Home

Ironwood, MI - There has been a battle for the souls of humanity since the garden. The Devil is constantly working, prowling around the edge of the fire, in an effort to pick people off and deceive them, keeping them from a relationship with God. In the middle we stand as a people, on one side is God, having given us the freedom to believe or not, and on the other, the Devil, working feverishly to keep people's hope in God dim, and hope in man, bright.

If the essence of wisdom is doing the will of God, “For the wisdom of this world is folly with God” (1 Cor 3: 19-22). We also see the essence of foolishness is placing a personal interest before the will of God. For God, “knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.” Paul wrote these words to the Corinthian church regarding worship, division, and the attitudes of the believers, because as Paul wrote we are Christ’s, and Christ is God.

With these words to the Corinthian church in mind, it is hard to listen to people say they listened to a sermon on the radio, Internet, or television on Sunday, when they did not go to church. As if this is the same thing! Certainly, there might be times when listening to a transmitted sermon is good and not damaging to the local church. However, for a healthy and mobile person to claim a transmitted sermon in their home is the equivalent of corporately worshipping with other believers is the height of foolishness, and a signature of the Devil’s deceptions finding a home in their life.

What happens when an able-bodied person decides to stay home instead of worship with other believers?

- There is a lack of fellowship with other believers. Imagine the words of 1 John 1: 6-7, “If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.”
- There is an absence of tithing and support to and within the church. Fellowshiping with others is a challenge, we are of one body and all parts of the body are important, so when people stay home and away from other believers, they grieve the Holy Spirit by robbing the church of their presence, their experiences, and their gifts. What they are doing instead is trying to keep the power of God for themselves, not much different than Simon the Magician wanting the power of the Spirit to glorify himself.
- Staying away from a church is a sign of pride that the church and the people in it are not good enough for them, and they are better off staying at home and worshipping on their own. The “Christian” takes on the characteristics of the Pharisee in Luke 18: 9-14, exalting themselves, while totally missing how depraved they are, and it is only through God’s mercy we and they are not condemned.

When Christians stay home on Sundays and elect to not get involved with the church other days of the week, they have fallen under a level of deception that places the things of the world before the Kingdom of God. There is a major misplacing of trust with the things of the flesh, and a minimizing of God's redemptive plan. There is nothing we can do more important than God's plan. Yet Christians think it is OK to find any number of reasons to avoid the church, and being a part of the Kingdom. Jesus was not lying when he said some people were going to find themselves surprised at judgment, when he says he never knew them.

Church planter Ian Minielly, living deep behind enemy lines at the Catalyst Baptist Church Ironwood, Michigan of the Upper Peninsula Association, Ian is making ground, doing the work.

Jesus Changes Fatherhood

By Dan Ghramm

Hudsonville, MI - A close friend called me yesterday and asked if I could use a quick coffee break at Biggby's. He had something that he needed to tell me right away. I'm always up for coffee, but I was a bit nervous because the last time he said something like this, he told me about something one of my kids was doing that needed to be addressed. This time, it was quite different. He smiled from ear to ear as he shared that he and his wife were expecting a baby. This is such good news because there was a lot of uncertainty if they could even have children.

I celebrated with my friend, but it brought me back to the early days of diapers, teething, toddling, and everything else that comes with little ones. My wife, Amanda, and I have five children. The oldest will have his driver's license soon and the youngest will start kindergarten in the fall. We have a full house.

At Redemption Church, we use a simple but profound phrase – *Jesus changes everything!* This includes my role as a dad. As I thought of what my Heavenly Father has done for me through Jesus I became keenly aware of how all that impacts how I parent. Three big ideas came to mind: embrace, empower, and embark.

God loved me so much that he gave his Son to die for me. I know I am loved. I want my children to know they are loved and embraced also. I don't want them to ever doubt either their heavenly and earthly father's love them. I make a point to tell my children how much I love them – every day if possible. God reminds me of his love so I want to do the same for my children.

God empowers me through his Holy Spirit. He has given me everything I need for life and godliness. I want to give my children everything they need to grow and blossom and mature – knowledge, resources, feedback, encouragement, instruction. I desire to provide an environment where they can grow, but continually prepare them for a very hostile world that will challenge their faith.

God has a mission for me. I am his ambassador and representative. My mission is to beg people to be reconciled to God. As a father, I have responsibility to help my children embark on the same mission. The goals of education, career, and family are good, but if my children do not have making disciples their primary goal in life, I have not done my job properly. Disciples make disciples. I must train my kids to share their faith and show others how to follow Jesus. Overwhelming at times for sure, but crucially important.

I am grateful I get to be a father. I'm thankful for my heavenly and earthly fathers. I pray that God will help me to be the dad he wants me to be. Recently I had the privilege of baptizing my four oldest children, including my son Joshua on April 30, 2017. Words are not sufficient to explain how incredible the feeling was at that moment.

Dan Ghramm serves as a Church Planting Catalyst with BSCM/NAMB in Southwest Michigan. He is married to Amanda, a Sign Language Interpreter. They have five children: Elijah (15), Malia (13), Jacob (10), Joshua (7), and Sophia (5). They live in Hudsonville, Michigan and are members at Redemption Church, a two year old church plant in Grandville a suburb of Grand Rapids.

My Dad

By Staff

My dad was one of the youngest in a family of 7 children. His older brothers were fighter pilots in World War II or soldiers on the front lines in Europe. His sisters helped out in the dress shop their mother ran. Dad was left to himself a lot and was trying to live up to the standard set by big brothers and sisters. As a result, dad joined the Marine Corp in 1952. It was maybe the hardest experience of his life and would impact him until the day he passed.

Mom and dad had three boys, I was the youngest, my sister would follow some 7 years later. We would get army fatigues (camos) for Christmas, taught to shoot and hunt at an early age, and the right of passage was when dad felt you were grown up enough he gave you one of his prized pocket knives. The very same day I got mine I cut my thumb wide open. Never did see that knife again. He took us camping and hiking. We went horseback riding and on fishing trips.

It is true what they say, over time we tend to remember more of the good than bad. Things weren't always great in our home. Dad drove an eighteen wheel truck for a living. He would often leave out on Sunday evening and not return before late Friday night. We never had much money, though I confess it never seemed to matter. Life was a struggle. We moved a lot. But my memories remain focused on the good times.

One of the best times was on a Sunday night in June. Back then you went to church on Sunday morning, Sunday evening and again on Wednesday night. Besides the church service we had Sunday School, there was Training Union and of course choir practice. This particular Sunday evening was hot, and all of the stained glass windows were raised high to allow in the cool evening air as the preacher spoke.. Well, I had been

feeling something eating at me since the Sunday morning service. While I was unsure what it was all about when it came time for the invitation, I knew I needed to respond. Of course, when you are the youngest of three boys you are forced to sit as far away from the protection of mom and dad.

When I tried to step in front of my two brothers to get to the aisle they blocked me. When I tried to move behind them they again blocked me. By the time I climbed up into the seat portion of the pew my shoes were making enough racket both parents noticed. All the while inside I'm in fear of going to hell because of my brothers being brothers. I was crying and confused because the invitation had now ended. As we sat back down mom gave me a tissue to wipe my face. All I could think of was at least when I enter hell I won't have snot dripping from my nose.

When the service ended dad, realizing what was going on, wrapped his big, muscular arms around me and walked me to the front. Pastor Perry was still there and I told him I wanted to be saved, if it wasn't too late. That night the pastor and my dad took me into an empty Sunday School room and shared scripture with me. My dad led me in the prayer of salvation. You cannot imagine how I was beaming when we got in the car where the family had been waiting. I had not only bypassed hell, I met Jesus because my dad's love led me to the throne.

What an amazing difference it made in my life. The following Sunday I asked my dad to accompany me as I walked to the front of the church during the invitation. Pastor Perry was smiling from ear to ear as he shook my hand and introduced me to the congregation. He also took a minute to reference my story from last Sunday night, including my two mischievous brothers. I was never more happy, and from that day forward my dad and I shared a special bond. Sure life was tough growing up, but the bad memories have faded away and the wonderful grace of God has continued to permeate my life all because my dad cared about Jesus enough to share Him with me. Happy Father's Day, dad! I love you and miss you.

Rural Bapt. church sees 900 baptisms in 6 years

by Grace Thornton/The Alabama Baptist

GADSDEN, Ala. (BP) -- In 1995, Joey Hanner was a trucker who was about to give up on his marriage -- and he was one Sunday service away from giving up on church too. "We were going to give church one more try and then we were going to end our marriage," he said. They were so mad at each other they hadn't even realized that day was their 12th wedding anniversary, Hanner said. And they had no idea it was about to become an even more significant date.

During the altar call, Hanner and wife Connie both separately ran down the aisle, only to look up from tearful, broken prayers and see the other one kneeling there too. "We both got saved that day," Hanner said. "God healed me and He got me out of my truck and into ministry." And ever since then, he's had no problems telling anybody and everybody about the hope that Jesus offers.

Something missing

But when Hanner became pastor of Union No. 3 Baptist Church near Gadsden, Ala., six years ago, he knew he and his church were missing something important. He went to an event in North Carolina where discipleship was emphasized, and with a burdened heart he came back and asked a question to the congregation of about 130 people. "I asked them to stand if they had been discipled one on one before and only two people stood up," he said.

That lit a fire in Hanner and it kicked off a movement toward discipleship in the rural church, which sits on 82 acres "15 minutes from everything," he said. They've seen 900 baptized in the past six years and grown from averaging 130 to 700 on a Sunday morning. And they've moved from one service to two. "We're a very strong evangelistic church," Hanner said, noting that about 50 people go out every Sunday and Thursday from the church to make visits in the community.

One on one

But not only that -- they follow it up with discipleship, he said. Hundreds have been discipled one on one by other members of Union No. 3 Baptist since he asked that question years ago. "Since we started discipling, our church has matured. We've caught the vision of what a true Acts 1:8 church should look like," Hanner said. "When you cross those borders, when you begin to really get into God's Word, you get to the point where you will go anywhere, say anything and talk to anyone for the sake of the Gospel." That's why Dan Garland, director of pastoral ministries and church consulting for LifeWay Christian Resources, said he recommended Union No. 3 Baptist to be featured in a video at the 2017 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting June 13–14 in Phoenix, Ariz.

"I was impressed with the number of young men who are being discipled at the church," Garland said. "We're talking about a church in the middle of nowhere ... and some people drive more than a half hour to be a part. It's a great church and God is doing amazing things there." The key to all of it has been the church growing and maturing in Christ, Hanner said.

"It's been humbling and phenomenal to see what God has done. We're just trying to stay out of His way."

Grace Thornton is a correspondent for The Alabama Baptist (thealabamabaptist.org), newsjournal of the Alabama Baptist Convention.

SENDING

'Refreshing' Dallas Send Conf. casts mission vision

by Josie Bingham

DALLAS (BP) -- Among a sea of attendees and volunteers in the Dr. Pepper Arena, the North American Mission Board and the International Mission Board's Send Conference challenged attendees to examine and redefine their lives on mission. More than 4,000 people paid and registered for the sold-out conference May 19-20 less than 30 miles north of Dallas in Frisco, Texas, which drew people from all states and three continents.

"Be careful not to manufacture a heart for missions outside a heart for Christ," IMB president David Platt said to the crowd during opening session. "There is no one without the other, and if you think there is, you've got to redefine your thinking. There are times in your life that are redefining, and that's what we're praying the next couple of days will be."

The theme, Redefine, brought church revitalizer John Herring of First Baptist Church in Prosper, Texas, back to Send even though he had attended the first one in Long Beach, Ca., earlier this year in February. This time, Herring brought 20 church members to Dallas for two days of biblical teaching and next steps. "The conference was encouraging and refreshing for us personally, and it was incredibly helpful for us in our work at First Prosper," Herring said. "We talk a lot about Jesus' mission at our church -- that we are called to be sent. Send helped us refocus on that mission and put feet to it."

Send in Dallas included worship led by Austin Stone Worship, Thomas Keys III and Crowder, and main sessions and breakouts with 30 diverse topics and speakers. "The breakout sessions were especially helpful," Herring noted. "At the conclusion of Send, my notebook was filled with pages of ideas and resources. What a blessing to have some 'blue sky' moments under the wisdom of these experienced leaders."

Church planter Aaron Clayton of Remedy Church in Waxahachie, Texas, was also taking notes with hopes to bring back "some nuts and bolts for how we can effectively equip and send church planters." "I am also looking forward to bringing back some fresh enthusiasm and energy," Clayton said. "I am hoping our people catch more of the vision for why and how they can live on mission in all of life. I hope they feel better equipped and more confident themselves and in their ability to rally together in community to live out the mission of God." With breakouts such as "Addressing poverty through local schools," "Risk in missions," "Leading women to advance the Gospel," "Leveraging the power of ordinary" and "Giving purpose to our jobs," the conference reinforced how every believer -- at any time -- can be on mission.

New Orleans youth minister and bivocational church planter Dallas Guidry, of Lakeshore Church in Louisiana, called the conference "unlike any other." "There are so many lost where our church plant is," Guidry said. "But it's all about relationships. Right now, I'm in seminary and coaching a baseball team. I'm developing trust and relationships with those around me by being engaged in the community. And coming to this Send

conference, I feel more refreshed than ever. It's awesome to see how people here are so willing to support one another in living on mission for God's glory. Everything we do is for Him."

A similar spirit and enthusiasm for missions gripped many hearts at the event. Georgia College and State University (GCSU) student Carson Gregors and her peers drove 14 hours to attend Send in Dallas.

Gregors and 12 others started Full Accord Ministry (FAM) to serve their fellow students on campus with authentic family relationships. They attended the Send Conference to take leadership tips and engagement tactics home to students at GCSU in Milledgeville, Ga. "I was especially looking forward to what Kathy Litton had to say about women in mission," she said. "She has incredible insight and hearing her breakout talk was inspiring. It was so great to hear such strong truth spoken over discipleship. It revolutionized how I'm going to approach my small group when I get back to school in the fall." "It's so encouraging to see thousands of people at an event focused on helping believers take Jesus to the people around them as an everyday lifestyle," said Kevin Ezell, NAMB's president. "I am thrilled as well to see such a young, diverse group. So many pastors worked hard to bring their people. The conference is for them, so it is great to see so many participate."

Every video, social media post, breakout and main session was designed to share messages that moved people toward their next missional opportunity. "It's exhilarating to see local churches taking mission seriously," Platt said. "And that's what this conference is all about: Men and women from churches in all 50 states and Canada -- and a few other countries, as well -- considering how God has sent them right where they live for the spread of the Gospel and contemplating where God might lead them around the world to people who've never heard of the Gospel. "It's an awesome sight," he said, "to see thousands of people at a conference representing thousands of churches in the SBC and beyond who together are saying that we want to spend our lives making disciples from our neighbors to the nations."

Josie Bingham is a writer for the North American Mission Board.

COLUMNS

Father Hunger

By Tim Patterson

Fenton, MI - "Diets are for people who are thick and tired of it!" I read that line in one of those humorous greeting cards some years ago, and I have never forgotten it. It sort of sums up the whole reason for trying to cut back on the groceries and trim off a few pounds.

Since our married life began, Sabrina and I have been on some kind of a diet for each and every day of that span of time. Being in ministry is not conducive for healthy eating. There are way too many pot-luck dinners, socials, banquets, weddings, anniversaries and lunch meetings. In the midst of all of "fellowshipping" we have dieted. You name it! We have tried it! Fad diets. Sane diets. Insane diets. Grapefruit diets. Protein diets. No fat diets. No sugar diets. Hot dog diets. (Really! I liked this one since I am a connoisseur of quality dogs.)

The one characteristic of each and every one of those diets is that I get hungry. I mean the kind of hungry that tells your stomach that your throat has been cut. Not just hungry in general, but specifically and pointedly hungry. Anyone can eat enough grapefruit so that you won't have an unquenchable desire for much of anything. You will just have an enormous urge to go to the bathroom. Yet a craving hunger goes beyond the general.

Some time ago, Sabrina and I decide to get serious about our weight and began a sensible and balanced diet. (Well, she is serious about it!) She works really hard at it and I periodically work hard at it. But the truth of the matter is that I still get hungry for certain things. Some days I just want a big ol' juicy hot dog with all the trimmings. Nothing else will do. It's got to be a "dog" and not some imitation soy substitute. That which you crave is the only thing that will satisfy a craving hunger. Nothing else will do. What is fascinating to me is that you don't REALLY crave something until you cannot have it. At least I don't. When something is taken away and is no longer available then the desire for that one object becomes unbearable.

I crave a great many things in my life. Not just food. I crave and long for places and periods in life that have brought me great joy or peace. I long for the sounds and seasons of days gone by and the feelings of comfort that come from carefree days of a less cluttered life. I hunger and crave for old friends and family. It has become apparent that I have a desperately gnawing father hunger. It is a hunger to be with and talk to my father who has been gone for many years now. It is a hunger to hear his voice and glean from him words of wisdom and advice. To sing along with one of his old country songs and smell the sweet aroma of Old Spice after his morning shower.

I have a hunger to go fishing at Shores Creek, and gather wild plums in old well buckets and paper grocery sacks. It's a hunger to eat pecans freshly exposed by a deft hand and very sharp, Old Timer pocket knife.

There is a hunger in my soul to play catch in the back yard with a new ball glove and a patient pitcher who never threw hard. Nagging at my heart is a hunger to work on an old 1950 Chevy truck with a man that knew every bolt and nut of that antique machine personally. There is a hunger in me to hunt jackrabbits on a cold winter night, and hear my father tell of how good he is with a pistol and then watch him amaze me with the facts. When cravings such as these for my dad begin to pull at my soul until it aches, it is then that I am reminded as to how temporal and fragile our lives really are.

Many times we speak of the "tie that binds" not realizing how frayed this cord has become. Any and all of us are but just a threads breadth away from death. Just the slightest of a tug from heaven will cause it to snap and the separation is complete. The way I see things is that there are certain hungers and cravings that should not be denied while others should be battled with all our might. Foods filled with fat-grams, saturated with sugar, and chocked full of cholesterol should be denied. But father hungers and the like, should be joyfully surrendered to.

I have taken a long hard look at our physiques and have determined that fat is going to be with us forever, but our fathers will not. Give in to the cravings that really count while you can. Love and indulge your father cravings while he is still here. Not just on Father's Day, but every day. I miss you, Dad.

Empty Nest... If I had only known!

By Mike Durbin

Fenton, MI - Shar and I sat across the table from our youngest son Jon and his fiancé Bonnie. They were in their second year of college and we were glad to see them. Jon caught us completely off guard a few weeks earlier when he told us that he was getting an apartment. Between classes, work and time with Bonnie, we only caught glimpses of him coming and going. I was seriously not ready for him to move out. We helped him move, but as we left him at his apartment there was a loneliness in me that's hard to describe. As we drove away I realized I wasn't ready to be an empty nester.

I should have been. We had been through a similar situation when our oldest son, Christian, moved out. He was in college and engaged to Brooke. He bought a house and rented rooms to his buddies until just before he married Brooke. The rehearsal was emotionally draining. I could hardly say a word without crying. I blubbered through the whole evening. It was so bad I wondered if I could make it through the ceremony - so did everyone else. With God's help, I pulled myself together and the ceremony was beautiful.

Now we were sitting across from Jon and Bonnie. They dated through much of high school and Bonnie was already a part of our lives. I could hardly believe what Jon was saying. He had just moved out in May, gotten engaged in June, and now he was telling us that they were getting married in August. I thought we were just going to have dinner! I sat there with a blank look on my face as I tried to process it all. My head was spinning. I'm so grateful for my wife. Shar responded with incredible joy at the news. Her response

pulled me out of my shock, and helped me respond with the support I had deep in my heart for them. I was honored when they asked me to perform the wedding ceremony.

Two and a half decades of our lives had been wrapped up in parenting. We struggled for a while with infertility and a miscarriage of our first child, but God blessed us with two incredible boys. Now we were entering a new phase of life as our youngest son moved out and got married. We were living the reality of God's plan: "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

It's been ten years since Jon and Bonnie were married and 12 for Christian and Brooke. Tears of gratitude rolled down my cheeks several times as I thought about these events. It was hard to see them leave home, but we watched two men follow God's plan and two parents' prayers for strength, guidance, and wisdom answered.

God was going to take me through another growing season in my life.

What felt like loss at the time ushered us into a new phase of life. God was taking us to a new place where He would teach us new truths and help us experience joys we never imagined. We didn't lose two sons. We gained two daughters. Brooke is a totally devoted mother and doing an incredible job raising our grandchildren. I couldn't be more proud of the father Christian has become. Our eight-year-old granddaughter, Iris, just had her first dance recital. Her six-year-old brother, Ethan, gave her a bouquet of flowers. Bonnie is in Cambodia for two weeks working with the underprivileged, and Jon just helped the company he works for through a successful merger.

As for the empty nest.....if I had only known!

Opportunities for Serving God in Three Places

By Tony Lynn

Fenton, MI - Pastor Jim Marcus, the Genesee Baptist Associational Director of Missions and I walked onto the campus of the "International Learning Center" (ILC) and stayed overnight where our missionaries prepare for overseas service. Many of them refer to it affectionately as "The Farm." It is located in the rolling hills outside of Richmond, Virginia with a calming lake as you drive in and a backdrop of trees surrounding one edge of the campus like a dark emerald tiara.

Jim and I were overwhelmed by the limitless opportunities to serve God overseas. The International Mission Board (IMB), under the leadership of Dr. David Platt, is mobilizing lay people in ways never seen before in the history of the IMB. When Dr. Platt joined our session to share from his heart we felt the burden he carried and felt the hope he has placed in the lay people found within the churches.

Language learning
Cultural studies

Tribes
The Gospel
Church planting
Making disciples
Risk taking
Leaving family members behind

College students, professionals, retired baby-boomers and even high school students are provided paths of overseas service lasting from a few weeks to years. Below are a few of the opportunities available to you and your church: internationally, in North America, and in Michigan.

Imagine and dream big as you read. By cooperating with others, our churches can engage people groups and populations outside of our local congregations. Here are 3 interesting options with different time demands and costs you may pray about participating.

INTERNATIONAL - www.bscm.org/sendmeinternational or www.imb.org

\$300 - \$3,000 with 1-2 day travel times

Missions College, January 15-19, 2018 at approximately \$300 includes training, housing, and meals at the International Learning Center in Rockville, VA. An intensive week of missions training for churches interested or already engaged in mission opportunities. Connect with missionaries and learn best practices in missions directly from those serving in East Asia, the Americas, and Sub-Saharan Africa. Write to info@imb.org indicating you would like more information.

Global Cities Initiative – <https://www.imb.org/global-cities-initiative/>

Submit you're an application to get involved in 1 of 4 world-class cities.

Mission Trips to China – contact me & I will put in you contact with “Wally,” our International Mission Board liaison to East Asian Peoples.

NORTH AMERICA - www.bscm.org/montreal or www.namb.net

\$1,000 - \$2,000 with 1 day travel time

Help new and young church plants in Montreal, Quebec, Canada who are experiencing a season of harvest by contacting Chad Vandiver, 940-268-6792 or cvandiver@namb.net - a missionary strategist who connects volunteers with churches for 5-10 day mission trips.

MICHIGAN - www.bscm.org/sendmemi

\$100 - \$500 with ½ day to 1 day travel times

By searching our own website page, www.bscm.org/sendmemi - you can discover the pastors, locations, and email addresses of those churches within our state who would welcome your partnership. Your people will grow in the challenge while their congregation grows in size. If you have further questions or

desire more details on how you, your church, or your association write or call me at: tlynn@namb.net or (734) 770-0608

Stuck in a Canoe

By Mick Schatz

Roscommon, MI - One hour into our canoe trip and I was beginning to think maybe marriage was a bad idea. No, we were not married yet but we were engaged. How could I marry someone who obviously had no idea how to paddle a canoe, keep us out of the bushes, or just keep balanced. Needless to say our conversation (arguing) and sarcastic remarks did not bring out the best in each other. I was a big selfish jerk, she was a frustrating human being, and we were supposed to be having fun!

Two hours later and still in the canoe we couldn't go in a straight line or keep off the shallows, but we were laughing and cracking jokes in the rain. It turned out to be one the best memories we share now as a married couple of twenty-two years. Yes, I can still be a jerk, and yes, I now realize she is perfect (she will probably read this article). The point is we worked it out. We were stuck in a canoe. Working it out, and working together was the only way we could reach our destination. Together we were still a mess, we weren't going to win any canoe races, but together we could survive and finish the trip and amazingly love each other even more than we did before.

My wife and I have discovered that if we choose to let problems and circumstances pull us apart, they will. If we choose to lean on each other, we become stronger and closer as husband and wife. Of course, frustration, blame, selfishness and "strong" discussion still happens from time to time, but humility and forgiveness brings us and keeps us together. In our relationship with Christ, we make the same choice. We can choose to back away and blame Him, or with humility and by asking forgiveness, we can lean into Him and discover a strength and depth of relationship like we have never known. The more we learn to trust Christ in the canoe trips of life, the easier it is as a couple to do the same. We have decided that being stuck in the canoe is okay as long as Jesus is in it too!

MICHIGAN NEWS

CHAPLAIN'S SACRED MOMENTS

By Chaplain Bob Dennis

Fenton, MI - My office is alongside the entrance to our beautiful Grand Rapids Home for Veterans Chapel which has a vaulted ceiling with stained glass imbedded. The members living at our facility find it a place of worship, and often a quiet meeting place with God.

Whenever possible I leave my office door open to make myself available should someone want to see their pastor-chaplain.

One afternoon a tall well dressed man walked through the door with his shiny shoes and urban dress hat. He asked "is Chaplain Poston here I need to talk to him." I explained to him that I was the chaplain that took his place when he went Home to be with the Lord at the age of 61.

His facial expression dropped, and so did he as he flopped into the chair beside the door. In a very sacred moment the bewildered gentleman explained that he was a "drunk" living in the Grand Rapids Home for Veterans domiciliary, and Chaplain Poston took him along side and explained that God had a better plan for his life than the one he was living. He explained that through the Biblical teaching of Chaplain Poston, and the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, he is now a successful urban pastor with his own flock to watch after. He had made the trip on this day to thank Chaplain Poston in person for helping him find a much better life of happiness in Christ.

This young urban pastor said he will teach his congregation the same things Chaplain Poston had taught him; the fear of God, the love of God and the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ who has a better plan for our lives than sin.

The man left as quickly as he came, never telling me his name. While only a brief encounter it was a very sacred moment that set in on me as I started to ponder this message from God. I had just made it 90% of the way through my day doing busy work like meetings, trainings, lining up programs and services, yet had not shared the Saving Grace of our Lord Jesus with anyone. God sent a messenger to me from the legacy of my "late" mentor. I had worked with Chaplain Poston for many years, but he needed to give me one more training posthumously.

This sacred moment was a "wakeup call" for this chaplain to not wait until Sunday's Alter Call to share the Amazing Grace of our Lord Jesus. I need to look, listen, and share Jesus all along the trail to Sunday. We never know whom God may have to cross our paths. Be ready and be willing.

CONTACT INFORMATION: If you have been called by God to be a chaplain or to be of support to our chaplains in prayer please feel free to contact me at (bdennis@bscm.org).

You can also see more information on our BSCM website at bscm.org and look under "SEND" to find the Chaplaincy page.

2017 BSCM EVENTS FOR CHAPLAINS: The first annual BSCM Chaplain Training will be at the Church Equipping Conference on September 16, 2017. We have a great key note speaker and meaningful topics selected.

SBC News

'Refreshing' Dallas Send Conf. casts mission vision

by Josie Bingham

DALLAS (BP) -- Among a sea of attendees and volunteers in the Dr. Pepper Arena, the North American Mission Board and the International Mission Board's Send Conference challenged attendees to examine and redefine their lives on mission. More than 4,000 people paid and registered for the sold-out conference May 19-20 less than 30 miles north of Dallas in Frisco, Texas, which drew people from all states and three continents.

"Be careful not to manufacture a heart for missions outside a heart for Christ," IMB president David Platt said to the crowd during opening session. "There is no one without the other, and if you think there is, you've got to redefine your thinking. There are times in your life that are redefining, and that's what we're praying the next couple of days will be."

The theme, Redefine, brought church revitalizer John Herring of First Baptist Church in Prosper, Texas, back to Send even though he had attended the first one in Long Beach, Ca., earlier this year in February. This time, Herring brought 20 church members to Dallas for two days of biblical teaching and next steps. "The conference was encouraging and refreshing for us personally, and it was incredibly helpful for us in our work at First Prosper," Herring said. "We talk a lot about Jesus' mission at our church -- that we are called to be sent. Send helped us refocus on that mission and put feet to it."

Send in Dallas included worship led by Austin Stone Worship, Thomas Keys III and Crowder, and main sessions and breakouts with 30 diverse topics and speakers. "The breakout sessions were especially helpful," Herring noted. "At the conclusion of Send, my notebook was filled with pages of ideas and resources. What a blessing to have some 'blue sky' moments under the wisdom of these experienced leaders."

Church planter Aaron Clayton of Remedy Church in Waxahachie, Texas, was also taking notes with hopes to bring back "some nuts and bolts for how we can effectively equip and send church planters." "I am also looking forward to bringing back some fresh enthusiasm and energy," Clayton said. "I am hoping our people catch more of the vision for why and how they can live on mission in all of life. I hope they feel better equipped and more confident themselves and in their ability to rally together in community to live out the mission of God." With breakouts such as "Addressing poverty through local schools," "Risk in missions," "Leading women to advance the Gospel," "Leveraging the

power of ordinary" and "Giving purpose to our jobs," the conference reinforced how every believer -- at any time -- can be on mission.

New Orleans youth minister and bivocational church planter Dallas Guidry, of Lakeshore Church in Louisiana, called the conference "unlike any other." "There are so many lost where our church plant is," Guidry said. "But it's all about relationships. Right now, I'm in seminary and coaching a baseball team. I'm developing trust and relationships with

those around me by being engaged in the community. And coming to this Send conference, I feel more refreshed than ever. It's awesome to see how people here are so willing to support one another in living on mission for God's glory. Everything we do is for Him."

A similar spirit and enthusiasm for missions gripped many hearts at the event. Georgia College and State University (GCSU) student Carson Gregors and her peers drove 14 hours to attend Send in Dallas.

Gregors and 12 others started Full Accord Ministry (FAM) to serve their fellow students on campus with authentic family relationships. They attended the Send Conference to take leadership tips and engagement tactics home to students at GCSU in Milledgeville, Ga. "I was especially looking forward to what Kathy Litton had to say about women in mission," she said. "She has incredible insight and hearing her breakout talk was inspiring. It was so great to hear such strong truth spoken over discipleship. It revolutionized how I'm going to approach my small group when I get back to school in the fall." "It's so encouraging to see thousands of people at an event focused on helping believers take Jesus to the people around them as an everyday lifestyle," said Kevin Ezell, NAMB's president. "I am thrilled as well to see such a young, diverse group. So many pastors worked hard to bring their people. The conference is for them, so it is great to see so many participate."

Every video, social media post, breakout and main session was designed to share messages that moved people toward their next missional opportunity. "It's exhilarating to see local churches taking mission seriously," Platt said. "And that's what this conference is all about: Men and women from churches in all 50 states and Canada -- and a few other countries, as well -- considering how God has sent them right where they live for the spread of the Gospel and contemplating where God might lead them around the world to people who've never heard of the Gospel. "It's an awesome sight," he said, "to see thousands of people at a conference representing thousands of churches in the SBC and beyond who together are saying that we want to spend our lives making disciples from our neighbors to the nations."

Josie Bingham is a writer for the North American Mission Board.

Association pioneers church revitalization model

by David Roach

ST. LOUIS (BP) -- Two years ago, First Baptist Church of Affton, Mo., knew it was dying. So it sought help from the local St. Louis Metro Baptist Association. In a process facilitated by executive director of missions Jim Breeden, First Baptist decided to replant itself in March 2016 as Church at Affton, led by replanter Jason Helmbacher. During its first year, the replant baptized 15 new believers and has come to average just over 100 worship attendees -- about 40 of whom were First Baptist members before the replant.

Helmbacher described the church as being "reborn for the sake of the Gospel," according to a video on the association's website. Within the St. Louis metro area, Church at Affton is not alone in its testimony of revitalization. Among the 140 congregations that cooperate with the local Baptist association, more than 30 have

participated in an association-led revitalization process over the past seven years, Breeden told Baptist Press, with more than a dozen opting to replant as new churches.

The replants have experienced a collective 400 percent increase in worship attendance, Breeden said. That success has led the St. Louis Metro Association to partner with the North American Mission Board in publishing resources for church replants -- including the Associational Replant Guide -- that it hopes will spur sister associations to similar success. The resources are available at www.churchreplanters.com.

Revitalization process

In St. Louis, church revitalization begins when a congregation that is plateaued or declining requests help from the association. At times a church initiates contact, and at times the association does. Citing data from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Breeden estimates 90 percent of churches -- both large and small -- may be candidates for revitalization. Each revitalization effort is led by the association's church revitalization team (CRT), which comprises pastors who have revitalized or replanted congregations in St. Louis. The CRT evaluates the church under consideration. Then a series of meetings culminates in recommendations the church must accept or reject in a business meeting.

The recommendations are always customized, Breeden said. "There's not a one-size-fits-all or a cookie-cutter approach," Breeden said. "Every church is unique, and every situation is unique. Every part of St. Louis, for that matter, is unique and needs a church that's healthy and fits their culture."

The association's church revitalization manual notes six potential courses of action that may be recommended to a congregation:

-- Change "systems, structures and strategies that need to be changed to effectively fulfill the Great Commandment and the Great Commission in the church's current context." This course of action is the least drastic and "may or may not require new leadership," the manual states.

- Partner with a stronger church as a mission or satellite campus.
- Replant the church.
- Merge with one or more sister churches.
- Transition the facility from housing one church to serving as "a center for many ministries to reach a community. This could include multiple churches meeting in one building and/or several types of ministries to be started or invited to join at a single location."
- Sell the building and start a church planting fund.

In every case, Breeden said, associational leaders "don't do things to churches" but "with churches." If a church does not affirm the CRT's recommendations, the association exits the revitalization process and seeks to support the congregation in other ways.

Replicating the model

One key leader in helping other associations launch revitalization ministries like that of the St. Louis Metro Association is Bob Bickford. Called in 2012 as pastor of declining Sherwood Baptist Church in St. Louis, he led the congregation to replant as The Groves Church and began to dialog with other replanters in the process. Within months of launching the replant, he joined the CRT and currently chairs it. As Bickford's passion for church replanting increased, he launched churchreplanters.com in 2015, with testimonies, forums and other resources for replants. This year, Bickford joined NAMB's replant team as associate director, and his website has been incorporated into NAMB's church replanting strategy.

"Our prayer," Bickford told BP in written comments, is that the St. Louis Metro Association's approach "will serve to further the work of replanting by equipping directors of missions, associations and churches to envision what God can do when a church determines to make courageous decisions and changes necessary to see their congregation move from decline and near death to life."

Johnny Rumbough, associational missions emphasis coordinator for the Southern Baptist Conference of Associational Leaders, echoed that sentiment. Breeden "is a seasoned and skilled leader on the topic of church health and revitalization," Rumbough, executive director of missions for the Lexington (S.C.) Baptist Association, told BP in written comments. "He understands the necessity to have the right leaders equipped and available to customize the revitalization process for each church requesting assistance, which is the key to the association's effectiveness. "The St. Louis Metro Baptist Association has created a church health culture," Rumbough said, "and a process for assisting that is a model for associations today."

David Roach is chief national correspondent for Baptist Press, the Southern Baptist Convention's news service. BP reports on missions, ministry and witness advanced through the Cooperative Program and on news related to Southern Baptists' concerns nationally and globally.

CLASSIFIED**Seeking Pastor:** Harper Creek Baptist Church

Harper Creek Baptist Church in Battle Creek, Michigan (Southern Baptist Convention) is looking for an experienced Senior Pastor to lead a congregation of 30 to 50 people. This dynamic group of worshipers is grounded in the Word of God and enjoys a blended type corporate worship. HCBC offers salary commensurate with years of experience. If you are interested in helping us share Jesus and grow in our faith, please visit our web site at www.harpercreekbaptist.org to learn more. You may also send inquiries or resumes to: PastorSearch@harpercreekbaptist.org or mail to: Pastor Search Committee, PO Box 2467, Battle Creek, MI 49016

Church Strengtheners/Mobilizer position

The Greater Detroit Baptist Association is seeking an individual for a Church Strengtheners/Mobilizer position. This position will replace the position of Associational Missionary (Director of Missions). [CLICK HERE](#) for more information about specific responsibilities, financial support, desired skills, education requirements, education requirements, ministry experience, and theological views. Interested applicants should send a cover letter and resume by July 31, 2017 to:

Mr. Nonnie Lesada,
Administrative Assistant
24250 Joy Road
Redford, MI 48239
detbaptasn@sbcglobal.net
313-533-2663

Family Ministry Leader

Warren Woods Baptist Church in Warren seeks a Family Ministry Leader to assist the church in developing a ministry to children, youth, and their families with the goal of inspiring faith, love and growing discipleship. Children's and youth ministry will reflect a balance of Bible study, fellowship, worship, service, and outreach.

Qualifications:

- A person with an undergraduate degree equivalent or with experience in children's and/or youth ministry
- Strong organizational, leadership, and communication skills
- Experience and ability in teaching and training
- The ability to build and lead volunteer teams
- A love for children, youth and families
- In alignment and agreement with the Baptist Faith & Message 2000

- A Christian who feels a call by God into ministry and demonstrates a personal relationship with Jesus Christ evidenced by Christian character and behavior

This is a 20 hour per week position. Pay commensurate with qualifications. Please submit a resume to pcarnline@warrenwoods.org prior to May 31, 2017.

Singer or Speaker for Women's Group

Mary Hester is the pastor's Wife of The Shore Church in St. Joseph, Michigan where she serves with her husband, Church Planter and Pastor Kevin Hester. Mary has been involved in ministry for twenty plus years. She is a homeschooling mother of eight children with a passion for changed lives through the life changing power of God's word. Mary studied music at Bethel College in Mishawaka, Indiana and at Grace Bible College in Wyoming, Michigan. Mary is available to give full or partial concerts or for speaking engagements to women's groups. To schedule a concert or a speaking engagement contact Mary at mry_hester@yahoo.com.

Free Books for Church Library

Crossroads Community Baptist Church in Ann Arbor (2580 Packard Rd, Ann Arbor, MI 48104) has a large supply of library books from our non-functioning church library that we would like to give to a church who has a working library. The only requirement is for that church to pick up the books. Please call (734) 971-0773 to see if they are still available and to arrange a pick up time.

Senior Pastor Needed

On January 1, Steve Oswalt resigned from Crossroads Community Baptist Church in Ann Arbor and started as senior pastor of Broadman Baptist Church, Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio. In the interim, Worship Pastor Douglas Keasal is serving as senior pastor. The search process for a new senior pastor is underway. Inquiries can be made directly to the church: Crossroads Community Baptist Church in Ann Arbor (2580 Packard Rd, Ann Arbor, MI 48104) (734) 971-0773.

Part-time Worship Leader

CrossPointe Church is seeking a part-time worship leader to work with the lead pastor in planning and implementing all areas of our Christ-centered worship ministry. Our music style is considered "contemporary" as we are led by a team of musicians (piano, guitar(s), drums, bass, vocals). Within our "contemporary" style of music, we value both old and new songs that are theologically rich and seek to glorify God (examples: Citizens & Saints, Getty Music, Sovereign Grace Music, Indelible Grace Music). We are a medium-sized church affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) located in Monroe, Michigan. We offer two identical gathered worship services on Sunday mornings which include; biblical preaching, scripture reading, prayer, theologically rich music, and regular observance of the biblical ordinances (Lord's

Supper and Baptism). Please visit www.crosspointemonroe.com for more information regarding CrossPointe's doctrinal statement, leadership, history, and various ministries.

To apply for this position or request more information, please email resume along with links to samples of your worship leading to crosspointeworshipleadersearch@gmail.com.

Bi-vocational Pastor Needed

Liberty Missionary Baptist Church, in Monroe MI is searching for a bi-vocational Pastor. Please send resumes to retiredchief1980@att.net or curtpat33801@yahoo.com. If you have any questions you may call Ron Doolittle at 734-752-0238.

Senior Pastor Needed

Roscommon Baptist Church is currently searching for a pastor. Please submit resume to roscommonbaptistchurch@gmail.com or mail to P.O.Box 178, Roscommon, MI 48653. For more information contact the church roscommonbaptistchurch@gmail.com.

AROUND THE STATE

Praise in the Park – Faith Fellowship Baptist Church from 12 Noon to 4pm, Jul 8th. Held at Walsh Park, Lansing, Michigan. For more information contact Faith Fellowship Baptist Church, 1001 Dakin Street, Lansing, MI 48912. (517)853-9897, or faithfellowshiplansing@hotmail.com.

VBS July10-13 - Faith Fellowship Baptist Church Lansing ,MI. For more information contact Faith Fellowship Baptist Church, 1001 Dakin Street, Lansing, MI 48912. (517)853-9897, or faithfellowshiplansing@hotmail.com.

Back to School Bash Sept 9 – Free school supplies and backpacks, clothes and giveaways. Faith Fellowship Baptist Church. For more information contact Faith Fellowship Baptist Church, 1001 Dakin Street, Lansing, MI 48912. (517)853-9897, or faithfellowshiplansing@hotmail.com.

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

LifeChangers 2017 – Youth Mission Trip

LifeChangers is an exciting, week long, hands-on, co-educational, youth Missions Camp now in its 22nd year of serving and ministering in the Brightmoor Community of Northwest Detroit. The dates are July 16 to 22 with a \$50 pre-registration fee due by June 16. The total cost is \$165 p/person. Wellspring, Spring Arbor University praise and Worship team, will again lead exciting worship. The Camp Pastor this year is Nathan Eda, Youth Pastor at Ann Arbor Chinese Christian Church. For the past two years Bro. Nathan, alongside his wife, Jennifer, and their Daughter, Asha, have been providing personal discipleship and pastoral care at AACCC. Following LifeChangers they will return to India where Nathan will teach three classes in the Seminary and assist his Father with his mission church.

All information is available at the website, www.golifechangers.org. Or you can call Wayne or Pam Vann at 734-718-4922 or 23, email golifechangers@aol.com. You can register at the website.

FREE WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

Women's Study - Every Tuesday at 10 am or 6 pm. The ladies will be studying "WAR ROOM," by Stephen Kendrick and Alex Kendrick. You can attend either class. Southfield Road Baptist Church, 14880 Southfield Road, Allen Park, MI 48101, (313) 381-3979.

FREE YOUTH BASKETBALL

Every Tuesday from 6:30 to 9:30 pm. Southfield Road Baptist Church, 14880 Southfield Road, Allen Park, MI 48101, (313) 381-3979.

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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