

COLUMNS

Perplexingly Paradoxical Problems (How Sweet They Are!)

By Tim Patterson

Fenton - Several years ago Sabrina and I frequented a particular restaurant that served a variety of foods at a reasonable price. The service was good, but the food was good enough to make you slap your grandma.

One day the waiter, who had come to know us by our first names, told us about a brand new dessert item and suggested that we try it. On most of our dining occasions, by the time we got to the dessert portion of our meal there was no room for anything, especially dessert. But this particular time the dessert that was offered, and the unusual nature of this treat captured the attention of our curious little taste buds. The dessert that our waiter offered was fried ice cream. Just the thought of how frying ice cream could take place made you want to place the order.

How would it keep from melting? What would it taste like or for that matter what would it look like? How could two seemingly opposing tastes, textures and states of being be brought together to produce anything that tasted good or for that matter was edible? It was almost incredulous to me that one could fry that which was to be an ice cold dessert, and it remain frozen and maintain it's cold, smooth and creamy texture. Would modern miracles never cease?

When our waiter did deliver our confectioners crazy cold creation, it was a culinary delight. The combination of a hot flaky crust encasing a frozen center of vanilla ice cream was a gastronomical delight that sent my salivary senses into extreme agitation. In other words, I slobbered all over myself it was so good. The improbable and seemingly opposing tastes and textures had been combined to provide a most memorable dining delight. The same sort of culinary combination is accomplished with the "sweet and sour" sauces used in Chinese food.

Logic and experience would tell us that these opposing tastes and textures should not get together but the fact of the matter is that they do. I have found these diverse combinations that produce unexpectedly wonderful blends are not unique to the world of foods. These perplexing paradoxes are found in our life experiences as well.

Sabrina and I have experienced these paradoxical happenings on more than one occasion. I remember well when we moved our eldest son and his wife many hundreds of miles away in order for them to attend seminary. We were so excited and thrilled for them and their new adventure, but at the same time we were saddened and even grieved at the loss we sensed. We were fully aware that because they had been called into the ministry that the possibility of us living in the same area with them in the future was very unlikely. We knew that this meant that we would be with them on very rare occasions and with any "future" grandchildren. They now have three daughters in this foreign land.

This happened again when my youngest son and his wife moved to Colorado and took our grand girls with him. I believe it should be a law that our children must get parental permission to move grandchildren more than 20 miles away! If you are a parent or know what it is like to be separated from the ones you love then you understand the difficulty of such an event, yet at the same time this new life in a different place is exciting and fulfilling. How can these two blend to create a wonderful life experience? How can the joy of seeing your children step out into life's great adventure mingle together with the grief of loss? Does the one outweigh the other and thus make it just bearable?

No! The fact is that God takes the joy and the sadness, and combines them to create a brand new life experience that will be used to make us more like Him and honor His wisdom. He mixes the good and the bad, the joyful and sorrowful, the sweet and the sour, and makes something wonderful and new. Yes, it goes beyond our logic and the experiences of our past. It really doesn't make sense, but God somehow synthesizes it for our good and His glory.

If you have not already encountered God's special way of combining life's experiences, you will. Just relax and enjoy the meal. The fried ice cream is a tasty treat indeed. Romans 8:28 reads, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." I now know, that includes fried ice cream.

Secondhand Faith

By Tony Lynn

Secondhand Faith is affecting our entire lives.

Secondhand faith is the prevailing spiritual mood that allows individuals to create, recreate, or crush his or her personal spirituality without that spirituality ever being challenged by anyone. Those holding to secondhand faith no longer believe in absolutes. People, by way of the Internet and instantaneous global communication, believe that societies with opposing worldviews appear to thrive and suffer at their own pace regardless of their religious affiliation.

During four decades of service in Africa among Muslims, in Europe among postmoderns, and in North America among a mosaic of world religions, I noticed that a very small percentage of the population actually clung to classic religious teachings and practice. Most lived out a secondhand faith.

Meaning Behind Secondhand Faith

What do I mean by secondhand? Bargains were important to my family, when I was a little boy. We knew how to stretch a dollar. Possessions or gifts, whether they were new or secondhand, made no difference to us. My first guitar was a used-guitar with a neck so bowed that it was almost impossible to get the strings to touch the frets. I quit my guitar lessons after only three months, sore fingers and all. My red go-cart was also previously owned along with every small-engine that was attached to its frame.

I have lost track of the guitar and the go-cart. I cannot remember exactly when I stopped playing with them or what became of them. It is no surprise. They did not cost me anything. They were mine. I enjoyed them for a time. Then I lost interest. They became unimportant to me. They were secondhand.

It seems to me that we are treating spirituality in the same way that I treated my childhood gifts. We pick up our spirituality without a lot of thought. We hold it for a while. We modify it when we want. We mix our beliefs willy-nilly. We exchange it for another form whenever it suits our mood. And if life's experiences threaten what we believe then we discard our quasi-spirituality. That is why I call this phenomenon secondhand faith.

Six Markers of Secondhand Faith

I learned to speak 3 modern languages. I've visited 20 countries and lived on 3 continents. I learned that our world is a colorful tapestry of languages, cultures, religions, philosophies, and peoples; yet, I found six markers of secondhand faith present in every area of the globe.

Once these attributes are identified and understood it is easy to see how this fraudulent faith has woven itself into the fabric of everyday life. These six traits are equally evident on the streets of our cities and in the sacred places of our society. I have observed the same six markers of secondhand faith in Africa, throughout Europe, and in North America. The six markers of secondhand faith are:

- Divine Schizophrenia
- Blended Beliefs
- Plastic Morals
- Twisted Tolerance
- Worldly Ways
- Spiritual Consumerism

Let me suggest, as you become familiar with these six markers, that you ask yourself if today's ambiguous, self-designed spirituality, with its six traits, is helping us to create a better world – or simply a more confused, chaotic one?

1. Divine Schizophrenia

“Divine Schizophrenia,” the first marker, says that any divine force is incapable of clear self-expression in one manner, simultaneously, to every culture and individual, therefore the divine force is revealed in different ways to different cultures and people.

Some may believe this divine force is a personal god, while others believe it to be energy, a design, or a destiny. People seem to believe that all religions, worldviews, and truth claims are valid and equal avenues of spiritual expression even though they may be contrary to one another. Those who hold to this point of view think that no individual culture possesses a complete description of a divine force; therefore, each community must ignore the other's differences and accept their points of view and practices.

2. Blended Beliefs

The second marker, “Blended Beliefs,” like a spiritual buffet, allowing people to blend different spiritual views, into customized, confusing, and even contradictory mixtures.

People are creating a spirituality that conforms to their own personal notions. To their way of thinking, there are no universal codes of conduct or standards of belief; that would be too confining. Each person is free to choose his own divine force, lifestyle, and beliefs, thereby, creating an array of spiritual dishes.

3. Plastic Morals

The third trait, “Plastic Morals,” allows a person’s morality to change based upon their constantly changing circumstances, not their convictions.

Much like the plastic plates, cups, and flatware used during a picnic, morals can be jettisoned after they have served their purpose. This conviction promotes personal happiness, without remorse or guilt, as the highest goal. According to this conviction, when it comes to moral issues there are no universally right or wrong answers. There are no appropriate or inappropriate judgments. There are no moral distinctions that apply to every occasion, every place, and to every person. Therefore, personal principles and practices can be followed or disregarded at the whim of each individual.

4. Twisted Tolerance

The fourth attribute of “Twisted Tolerance” expects people to give their sincere support to the opposing beliefs and behaviors of other people.

Twisted tolerance is likely the strongest conviction. Strange behaviors are more tolerated in society, while traditional values are marginalized, ridiculed, or dismissed as trivial. People are no longer expected to simply put up with opposing points of view; now, they must validate contrary, even repulsive, opinions as acceptable and normal. As a result, people distrust anyone who thinks he has an absolute response for every situation. People label anyone a bigot, militant, or extremist if he is not completely approving of everyone else’s lifestyle and choices.

5. Worldly Ways

“Worldly Ways,” the fifth marker, shows how people have exchanged divine guidance for secular counselors.

People are attracted to worldly guides and self-designed ideas focusing on self-discovery, self-help, self-affirmation, and feel-good philosophies. People focus much more on the here-and-now rather than the hereafter. They want spirituality that is relevant to their daily lives and think that traditional religions have fallen short on relevancy. They think that human-focused spirituality is more important than pursuing God. People no longer look for guidance from the God of the Ages; instead they are listening to the gods of this age. People are creating demigods from this era of

politicians, atheistic moral philosophers, financial mammoths, and celebrities hawking the latest spiritual fad.

6. Spiritual Consumerism

The sixth attribute, “Spiritual Consumerism” reveals how people are searching for that choice-driven, customized spirituality, suited to their own tastes, for the smallest cost to themselves.

People have become avid bargain hunters when it comes to spirituality. People have grown accustomed to enjoying goods and services for their own immediate gratification. It should be no surprise that economic habits have shaped spiritual habits. Shrewd shoppers have learned to search for bargains at the local malls and on the Internet. In the same way, they want to get all that they can from spirituality while giving up as little as possible. Self-gratification has replaced sacrifice. Convenience has replaced service. People are no longer worried about the epic questions, such as, “Why am I here?” They are too busy dealing with life’s immediate questions, such as, “How can I be happy, right now?” From their perspective, religion exists in order to make people happy or to help them cope with life. Spiritual consumerism is on the rise and rapidly climbing.

So how do we lead people to Christ and create dedicated disciples for the Lord is everyone is affected by secondhand faith? Let me invite you to read another section of this column during April, here in the Baptist Beacon, when I will explain how the people with whom we work are much different than decades ago.

It’s time for spring training!

By Mike Durbin

Fenton - Spring Training has started for Major League Baseball players. The Detroit Tigers are gearing up for the 2018 season as they practice in Lakeland, Florida. They are running, catching, throwing, and batting. Even though these baseball players have reached the top in their profession, they train to keep their skills sharp. They know that training makes a difference!

In similar fashion, one of the characteristics of top baptizing churches is evangelism training. These pastors engage in personal evangelism and they train believers in the church to do the same. Sharing the Gospel is one of the marks of following Jesus. In Matthew 4:19 Jesus said, “Follow me... and I will make you fish for people” (CSB). Consider doing evangelism training using these three approaches;

Modeling: Jesus modeled evangelism for the disciples as they did life together. As they walked and talked, Jesus showed them what it looked like to help people encounter God in their daily lives. They watched as Jesus engaged people in whatever they were doing. To a woman in Samaria drawing water, Jesus talked about living water (John 4). When Mary and Martha were devastated by the loss of their brother Lazarus, Jesus declared: “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live” John 11:25. Nicodemus came to Jesus at night seeking God. Jesus penetrated his heart

with spiritual truth when He said: “You must be born again.” Throughout the Gospels, Jesus models how to bring God into the conversation. We can do the same by intentionally modeling to the people around us.

Sermons: My first attempts to share the Gospel took place when I talked to people about the sermon my pastor preached Sunday. I didn’t grow up in church. I didn’t know much about the Bible, but I knew the parts he preached Sunday. Those messages found their way into my conversations and I learned something powerful about sermons. If my memory serves me correctly, my pastor mentioned the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus in some way in every sermon. He taught the centrality of the Gospel.

Joel Southerland, Executive Director of Evangelism at NAMB, shares that he always ends his sermons with the ABC’s of salvation. - Admit, Believe, Confess. He got a phone call one day that he told his assistant that he would return later. The man called back three times insisting to talk to him. When he finally answered the call, Alan said: “Preacher, I have a guy here on the loading docks that I’m sharing the gospel with. I’ve given him A and B but for the life of me I can’t remember C. What is it?” As soon as he heard the word confess, Alan hung up and Joel realized that he was teaching people how to share the Gospel through his sermons.

Evangelism training resources: There are many resources available for evangelism training. In Michigan, we have developed, “Mi moment - The Moment that Changes Everything.” It uses our personal testimony and a unique illustration to share the Gospel. Two of the Great Lakes separate Michigan into the upper and lower peninsulas. It is impossible to get from one peninsula to the other on land from anywhere in the state. The Mackinac Bridge unites the divided state of Michigan. Here is an illustration of what sin does in our lives. It separates us from God. When Jesus died for our sins on the cross, was buried, and rose again, He became the bridge that unites us with God. You can find more about Mi moment and other evangelism resources at BSCM.org. It’s time for Spring Training!

There is Always Something to Be Thankful For

By Mick Schatz

Roscommon - This is the theme or motto of our Bambi Lake staff. God is the focus, and a thankful heart for His provision is what keeps us going. I am reminded of the scripture in Philippians 4:6, "Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." So we worry about nothing, but pray for the camp with thankfulness, anticipating what the Lord is doing and will do as we join him, faithfully serving here.

It is such a blessing to see how God provides in unexpected ways in daily life at Bambi Lake. Following Christmas break, three of our housing units were without water due to frozen pipes. One of our staff was staying in the lodge. On Sunday morning at about 5:30 am the fire alarms in the lodge went off. They ran to the alarm to see where the problem was located. It indicated the elevator corridor, so the area was investigated through the game room. No smoke, but the sound of water running? No! Water was shooting like from a fire hydrant from the handicap restroom! A pipe had burst, shorting out the alarms in the ceiling on the basement level, setting off the alarm. Once the water was shut off and the damage surveyed, we had to replace some ceiling tiles and dry the place out. Imagine, if we had not had staff in the lodge, what the damage would have been by nine o'clock Monday morning when we came in to the office. This was one of God's blessings as He provided knowing what we needed before it happened. We see the hand of God regularly at Bambi Lake.

One of the furnaces in the Wilson building has been malfunctioning, so it has been cold in the worship area. But, with heaters that we already owned and creative airflow, we have been able to keep the space comfortable for guests at our retreats. And God's provision of warmer weather has helped significantly as we have not had to overcome the arctic air. Yes, there is a need to replace the furnace, but until finances provide a solution, God is blessing us with warmth.

We started the winter without a working snow plow. A volunteer who did some plowing for us decided to sell his plow truck. So with God's timing, we were able to secure a new, used snow plow truck. It was so critical to have a dependable plow truck. The weather has been rather unusual this year, rotating between four inches of snow and two inches of ice. Icy roads this year have seen unmanned cars sliding as well as the terrifying trauma of a car not stopping until the last second. But, with God's protection, no significant damage was seen for any person or vehicle. Our staff with the new plow truck has been able to keep up with the snow. And it has been used to carry sand to sprinkle the roadways to aid traction. We have used a lot of sand on the roadways and salt on the walkways to keep people safe.

In February, all of the rain and melting snow poured over two feet of water in the basement of the maintenance manager's house. The hot water tank floated and fell over breaking pipes resulting in the water being turned off and the home left without water. This happened at a time when college was on winter break and we were able to enlist extra help from a college student to help with the "mud-out" and get them cleaned up and dried out, working toward restoration. Much of this was completed before a small

retreat and, by God's grace, did not happen in the middle of a large retreat! And there will be a fresh, renovation of the basement in this house, another blessing.

Other drainage problems have surfaced as the water levels go up because there is nowhere for the water to go. The drains are full, the ground is frozen, and the water backs up in the basement. Laundry must be done, so it becomes a slow process. God has blessed us with a patient and diligent person who plugs away at the laundry until it is accomplished, letting the drains clear between loads.

Lest it sound like everything has been discouraging and things are not going well at Bambi, I hope you will read on.

We have hosted a Men's Retreat, two Youth Retreats, and a Women's Missions Retreat to date. These events are full of people who are commenting about the good changes they see at Bambi. The stage in the Wilson Auditorium is new, with up-to-date technology providing a new atmosphere. The relocation of the sound booth has made it so much easier to adjust the blend and levels of sound.

The food service is getting more creative, and we have begun to offer some new menu options. Guest are loving the coffee and cookies at check-in, a new normal in the lodge. Although we have had a few glitches, Camp Manager Mick and the smoker have gained fame. Mick also serves "hot off the griddle" pancakes for Saturday breakfast which has been well received by all of the groups attending.

The calendar is full and many events are new and exciting. Our event registration process is now user and group friendly. Administrative costs are less than the prior system, which is another blessing. When registering, select the event you want to attend and get details, before you are asked to log in.

God is blessing us with returning staff and new staff that are making it possible to keep up with the demands that these changes and busy schedule add to our days. We are experiencing growing pains-- which is a great thing. God is providing for our needs. God has blessed us with a Camp Director who is multi-talented and uses all of his giftedness to serve in this place. We believe that God is instilling great vision in Pastor Mick. We know God has every resource needed to accomplish the vision He has given.

Daily, as people come into the lodge, they are reminded "There is always, always, always something to be thankful for." It keeps us encouraged and focused on thankfulness to our God who is greater than any difficulty that we face and who can turn everything for the good of those who love Him.

STARTING

Here and Now: Mission Offering for North American Missions

By Staff

Fenton - During the month of March Southern Baptists will join together in prayer and giving to support our mission efforts across North America. The offering is called the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering (AAEO) and is named after a champion of missions who lived 100 years ago. Here and Now is this year's theme referencing the urgency of the need. Every gift to the AAEO - 100 percent – goes to train, resource, and send more than 5000 missionaries in church planting and compassion ministries across the United States, Canada and their territories. The cooperative giving of Southern Baptist churches and individuals makes the work possible.

The churches that make up the Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM) gave more than \$140,000 to the offering last year. As part of the mission offering emphasis, the North American Mission Board (NAMB) highlights the work of a group of missionaries from around the continent. This year, one of Michigan's own missionary couples, Travis and Jennifer Whittaker, are two of the featured missionaries. They are a church planter couple at the Mile City Church in South Lyon.

Travis began his life in Christian ministry as a musician until God called him to do more. "I never wanted to plant churches," Travis says. "Because of my stuttering problem, I wanted to sing for Jesus, not teach. But I heard the call of God challenge me to lead in a new way." Mile City is helping launch a new church in Grand Blanc this year, and is already planning to help another new church.

NAMB provides a wide range of resources to prepare churches to give and pray for the AAEO. Check out the various resources with multiple language translations, videos for your church, social media package and printable resources.

Don't look at the scoreboard

By Ken Nether

Detroit - When I played basketball I would hear my coaches tell me all the time to “stop looking at the scoreboard.” Then when I become a basketball coach I told my players to “stop looking at the scoreboard.” Looking at the scoreboard can either make you lazy or discouraged, either way it does no good. If a team is “winning” they have a tendency to stop playing hard and to rely on their natural talents. If a team is “losing,” they become discouraged and no longer want to play the game they love.

One of the most dangerous things athletes can do when they are engaging in their sport is to look at the scoreboard. Although the scoreboard is an indicator of what is happening in the game, it does not tell the whole story. It only gives you a brief snapshot, but it does not show you a picture of what will happen within the game in the future.

As a church planter, I offer this advice to others pursuing God's calling to begin a new church - Do not look at the scoreboard. We all know what the church planting scoreboard is. The ABCs, Attendance, Buildings and Cash. From the world's perspective that may measure success, however it is not an indicator at all if we are being successful in the kingdom. If those are the measurements then Jesus would have been a failure! Leading a church is not a sport and the only scoreboard that matters is that we are being faithful to the assignment that Jesus has given us. Crossover Church was planted in September 2016, and we have come to realize that only He is in control of the outcomes. We are to live a life of faithfulness to Him.

God has called us to focus on the field, not on the scoreboard.

Luke 10:2 (ESV)

And he said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.

God wants us to focus on the field of people who are lost and who are waiting for laborers to share the gospel with them. The reason we can even dream about planting a church is because someone went out into the field and shared the gospel with us. The scoreboard lies, it doesn't tell the whole story. No matter what it looks like, we are already victorious. We have already won the championship. We are on the winning team. Let's stop looking at the scoreboard and start looking unto Jesus.

About the author: Ken Nether was a typical teenager who “grew up in church but never grew up in Christ.” However, while he was playing professional basketball overseas, the God he heard all his life whispered “Go Home.” Ken decided to listen and has been following the path God has set before him ever since. Pastor Ken has been a teacher and basketball coach in the city of Detroit for the past 6 years. He is a dynamic communicator, insightful scholar who has the ability to connect with all people from all ages and backgrounds. On September 18th, 2016, Ken and his wife Tolice, alongside an incredible team, launched CROSSOVER CHURCH.

God Makes the Way Clear

By: Shea Prisk

Grand Blanc - In 2002, I watched my parents plant a church in Hartland, MI. It was a fun experience, but I didn't play a huge role. I had a couple years of high school left then I would be off to college. As I matured and my relationship with Christ grew, I started to feel a pull to working in the ministry. However, as I observed from afar my parents experience of planting a church, it didn't look like anything that I wanted to be involved in. In fact, I remember telling several people in college that "I would never work for a church."

I graduated from college in April of 2009 and accepted a position working at a camp in Vermilion, OH called Beulah Beach. I never felt a clear call in college towards a particular occupation, but I knew I loved summer camp through my experiences as a counselor at Spring Hill, so working full-time at a camp seemed like a logical destination.

Working at Beulah Beach was extremely valuable- for the first time in my life I was truly on my own. My relationship with Jesus grew tremendously during those two years. I was given a substantial amount of responsibility; interviewing and hiring 60+ summer staff each summer, summer camp programming, managing facilities, preaching, and overseeing a large staff were just some of my roles. This was also the place where I started my marriage- I will forever be grateful for the foundation it laid for our marriage as we both served in full-time ministry (my wife, Andrea, served as the Day Camp Director).

Fast forward to 2011, and God had led my wife and I back to Michigan. For the next four years I worked in medical sales, a job I excelled at, but as time continued to pass, I couldn't help but think, "is this seriously what God has designed me to do?" In the summer of 2015, Andrea and I took a trip to see friends that serve as full time missionaries in Guatemala. The entire time I was there I felt so jealous, jealous of what my friends were doing with their lives and the perpetual feeling that I was wasting my life. I started begging God to move in our lives, to whatever the next chapter was because I refused to believe I would work in medical sales for the rest of my life.

It was shortly after returning from that trip that I called Travis Whittaker because we hadn't spoken in about a year. As soon as he answered, he remarked, "You're calling me to come help me start this church." Travis was right. Over the next couple months, God made it abundantly clear that we were supposed to help start Mile City, a new church in Livonia, MI, but also showed us that it was not our "final stop." Throughout 2016, God continued to put people in my life and grab my attention in ways that made it very clear that church planting was a part of our future.

Grumlaw Church is God's dream, not mine. It's ironic that I once said "I would never work for a church." God has clearly changed my heart and pushed me forward on a mission that I can't ignore. Each day, I am excited and terrified, but more than anything, I'm humbled that God has chosen me for this purpose. Planting a church has been the most challenging endeavor of my life, and it constantly puts me in a place that if God doesn't come through, you're in trouble. But my goodness, is it rewarding and incredible that God chooses to use ordinary, sinful idiots in His plan for redemption.

About the author: Shea Prisk is Lead Pastor of Grumlaw Church in Grand Blanc, MI. His wife is Andrea, and they have two children. Grumlaw Church meets at Genesys Conference & Banquet Center, 805 Health Park Blvd, Grand Blanc, MI 48439 on Sunday mornings at 10:30am.

STRENGTHENING

We Charge You With Being Christian

By: Ian Minielly

A number of weeks ago, I asked my congregation if they were arrested and charged with being a Christian, what in their life could a court use to convict them? This question has nothing to do with a works based salvation and everything to do with the reality of the past. For the past 2,000 years many Christians have faced that question and been found guilty. They were guilty not for what they believed, but for the results of those beliefs.

It is easy to say we believe. It is easy to claim the mantle and name "Christian." But what is the outward expression of that faith, what is the result? As Paul described to the Ephesians in Chapter 4: 17, "Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds." This is a call to action by Paul, reminding the Ephesian church they are no longer who they were, they are now Children of God, in Christ, which we see in verse 24, "...put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."

Our new lives in Christ result in our being separate from that which we were. As such, there should be an obvious difference between the old and the new. If there isn't, we have to ask why? What are we doing to reject the call and separation from our old life? We are accepting of grace and eternal life, which we did not pay for, but slow to change on our end and live as called. Are we making good choices and living righteously so our deeds rise to God's throne as a pleasant aroma or are we continuing as before?

So I ask again, what in your life could be used to convict you of being a Christian? Church attendance? I think not. Many who do not believe go to church and many who do have stopped. What about regularly tithing? I think not, many tithe without belief for status, family, and economic benefit. So, what in your life could be used against you because a judge and jury cannot see what we profess, but they can see the results.

So what might be enough for conviction? If there was evidence of care for widows and orphans, this would count against you as Christian behavior, but who does that anymore. What about loving your neighbor as yourself? This would be easy to figure out. Let the prosecutor interrogate the stranger we met last week. Their words might be enough to convict, although for most of us, we did not do anything but exchange empty platitudes. The Good News of Jesus went undelivered. If we remember John 13: 35, all people will know we are disciples of Jesus if we have love for one another. So we must

reflect on our lives again, what evidence in my life could be used to convict me of being a Christian? Is there evidence I have love for others?

Most of us will need very little space to write those things in our life that a court could use to convict us of our faith. This is a major hole in our faith today and something we should immediately want to rectify. It is an easy fix; we just have to be willing to freely love others, without an expectation of return, to the glory of our Lord and Savior. Challenge your spouse and kids and church to live radical Christian lives, just as we are called. Often the only thing necessary for change is one person willing to be the first. This is our call, it is not a burden, it is a blessing to us and those around us, and a pleasing aroma to God.

The Misrepresentation of Being Agreeable to Change

by Tracy Jagers

Do churches ever misrepresent themselves? Sure they do! Ask most pastors within their first two to three years of being on a church field. "They told me they were mission-minded. They said they really wanted to grow and reach this community...." are just two common comments I have received in the past nine years of relating specifically with pastors and staff.

Do churches intentionally misrepresent themselves? Probably not. Or at least, I pray that is not their intention. One thing of which I am keenly aware - churches often say they are ready and willing to change, hoping they will experience the anointing of God upon their church, but once the change begins to affect the church they know and love, they begin to push back. This is a major blockade to revitalization.

From the information I gathered, it was Mark Twain who made the statement "The only person who likes change is a wet baby". I wonder if Mark Twain ever changed a baby's diaper. None of our five children seemed to enjoy the whole "changing" process, especially when they had diaper rash. They would cry, kick and scream throughout the entire process. I can't fathom why either. They were in an "awful mess" and inundated with an "awful aroma."

Change is not always pleasant, but when a church is in an "awful mess," it is the only solution to the unpleasantness and pain. The Lord desires us to be followers who present a "sweet-smelling aroma" by the conduct of our lives in this present environment (Eph. 4:17-5:17, esp.5:2). Therefore, change is a model and a regular practice we are obligated to submit to for the glory of God to be revealed in us and in our assemblies. Hold all ministry and programs with a loose grasp, allowing the Holy Spirit to evaluate and adjust everything for its greatest effectiveness.

Change and pain need not be synonymous, if we come to realize that who we are, and everything we are steward over, is HIS!

About the author: Dr. Tracy Jagers is the Associational Director of Missions at Gateway Baptist Association, Edwardsville, IL

Foundation Vision Tour Scheduled

By David Roberts

MIDLAND – A Vision Tour to promote the work of the Michigan Southern Baptist Foundation (MSBF) will be held March 19-22 in various locations around the state. Pastors, staff, church leadership, BSCM staff, Associational leaders and other interested persons are invited to attend this FREE event that will include a meal our presentation as well as a time for questions to be answered.

The goal of this Vision Tour is to acquaint Michigan Baptists to the existence of, importance and potential of a healthy Baptist Foundation in our state. Many Southern Baptists in Michigan do not even know this Foundation exists or what it does. As a result, MSBF Trustees are promoting this tour event to allow Michigan Baptists the opportunity to learn what the Foundation is, what it does, and what we need to do to get it where it needs to be. A healthy, active, forward-looking Foundation can be a great blessing to our churches, church members, associations, the State Convention, and other gospel causes.

Please save the date on your calendar and do your best to make it to one of our Vision Tour stops:

March 19 – 6pm – Faith Baptist (Battle Creek)
March 20 – 12pm – Warren Woods (Warren)
March 20 – 6pm – Monroe Missionary (Monroe)
March 21 – 12pm – Grace Church (Jackson)
March 22 – 12pm – Colonial Hills (Mt. Morris)
March 22 – 6pm – Grayling Baptist (Grayling)

Special Guest speaker: Doug Morrow - Executive Director for the Baptist Foundation of Illinois.

To register, email david@baybaptist.net or call 989-631-9421. Please mention your name, the date and location you'll attend, and how many in your party. The MSBF Trustees hope to see you at one of our Vision Tour stops!

About the author: David Roberts serves as the Associational Missionary for the Bay Area Baptist Association and as a Trustee for the Michigan Southern Baptist Foundation. He has been involved in Southern Baptist ministry for over 26 years.

VBS Institute at Ridgecrest

By Bob Wood

MONROE - Seven Michigan Baptist leaders attended a national Vacation Bible School (VBS) Institute at Ridgecrest Conference Center in January. Along with Southern Baptist Leaders from across the eastern United States, they received training to plan, to prepare, and to conduct 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 that 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. That they were willing to take time out of their busy lives to come and learn and go back to their states to teach others."

The training equipped the team to return to Michigan, and lead VBS Institutes for local church leaders in our state. Shar Durbin commented, "VBS 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 that will find their way into the hearts of children and leaders for years to come. They are already in mine."

The Michigan VBS leadership team members come from churches across Michigan. The team includes Shar Durbin, Megan Line, Nickol Mearnic, Carla Saunders, Debbie Turner, Betty Ward and Bob Wood. Please contact any of the team members for VBS information or assistance.

Michigan VBS Institutes will be April 29, 2018 at Merriman Road Baptist Church, Garden City and 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.

Each VBS Institute starts with a worship/pep rally, and core leadership workshops for all VBS leaders in the morning. Lunch is provided. Breakout enrichment workshops are offered after lunch. Carla Saunders describes one of the breakouts, Gospel-centered Children's Ministry, "We learned that the Bible stories we read and teach are truly centered around Christ." Core leadership workshops 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. You can register online at <https://www.bscm.org/event-registration>.

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: Dr. Bob Wood is pastor of Heritage Baptist Church in Monroe, MI.

Church Revitalization in the Small Church

By Tom Cheyney (edited)

2 Timothy 1:7

“For God has not given us a spirit of fearfulness, but one of power, love, and sound judgment.”

Orlando, FL - The small church is the beginning of our early American Religious Heritage. We started our religious foundation with the creation of small churches. Even during the early days of the pilgrims at Plymouth Rock, the small church was in existence. Many things can be said about the small church. The small church is unique from all other sized churches. Paul Madsen says it so well, "The small church has no different mission than any other church of the land, regardless of size. It may use different methods to achieve that mission, but the mission of proclamation, fellowship, ministry, and service is the same for all."

It is astounding to realize that 90 percent of all churches today are not growing, and that churches with 101-200 total members 50 percent of them have plateaued. Another 19 percent have declined, leaving only 31 percent of these churches that are growing.

A more recent series of studies (The State of the Church) was conducted by Bill Day; Associate Director of the Leavell Center for Evangelism and Church Health, who serves the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary as the Gurney Professor of Evangelism and Church Health in his sequential studies on church health and growth of 2003, 2007, and 2010 where he reports that currently there are less than seven percent (6.8) of our SBC churches which are healthy growing churches. That means 3,087 of our 45,727 SBC churches are healthy. Abraham Lincoln said about the small churches in America, "God must love the small church. He made so many of them." Carl S. Dudley, professor of church and community at McCormick Theological Seminary, in Chicago, Illinois, states that the break-even number (small church congregation) would be around 175 participants in the Sunday School structure of the church. He does give us one careful delineation, he says that in the Mennonite denomination a congregation of 75 would be considered quite large.

Small Church Defined

1. Number of members now
2. Worship attendance
3. A comparison with past days when the congregation was much larger
4. The image projected by the pastor's definition of comparative church size
5. The physical size of the building or buildings
6. The size of the budget as compared to the past
7. A full workload for the minister or ministers
8. An individual's previous experiences in other congregations
9. The quality of caring relationships among the members
10. The size, number, and variety of fellowship circles or primary face-to-face groups which together constitute that congregation

Most definitions of the small church are misleading. In most mainline denominations, at least 60 percent of the congregations are included among the "small" churches. One stunning report comes from James E. Lowery as he describes the Churches of his particular denomination where he states: "43 percent of the clergy are serving 18 percent of the people in 62 percent of the churches in a situation which is programmed for failure." You ask ten leaders of small churches today you will get at least ten different lists of characteristics of a small church. There are at least fifteen characteristics of the small church today. Regardless of denomination, these fifteen elements appear predominantly throughout the small church in America.

THE SMALL CHURCH ACTS AS:

ONE BIG FAMILY AND IS ONE CELL; A CLOSE NICHE FAMILY; CASUAL IN ITS CHARACTER; DISPLAYS MARVELOUS DEVOTION AND COMPASSION; ALLOWS FOR FASTER PARTICIPATION AND CONNECTION; SIGNIFICANTLY RELIES ON VOLUNTEERS TO LEAD THE CHURCH; KNOWS WHEN YOU ARE NOT THERE INSTANTLY; PRACTICES CAREFUL FINANCING AND MANAGEMENT; IS INVOLVEMENT FOCUSED NOT QUALITY FOCUSED; HAS FEW ENTRY POINTS INITIALLY; PLACES THE CENTER OF ATTENTION ON A SINGLE EVENT AT A TIME; PASTOR MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE IMPACT; IS GUIDED BY A FEW COMMITTED LAY LEADERS; GROWTH BLUEPRINT IS SMALL GROUP AND CLUSTERS DESIGNED; DRAWS PARTICIPANTS FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS.

For the small house of worship there are various impediments to expansion that need to be defeated if it wishes to break the hurdle in church renewal. What is of significance, is that some of the small churches strengths can also be their weaknesses. I see at least eight growth impediments for those small churches desiring to break through in church renewal.

Here are the eight enlargement obstacles:

THE SMALL CHURCH PLANT HAS PARTIAL OR INCOMPLETE PROGRAMMING

THE SMALL CHURCH PLANT HAS VERY LITTLE OUTREACH OR EVANGELISM

THE SMALL CHURCH PLANT CAN REAR SMALLNESS IF IT DOES NOT KEEP A GROWTH MENTALITY CLEARLY BEFORE THE PEOPLE

THE SMALL CHURCH PLANT CAN EXHIBIT AFTER THE INITIAL FUNDS RUN OUT TO LAUNCH THE CHURCH, SWIFT AND STEADY PASTORAL TRANSITION.

THE SMALL CHURCH PLANT CAN BEGIN TO GROW A TOUGH CRUSTED LEADERSHIP TEAM

THE SMALL CHURCH PLANT DICTATES MERE EXISTENCE FINANCIAL PRACTICES

THE SMALL CHURCH PLANT EXHIBITS TO THEIR TARGET AREA INSUFFICIENT AMENITIES AND SERVICES

IN THE SMALL CHURCH PLANT FAMILIARITY OF SMALL GROUP BECOMES TOO FAMILIAR

Since one quarter of the Protestant churches in the United States and Canada average fewer than thirty-five at worship, what can we find are the strengths of these congregations?

I believe there are at least nine strengths

THE STRENGTH OF A HIGH DEGREE OF LAY OWNERSHIP

THE STRENGTH OF POSSESSING A VISION FOR REACHING THE COMMUNITY

THE STRENGTH OF HAVING A HARD WORKING AND DEDICATED PASTOR

THE STRENGTH OF A SUPPORTIVE PASTOR'S WIFE

THE STRENGTH OF DEDICATED LAY LEADERSHIP INVESTMENT

THE STRENGTH OF AMPLE FACILITY FOR THE PRESENT AND NEAR FUTURE

THE STRENGTH OF CORRECT METHODOLOGY

THE STRENGTH OF FELLOWSHIP

THE STRENGTH OF BAPTISM

There are at least eight major factors that influence the capability of the small church to survive.

The small church:

1. Is not a branch office
2. It reinforces community
3. It's subsidies increase vulnerability
4. It is a socialization factor
5. It displays the Importance of shared experiences
6. It shows distinctively the centrality of worship
7. It is a lay-dominated institution
8. The members institutional commitment is directed as a whole rather than toward any one component

For the small church aspiring to crack the barrier to church enlargement there are at least 7 intentional actions to be considered.

REQUIRES CHANGES IN PASTORAL LEADERSHIP PATTERNS

REQUIRES CHANGES IN ORGANIZATIONAL FORMATION

REQUIRES CHANGES IN HOW NEW MEMBERS ARE INCORPORATED INTO THE WORK

REQUIRES CHANGES IN THE NEW CHURCHES OUTREACH STRATEGIES

REQUIRES CHANGES IN THE BUDGET AND FINANCIAL POLICIES OF THE NEW CHURCH

REQUIRES CHANGES IN THE WAY THE NEW CHURCH FUNCTIONS IN REGARD TO BUSINESS PROCEDURES

REQUIRES CHANGES IN THE NEW CHURCHES LAY LEADERSHIP PATTERNS

One important ingredient when just starting out to renew your church: Seek to Continually Build Momentum in Your Church.

Prayer is the often overlooked revitalization tool! It ought to go without saying but here is the first thing you need to do.

Pray and teach your people to pray

Stop talking about it and start actually praying at prayer meetings

Keep preaching about prayer and model prayer during your preaching

Have a prayer list and pray through it

Develop a ministry that prays for all other ministries

Be a leader that models prayer

For most denominations the small participant church, though it is tenacious, does not have the willingness alone to break the barriers needed for church revitalization. A church revitalizer should be deployed. Yes, the small church is vital to the American heartland and by and large will not die. Yes, they do not experience great shifts in membership, but they do not have the willingness to take the actions needed to break the barriers necessary for church revitalization.

There are at least nine characteristics of the church which is beginning to stall and face plateau or decline.

- ACHIEVING ORIGINAL GOALS
- PEAKING ATTENDANCE & MEMBERSHIP
- THE GOOD OLE DAYS
- STAGNANT POPULATION
- COMMUNITY IN TRANSITION
- NOT MAKING CORRECT TRANSITIONS
- SENIOR INFLUENCE
- BEFUDDLED BUILDING COMPLEX
- NOT INVOLVING NEW MEMBERS
- LACK OF PASTORAL DISCRETIONARY TIME
- DECLINING ATTENDANCE
- COMFORT TURNING INWARD

Key Insights

Remember from “0-50”-ish members, your people helped you grow to that level! To get the next 50 people the pastor will have to get them and personal evangelism will be a key contribution to that cause! Member will usually not help with growing the church due to comfort restraints. However, as you get to 125 participants church members begin bringing new people again!

Discovery #1: Growing and declining churches actually do the same things!

Discovery #2: Growing and declining communities do not statistically correlate with growing and shrinking congregations!

Discovery #3: Growing churches have a clear sense that God is active within them and is using them to change lives!

Discovery #4: In both growing and declining congregations the emphasizing of money and programming is a mistake!

Discovery #5: Growing congregations that have turned things around have experienced a spiritual renewal.

Discovery #6: Nothing happens without that spiritual renewal first and foremost.

Discovery #7: All renewed churches were outer focused and other focused.

Discovery #8: All renewed churches were willing to change! It was not lip service but real commitment.

The overall discovery from the report is that these factors are the distinctions between growing and declining congregations. It concludes all of these must take place for revitalization and growth to happen.

1. Church Revitalization Is A Long-Term Many Year Process!
2. Plan on investing a minimum of three or four years at the outset.
3. Do not allow oneself to become distracted in the process.
4. Remember you are called to do God's thing not a good thing!
5. Beware of a short attention span within yourself and your congregation.
6. New is not always the best or right answer, it is just new and can contribute to failure.
8. Be sure the new things you do match the main thing you are doing to revitalize your church.
- ™9. Lastly, Prayer is the glue that holds everything together! So keep praying! It will be the very thing that hold the church together during difficult times.

About the author: Dr. Tom Cheyney is founder and Executive Director for RenovateConference.org and ReproducingChurches.com located in central Florida.

SENDING

Southern Baptists appoint 20 new international missionaries to the nations

By Julie McGowan

Omar Loza accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior in his home country of Peru, and then he shared the gospel with his friends and family. A few years after reading that God wants believers to take the gospel to the ends of the earth, he visited an Andean town.

"I saw Aymara people worshipping God in their own language and culture," he said. "God put in my heart a desire to see many different people groups worshipping Him."

Omar's wife, Tia, said she also has known she wanted to make Christ known to others since she surrendered her own life to the Lord's leadership. The Lozas, who are being sent by La Respuesta-Highview Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky, to serve God in the Americas, are among 20 new full-time, fully funded missionaries appointed by International Mission Board trustees Feb. 28 and recognized during a Sending Celebration near Richmond, Virginia.

Good news

"God reconciling all peoples of the earth to Himself and to one another was good news to two kids raised in broken homes," said Stephanie Roth, who was born in Alaska, "met Jesus" at age 3, and moved to Kansas at age 10. "Reading about and meeting missionaries in person drew me to dedicate my life to missions as a teen."

Her husband, Christian, said he learned the realities of a culture far from God while spending summers with his unbelieving father in Sweden. Christian said it broke his heart.

“Redeemer Church has been a flame for us, a place of warmth and comfort, burning refinement, and an igniter to see God’s glory made known,” he said. The church, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, is sending the Roths to Scandinavia to share the gospel among the European peoples.

Encountering God

IMB President David Platt challenged the new missionaries with a message from the Book of Exodus, beginning with the story of the Israelites in slavery in Egypt and then God’s plan to deliver His people.

“Moses was simply minding his own business, but you never know when your life might be changed forever by an encounter with God,” Platt said.

In an encounter with God, Moses asks two questions: “Who am I? Who am I, God, that you would send me, a stammering shepherd?” (Exodus 3:11) and “Who are you?” (Exodus 3:13). God’s answer: I AM — *Yahweh* — translated “The LORD.”

“The same God who appeared to Moses in the burning bush is the same God who is sending you,” Platt told the new missionaries. “Remember when you are God’s servant in God’s presence doing God’s work, you are on holy ground. You are in the presence of the holy God of the universe.”

He said the Name of God also reveals that God is merciful, He is ever-present, He is all-powerful, He is self-existent, He is self-sufficient, He is eternal, He is immutable, He is faithful, and He is sovereign. Therefore, Platt said, the missionaries must remember to find their rest and refuge in The LORD, and live so the nations might be glad in Him.

“You are stepping out on the absolutely true promises of God,” Platt said. “There is no safer place to be.”

Surrendered

Just as Moses obeyed God and trusted His faithfulness, the new missionaries are following God’s leadership in their lives. For Mark and Aimee Phillips from First Baptist Church, McAllen, Texas, exposure to God’s work through the years has led to their joining Him on mission. They are being sent to serve in Sub-Saharan Africa among the peoples of Madagascar.

“Through the testimonies of missionaries at church camp, I became burdened for those that don’t know Jesus, and it was there that I surrendered my life to share the gospel with the nations,” Aimee shared during the celebration.

“In Romans 15 it says, ‘those who have never heard will understand,’ Mark said. “This same call to take the gospel to the nations was confirmed in my heart during a summer volunteering with the IMB in Uganda. Through multiple short-term mission trips and ISC terms, God has continued to reaffirm His call on our lives to share the gospel where Christ has never been named.”

Who will go?

Luke and Lilly Price* attend a church in North Carolina that highlights a people group every Sunday that has no access to the gospel and no known believers.

“As one of the pastors, I would encourage our people to pray that God would send believers to take the gospel to these people groups,” Luke said. “One day I realized that I couldn't keep praying that God would send other people to take the gospel. We needed to be willing to go.”

Lilly said they are excited to be going to a part of the world — South Asia — that is home to hundreds of unreached people groups. They are joining more than 3,500 other full-time workers sent by Southern Baptists, cooperating with the vision of a multitude from every language, people, tribe and nation knowing and worshiping our Lord Jesus Christ.

The opportunities are limitless. [Find out how you can go.](#)

**Names changed.*

Julie McGowan is public relations manager for IMB.

Here and Now: Mission Offering for North American Missions By Staff

Fenton - During the month of March Southern Baptists will join together in prayer and giving to support our mission efforts across North America. The offering is called the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering (AAEO) and is named after a champion of missions who lived 100 years ago. Here and Now is this year's theme referencing the urgency of the need. Every gift to the AAEO - 100 percent – goes to train, resource, and send more than 5000 missionaries in church planting and compassion ministries across the United States, Canada and their territories. The cooperative giving of Southern Baptist churches and individuals makes the work possible.

The churches that make up the Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM) gave more than \$140,000 to the offering last year. As part of the mission offering emphasis, the North American Mission Board (NAMB) highlights the work of a group of missionaries from around the continent. This year, one of Michigan's own missionary couples, Travis and Jennifer Whittaker, are two of the featured missionaries. They are a church planter couple at the Mile City Church in South Lyon.

Travis began his life in Christian ministry as a musician until God called him to do more. "I never wanted to plant churches," Travis says. "Because of my stuttering problem, I wanted to sing for Jesus, not teach. But I heard the call of God challenge me to lead in a new way." Mile City is helping launch a new church in Grand Blanc this year, and is already planning to help another new church.

NAMB provides a wide range of resources to prepare churches to give and pray for the AAEO. Check out the various resources with multiple language translations, videos for your church, social media package and printable resources.

Baptists share Christ during Olympics in South Korea

by Tim Ellsworth

GANGNEUNG, South Korea (BP) -- On an uncharacteristically warm day during the Winter Olympics, visitors to the train station were greeted by a number of different religious groups. The Mormons wore yellow vests. The Jehovah's Witnesses had their literature racks set up. Methodist Koreans were carrying yellow bags as they handed out literature. Among these were a group of volunteers from the SBC of Virginia distributing copies of the books of Romans and John in 24 different languages.

"The world comes to one location, so this gives you an opportunity to share the Gospel and to give them something in their hand that they can read and follow up with even after they leave," said Steve Bradshaw, director of evangelism for SBCV. "We're to go into all the world, so it's really just doing the work of the Great Commission." The Virginia volunteers were just a few of the many Baptists, both from the United States and across the world, who traveled to South Korea to minister and evangelize during the Olympics. "There's a sense of unity in the games," said Mindy McCord, administrative coordinator at SBCV. "We're all cheering for our own people. It's all competition, but once you're outside of the venue or the event, there's not contention between countries. It's just so easy to strike up conversations with people who you wouldn't normally interact with."

David Crim, a long-time Southern Baptist who serves as pastor of International Baptist Church of Manila in the Philippines, brought 14 of his church members to South Korea to seek opportunities to share the Gospel with people. Crim said his "disciple-makers" were trained to start "Gospel conversations" using the acronym "LOVE." They'll ask people what they "like" about the Olympics, what their "opinions" are about what the world needs most to experience the kind of unity seen at the Olympics, what is most "valuable" about the Olympics that can lead to peace and unity and then "engage" them in a short message about how they can be connected with God's love for them.

International Baptist Church also established a website, godspassionconnected.info, where they could direct people they encounter who wanted more information about what it means to be a Christian. Those who respond through the site will be directed to a church in their community. Overall, Crim said his church's interactions had been positive. "There have been a few rejections and even a few unkind responses, but most people have been willing to engage," he said. "We are leaving the results of our conversations to God. We see our role as simply planting seeds of the Gospel."

Randall Aldridge, an SBCV church planting strategist and part of the South Korean ministry team, went to the Olympics in 2016 in Rio de Janeiro and connected with Outreach Bible Project, a ministry of Hillcrest Baptist Church in Acworth, Ga. (an American Baptist congregation). OBP is a ministry that takes short-term volunteers to Olympic host cities to help distribute Bibles, tracts and pins that are used as a means of sharing the Gospel. "We just wanted to see if it was something that our churches could get involved with, if it would be another opportunity that we could offer our churches to do ministry around the world," Aldridge said. "God always provides for us divine appointments and opportunities to share the Gospel and also to connect with other Christians."

The SBCV group also spent time, in addition to the train station, at Olympic Park for the ice events and in Alpensia for the ski events. Bradshaw said they were already thinking about how SBCV churches might be involved in the 2020 Olympics in Japan and come alongside local churches there to assist them in sharing the Gospel. For McCord, the trip to South Korea was a trip home. The daughter of International Mission Board missionaries who served in South Korea, McCord lived there until she was almost 14.

"For me to be able to come back home and do ministry where ministry began for my family is a pretty incredible opportunity," she said. "I love these people. I love this country. This is home. To remember that, to see that again 20 years later, is pretty special."

About the author: Tim Ellsworth is a sports correspondent for Baptist Press and associate vice president for university communications at Union University in Jackson, Tenn. He is covering the Winter Olympics in South Korea for Baptist Press, previously having covered four Olympics -- 2008 in Beijing, 2010 in Vancouver, 2012 in London and 2016 in Rio de Janeiro.

Every Believer on Mission

By: Alin Patularu

Windsor, Ontario, CA - As our small church began to take form, and God began to save sinners by His grace, we ran into a problem. These new believers wanted to share their faith, but didn't know how. They were excited about their new life, they were glowing with the light of Christ, but they were unsure how to share this good news, and frankly, I didn't know how to help them. The temptation can be to hold back sharing the Gospel until we "know enough." But I knew there had to be a simple, reproducible and faithful way that a newly baptized believer, still dripping with baptismal water, can faithfully begin sharing the Gospel, but how?

The Gospel is not a religious doctrine, as much as it is good news. It's easy to baptize the Gospel in religious rhetoric and forget that its ACTUAL news. The Gospel is history, it's flesh and bone! The Gospel is front page current events news.

Then it hit me, "That's it! It's news!" In that moment God saturated my mind with ideas. It was as if a flood gate opened and I couldn't stop the creative energy of the Holy Spirit from consuming me. The world is sharing their "gospel" everyday through every means and medium possible. The Church needs to do the same.

God led me to create a ministry called, "Good News for Windsor." The goal of this ministry was to start a grassroots movement that would embolden Christians to live as domestic missionaries. We created simple, clear, and easy to present resurrection pamphlets so that even new believers could open them up and share with anyone. We created drop cards that pointed people to our website, where they would see a professionally produced proclamation of the Good News as well as other resources for those wishing to dig deeper. We made T-Shirts that said, "Ask Me for Some Good News" in order to prompt people to begin conversations with us! It's always nerve wracking to start a Gospel conversation, but it's much easier when someone else ASKS YOU for the Gospel!

The results have been nothing short of miraculous. We were able to share the Gospel with over 50 people, face to face, at a local festival last summer using the materials we created. But more importantly, our congregation is reporting an increase of Gospel conversations with their family, friends and even strangers! I was able to personally share the Gospel with a Muslim woman at the grocery store and give her a resurrection pamphlet. However, in the providence of God, the next week at the gym she saw me, and I was able to witness to her again at the gym. We chatted for 20 minutes about the resurrection and eternal life, and this time her Muslim friend got to hear the Good News as well. All because I wore a shirt that said, "Ask Me for Some Good News!"

If we truly believe that God came in the flesh, died on a cross to cleanse us from all our sins, and rose from the dead to grant us eternal life, then we ought to go to extreme measures to share this news. We are strongly encouraging the Saints in our fellowship to become living, breathing, Gospel billboards. After all, isn't that what Church Planting is all about? Bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ to every living soul on this beautiful planet?

Charles Spurgeon said, "Every Christian is either a missionary or an imposter." Every believer on mission is normative Christianity. Pew warming and consumer Christianity needs to become the oddity among us, not the norm. So think, how can I begin to clearly and simply share the Good News of Jesus of Nazareth? And then GO and DO IT! Don't wait for permission, don't look to see what others are doing, GO! This news is too wonderful to wait!!!!

About the author: Alin Patularu is the founder and Lead Teaching Pastor of Life-Giver Church in Windsor, Ontario. Alin has been married to his wife Shelly for 7 years and they are expecting twin baby boys.

God is a Sending God

By Eric Stewart

Flint - God is a missionary God.

He is a sending God.

His plan from the very beginning has always involved sending His people do His work.

The Latin term *missio Dei* is a common term used to describe God and it has often been translated as the “sending of God” or the “mission of God” which comes from the very nature of God Himself, “encompassing everything God does in relation to the kingdom and everything the church is sent to do on the earth.” (McIntosh, John A. 2000. *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, ed. A Scott Moreau, s.v. “*Missio Dei*.” Grand Rapids: Baker.) The nature of God and the understanding of the *missio Dei* reveals to us that God is not only a supporter of missions, but that He is actually the initiator of missions. Missions exists because God exists. Church planting exists because God exists. When people engage in church planting or other missionary activity it is not like they are doing something for God. They are actually simply joining God in what He is doing. The nature of God and the mission of God cannot be separated.

In contemporary society today, it seems that the majority of Christians don't connect theology to church planting. It seems that most simply compartmentalize the faith saying that theology is what we believe and church planting or other missionary activity is what we do without any continuity or connectivity between them. This is a flawed view as the right thinking always precedes the right action. In order to be faithful in our church planting we must have a Biblical understanding of theology.

Upon studying the trinity, we see the pattern of relationships as it relates to church planting. In the plan of redemption, it is revealed to us the unique role that each person of the trinity plays. There is a division of labor even within the Godhead. In salvation God the Father is the sending God. He sends the Son and the Holy Spirit. He is the master planner of redeeming the elect. When Jesus was carrying out His ministry He often explained that He was sent to the earth in order to do the will of the Father. God the Father is the sender. Jesus is the sent one. He was sent to carry out a specific ministry of living the perfect life that none of us could live and then dying the death that we should have died. Then on the third day He was resurrected unto newness of life making man's redemption complete. He was the one sent.

The Holy Spirit was finally sent as a support to Jesus. His main mission is to carry out the work of Jesus. Herein we see a model for church planting. In order for church planting to exist there must be a sending church. Just as there is a sending church there is also a sent one, the church planter. This is the church planter that is called to fulfill the specific assignment of planting a new church. No church planter can do his work alone so there must also be a support team sent to surround him. That is a group of people that come along side of the church planter to fulfill the task. Literally the sending God gives us a model of what church planting relationships should look like.

Our ecclesiology is vitally important as it relates to missions. What is the purpose of the church? Is the church an end unto itself, or is it the means to carrying out the missionary task. It is my persuasion that each local church should form into a missionary agency with one of its chief concerns to send believers out on mission with the chief mission being planting new churches. The goal is to not just grow the seating capacity of the church, but to grow the sending capacity of the church. It seems the Apostle Paul made this extremely clear when he gave instructions to the leaders at the church in Ephesus, "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-12). These verses teach us that the leaders of the church are called and put in place in order to equip the saints to carry out the ministry.

What better ministry than church planting. The church should have a primary focus on equipping those in her midst to take up the call of planting other churches that plant other churches.

About the author: Pastor Eric married his wife Lori in October of 2006 and they now have three beautiful children. Pastor Eric received a Bachelor of Science degree in Social Science and Religion from Liberty University and has since begun working on a Masters of Divinity degree. In the fall of 2014 Eric along with others from the Flint area started ONElife Church which Pastor Eric now serves as the Lead Pastor.

Warm Hearts Beat Cold Weather

By Cecil Cogswell

Sarnia, Ontario, CA - As the clouds darkened the skies over the city of Sarnia I was reminded it was expected to be a colder winter and the snow would pile up. The cold winter is what birthed the idea to hand out retired winter wear along with with the gospel message, thanks to the Ayton family. This year we had over thirty people participated in reaching the unchurched people of Sarnia.

The winter wear had been collected diligently and coats were ready to be handed out to anyone who had a need. Not to be put off by the foreboding sky, this little band of Christians gathered along the side of Bayside Mall to hand out hot chocolate, coffee, winter coats, boots, hats and mitts. Along with these acts of kindness were people ready to talk about the love of our Saviour. Gospel literature was available and tracts were intermingled in the pockets of all the coats. We were all gathered to give a cup of water in Jesus' name.

The spirit of spontaneity, adventure and resourcefulness all came to fruition on a particular Thursday morning. As the raindrops hits my windshield I decided to turn around and go home to gather plastic tarps and my sunshade. Before long we had constructed a "tent city" to keep the garments and shoppers dry as they looked for something that might fit their children or themselves. One single mom remarked how thankful she was for these coats because she did not know what she was going to do for her kids.

Our church planting team (The Bridge Gathering) put together eighty “blessing bags” filled with colorful homemade hats, many personal items and a New Testament. We added a special event prize filled with Christmas delicacies, bus passes and other practical helps for anyone who filled out a ballot, which would be drawn at a free Christmas dinner in two weeks. We gained contact information for future events and asked if they would check off an interest in life skill classes like cooking, finances and parenting. Many responded positively to this initiative and we look forward to maintaining email and phone contact to continue our ministry to this community in the days ahead.

Over the next three-hours, we witnessed to more than two hundred people, enrolled them for future follow up and handed out Christmas dinner invitations to which one hundred actually came two weeks later. And just when you think you’ve done everything, I had my first turkey cooking experience as I spent the day putting three of those big birds through my kitchen oven. At the event, volunteers mixed and mingled during the dinner to indicate that we are interested in a relationship, not just helping them out. Children were kept occupied with a craft while parents enjoyed the delicious turkey and ham dinner. Someone even set up a photo booth and took family pictures, printed them off and delivered them to the families. One person remarked, “this was the first family picture they had taken in years.”

At the end of the day, here is what we learned: If we are going to ask someone to consider a personal relationship with our Saviour, we had better be ready to establish a personal relationship with them first. We cannot talk about a relationship with Jesus Christ and not be prepared to engage ourselves in relationship with others. This is the gospel connection we must make if we are going to reach our lost neighbours. This is what it means to be “On Mission” and it is the most exciting thing we can do as Christians.

About the author: Cecil Cogswell serves The Gathering Church as Director of Community Outreach for Sarnia-Lambton. Cecil and wife Jayne planted a church in the Greater Toronto Area years ago and pastored that church faithfully until relocating to Sarnia. Cecil and their team plan to develop small groups within the area as a strategy for reaching people with the Gospel. They are extremely hospitable and enjoy having people into their home. They have two married daughters.

MICHIGAN NEWS

Editorial: Perilous Times

By David Smith

Sharonville, OH - Tragedy strikes the human experience. We suffered the horror of the Valentine's Day slaughter of children at a Florida high school. We bid farewell to the last great evangelist just a few days later. Many readers experienced the loss of a loved one or friend to sickness, accident or age. Nothing ever prepares us for these events but it's the first one, in Florida, that has rocked us to our core. How could a young man decide to deliberately murder his peers? Does the Bible reveal the root of such tragedy?

Paul tells us in 2 Timothy 3:1-4 about the last days. "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;"

Whether these are the last days or not, all would agree they are perilous. The thing that makes them that way are the men who live as Paul describes. The list is long and sordid. As we look at it we can calculate multiple reasons why tragedy is the fruit of such men. So how does the church respond? Let's stay with Paul's letter to Timothy and see if he'll give us an answer to our question.

First, he tells Timothy to hold on to what he has learned (2 Tim 3:14-17). Timothy lived a biblically centered life which started in his childhood and continued through his association with Paul. The church and Christian parents must make Bible training a priority for children and youth. It is time to return to catechizing our families in the word of God and the doctrines of our faith.

Second, he tells Timothy to preach the word (2 Tim 4:1-2). Notice that this is the only remedy to the kind of unsound doctrine that leads to error. The church must make the exposition of the word of God central to every service, every ministry, every class, and every event. It is the foundation of a healthy Christian spirituality.

Finally, he gives Timothy a four-fold charge (2 Tim 4:5). Paul tells him to watch. This is the work of every man in prayer. Watchfulness describes the church. Paul tells him to endure affliction. We have something of the same tenor in 1 Tim 2:3 where Paul says, "endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." Life during perilous times is hard. The "despisers" are looking for a reason to do their work against the church. We must endure and preach and pray. Paul tells him to do the work of an evangelist. Our broken world needs the gospel. The men described in chapter three need the gospel. Who will tell them if not the church? Paul ends by telling him to fully perform his ministry. People are hurting.

Tragedy again has raised its ugly head. How should the church respond? We fully perform our ministry by demonstrating the love of God we have received. The shattered and broken hearted need comfort. They need the comfort we have received in Christ. During these perilous times let's resolve to let the church be the church. That is, a family of biblically centered, cross carrying, Christ committed people ready to comfort a hurting world.

About the author: David Smith is a pastor, author and husband...

Billy Graham Ministry included Michigan roots

By Tanda Gmitter, Lynsey Mukomel

The Rev. Billy Graham has been described as the most widely heard Christian evangelist in history, according to the Associated Press. He traveled to 185 countries worldwide spreading the Gospel, but his first ever crusade took place in Grand Rapids. It should then come as no surprise his ministry had an impact on many right here in Michigan. Graham's famous televised "Crusades" had Michigan roots. Hudsonville couple, Wendell and Grace Leathead, in an interview with The Grand Rapids Press years ago, remembered a message they heard from Graham at a Grand Rapids rally in September 1947. "It was the renowned evangelist's first "crusade."

"That particular night impacted my whole life in terms of serving the Lord," said Grace Leathead. "He preached such a simple gospel message. I was really touched by that message, and opened my heart to the Lord and became a Christian." "He had a way of exciting you about the word of God when he preached and people responded to his message," Leathead said. "He was just a real inspiration to me and to so many thousands of people. ... He didn't try to be showy or anything. He was just so convinced of what he knew to be the truth and expressed it very well." At the time, Wendell and Grace were teenage sweethearts, were among a group of kids from Grandville's Grace Bible Church who went to hear Graham speak at Calvary Church. They later married -- he worked in construction and she served many years as church secretary.

Their souls are among the countless ones touched by Graham, who went on from speaking to 6,000 people in that initial crusade in Grand Rapids to lead rallies involving millions of people across the globe, and upward of 1 billion television viewers.

Graham's legacy also extends to the local chapter of Youth for Christ, an organization he helped create. "We stand on his shoulders as we continue to serve kids here in West Michigan," West Michigan Youth for Christ Executive Director Dan Kregel told 24 Hour News 8. "He started off as our first employee. He made \$75 a week back in the day and we went all over the country at youth rallies, sharing the good news of the Gospel." Graham served as the first evangelist leader for the organization. Kregel said he set the tone for their continued mission. "It's sad," Kregel said of his death. "Our world has lost somebody of such high integrity and such high character and just a deep calling to share the good news of the Gospel. His life purpose was to help every single person experience life in Jesus Christ and you know, that's really the hope of the world."

Billy Graham was 99 years old and will be laid to rest in Charlotte, North Carolina.

About the author: Tanda Gmitter serves as the newsroom leader for MLive in Grand Rapids. I have the pleasure of working with our wonderful staff of journalists and being immersed in West Michigan's news scene daily. I am proud of what we do here at MLive.

SBC NEWS

The Reason David Platt Wants to Resign From the IMB

By Megan Briggs

Richmond, VA - David Platt, president of the International Missions Board (the sending arm of the Southern Baptist Church), has announced his intention to resign from that position and focus his efforts on the local church. Platt has expressed his commitment to continue serving as president of IMB until a suitable replacement can be found. Taking on the role of president in 2014, Platt has led the organization through a significant time of transition due to budget constraints.

In 2015, Platt led the organization through a lot of cutbacks due to a \$21 million budget deficit. IMB ended up losing over 1,000 missionaries and staff. In addition to the changes due to budget constraints, Platt also made other changes to the qualifications for those who can serve as missionaries. The most head-turning of those changes was lifting the ban on speaking in tongues.

The Local Church Wins Out in David Platt's Decision

In September 2017, Platt was confirmed into the role of teaching pastor of McLean Bible Church (MBC), McLean, Virginia, by a 95 percent approval vote from the congregational members. Platt and his family are members of the Washington, D.C., area church, where Platt also serves as elder. When he took on the role at McLean Bible Church in September 2017, Platt said, "I am all in as IMB president," he shared. "Me teaching God's Word in the local church is not in any way indicative of a desire to do less at IMB. I am not changing anything when it comes to my commitment to the IMB."

However, he also expressed the reason for taking on the teaching pastor role was because of his feeling that "he wasn't using his role and gifts in a way that shepherds and mobilizes as many people as possible on mission."

David Platt Announced His Intentions to Trustees of IMB

On Monday, February 12, 2018, Platt spoke to trustees of the IMB about his decision to transition from the role of president. Platt requested the group begin searching for his replacement immediately, but assured them he would continue in the role until a suitable successor had been found. According to a statement on IMB's website, Platt gave this explanation to the trustees:

"I have come to the realization that it is not viable long-term for me to lead as president of the IMB while serving as teaching pastor in a church," Platt said. "This realization has been sobering, for I don't believe I can choose between preaching and leading in the local church, and mobilizing and shepherding people in global missions. Therefore, I have come to the conclusion that if I am going to serve in this way in the local church, then I need to serve in different ways for the cause of global missions."

"I love this IMB family, and I want to encourage you continually with God's Word, I want to mobilize limitless missionaries to join you, and I want to work with you overseas in any ways I can help you," Platt said. "In short, I want to do anything I can to see missions succeed across and beyond IMB and the SBC for the glory of God."

Before serving as president of IMB, Platt was pastor of The Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham, Alabama, from 2006 to 2014.

About the author: Megan Briggs is a writer and editor for ChurchLeaders.com. Her experience in ministry, an extensive amount of which was garnered overseas, gives her a unique perspective on the global church. She has the longsuffering and altruistic nature of foreign friends and missionaries to humbly thank for this experience. Megan is passionate about seeking and proclaiming the truth. When she's not writing, Megan likes to explore God's magnificent creation.

The Director of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan recently spoke with David at the annual meeting of State Executives in Galveston, TX. He asked David if he and his wife had peace about the decision and said that he had complete peace but still felt a heaviness about IMB. Patterson responded to him saying that he understood and would be praying for him and his family as they make the transition.

Billy Graham's impact praised by Baptist leaders

by Art Toalston

NASHVILLE (BP) -- Few men could spark the outpouring of respect and gratitude as Billy Graham upon his death today (Feb. 21) at age 99. Among Southern Baptists -- among whom Graham counted himself -- a range of leaders underscored the broad scope of the famed evangelist's influence.

Steve Gaines, president of the Southern Baptist Convention and pastor of the Memphis-area Bellevue Baptist Church: "Billy Graham is with Jesus. He has seen and talked with our beloved Savior. May the awareness of his death result in many people hearing the Gospel and being converted to Jesus Christ! "He is the nearest thing to a true prophet that Christians have had in the past century. He was a man of integrity, simplicity, love and evangelistic fervency. He preached to more people than anyone else in the history of Christianity. He was a legendary man of God, and every born again Christian will miss him. He was converted to Christ in 1934 at an evangelistic crusade in Charlotte, N.C., led by evangelist Mordecai Ham. He soon felt the call to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the world has never been the same."

Frank S. Page, president of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee: "Along with countless others, I mourn today for the passing of Billy Graham. As I came to Christ as a young man out of a non-Christian home, he became a mentor to me from afar. I admired his preaching, his life and his integrity. I told him so years ago when I got to meet with him. Heaven is a richer place today. "For three-quarters of a century, he has been a faithful ambassador for Christ, seeking to reconcile men and women to God through faith in Jesus Christ," Page said. "He has borne witness for Christ without distinction, sharing the Gospel with the world's most powerful leaders and with the oppressed, urging the wealthiest and the most impoverished alike to find their hope in Christ alone."

Ronnie Floyd, pastor of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas, president of the National Day of Prayer Task Force and immediate past president of the SBC: "I am overcome with emotion when I think of Billy Graham and his influence on all of Christianity. He was a giant for God, a one-of-a-kind, once-in-a-generation prophet of God's truth and grace. He called everyone, young and old and even boys and girls, to get up from their chairs and give their lives to Christ. And they poured out by the thousands.... I pray we may never forget his legacy and his unrelenting passion for Jesus, and may we follow his footsteps in calling people to repentance in Christ."

Kevin Ezell, president of the North American Mission Board: "Only eternity is expansive enough to measure the impact Billy Graham had on our world. I will be forever grateful for the way he kept believers focused on the priority of proclaiming Jesus. I am thankful and grateful for the impact he made on my life and that of millions of others."

Paige Patterson, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary: "The eyes of a North Carolina farm boy sparkled as never before this morning when Billy Graham entered heaven. After nearly 100 years spent largely in an effort to 'rescue the perishing and care for the dying,' the world's evangelist was called home to a prophet's reward. "Never accused of the hoarding of wealth or of sexual misconduct, his careful practices of conduct place him in a category of a man whose life was a proclamation of Christ as well as His message. His faithfulness to the proclamation of God's plan of redemption -- undergirded by his initiatives on racial justice and his concern for the lost -- set the standard for all who would attempt to preach the riches of the Gospel. His allegiance to sacred Scripture was legendary. Never did he allow doubt to shake his confidence in God's Word."

R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary: "An epic era of evangelical history has come to an end. Billy Graham was not only a titanic figure in evangelicalism, but in world history and perhaps represents the last of a kind. He dominated 20th-century American evangelicalism and remained a major figure on the world stage throughout most of the 20th century in a way that we can envision no evangelical leader in our times. He was a man of deep conviction whose passionate heartbeat was for the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Thom S. Rainer, president and CEO of LifeWay Christian Resources and founding dean of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Ministry: "Graham will forever be revered as one of the greatest evangelists the Christian faith has ever known. In a day and time when Mr. Graham

could have easily commanded the attention of millions for his own gain, he chose to live a private, humble life. Throughout his life, it was obvious he wanted the focus to be not on himself but on one thing: the cross of Jesus Christ."

Russell Moore, president of the SBC Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission: "We are fortunate to have lived in the era of Billy Graham. He was perhaps the greatest Southern Baptist in history, turning the world upside down with the Gospel. He was never ashamed to confront a brave new world with the old-time Gospel. Combining the power of a 'the Bible says' authority with the compassion of a 'Just as I Am' invitation, he projected the mission of Christ Jesus, full of grace and truth. Behind Dr. Graham's stately North Carolina accent, millions of people heard another voice, a northern Galilean voice calling 'Come, follow Me.' As we grieve the loss of Billy Graham, let's thank God that in this man's life we were able to see the Gospel that is, still and forever, the power of God unto salvation."

Tim Patterson, Executive Director-Treasurer of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan: "Dr. Billy Graham was the voice of the evangelical church before and during my lifetime. His uncompromising clarion call of the Gospel that "whosoever will may come", will thankfully continue to ring for generations to come. I can think of no other Christian voice that has impacted more people with the saving knowledge of Jesus than that of Billy Graham. He was a man of integrity and convictions, to which he stayed true for the entirety of his life. All of Christianity is saddened by his homegoing but we look forward to a great reunion one day soon."

Adam Greenway, dean of Southern Seminary's Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Ministry: "The passing of Billy Graham marks the end of an era in American Christianity. He was incredibly passionate for evangelism and he influenced every level of American life. He was also passionate about theological education and the training of the next generation of evangelists and evangelistic pastors. That's personified by his support for the creation of the Billy Graham School at Southern Seminary -- the only graduate school ever allowed to carry his name. I think his greatest legacy would not only be those whom he personally impacted through his evangelistic ministry, but the scores of pastors and evangelists who have been trained to preach the same Gospel that he so faithfully proclaimed."

Jerry A. Johnson, president of National Religious Broadcasters: "The world has lost a great man, but those in heaven are surely rejoicing in the homecoming of this good and faithful servant. Only God knows how many are there with him because of his ministry and how many more there will be. It seems trite to say he was a giant among men, but no one could doubt the truth of this statement. For more than eight decades, Billy Graham faithfully obeyed Christ's command to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature as our Lord commanded. Billy Graham loved the Lord with all of his heart and demonstrated this through his ministry. He was a trailblazer in the use of radio, television, film and other communications platforms to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ.... Billy Graham was and will remain a shining example for us all."

Richard Land, president of Southern Evangelical Seminary and former president of the SBC Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission: "I grew up in a home with a Christian father because of Billy Graham. Dr. Graham came to Houston's Rice Stadium for a crusade in the early 1950s. Some of the men from the local Baptist church in our neighborhood

invited my father to go with them to hear Billy Graham. It was there that my father accepted Jesus as his personal Lord and Savior and became a faithful deacon and Christian father for the rest of his life. Similar stories have been repeated literally hundreds of thousands of times across the globe. I am eternally grateful that God sent Billy Graham to us and that he answered God's call and became the greatest messenger for the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ since the Apostles."

Jerry Drace, a former president of the Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists and president of the Jerry Drace Evangelistic Association: "Graham's standards of integrity, honesty and genuine concern for all people of all backgrounds will forever be a model for every vocational evangelist. His single message of telling others that, 'God loves you' and his constant reminder that, 'The Bible says' was the foundation of his God-anointed ministry. One one occasion I was scheduled to speak to the annual meeting of religious officials in Shenzhen, China. Rev. Graham shared with me the message which he delivered to that same group a few years before. That evening when I spoke, I brought them greetings from Rev. Billy Graham and they applauded. I knew then that everything was going to be fine. His impact will continue to live on in the lives of the thousands of evangelists throughout the world who were blessed to have come under his influence."

From Twitter:

-- Chuck Kelley, president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary: "With news of the passing of evangelist Billy Graham, I am rejoicing over his magnificent life of faithful, powerful, fruitful Gospel preaching & careful, intentional, consistent Gospel living!"

-- Danny Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary: "I'm saddened to learn of Dr. @BillyGraham's passing. Yet rejoice that he is now in the arms of King Jesus, and for the legacy of evangelism he leaves."

-- Bryant Wright, pastor of the Atlanta-area Johnson Ferry Baptist Church and a former SBC president: "Isn't it a fitting tribute to Billy Graham's life that on every major news outlet that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is being shared over and over. Oh Lord, may Jesus and the Gospel be the focus as we live each day and when any of us are called to heaven one day!"

-- Jack Graham, pastor of the Dallas-area Prestonwood Baptist Church and a former SBC president: "Billy Graham never wavered and preached Jesus faithfully without apology. The cross and resurrection and the public call to decision was the focus of every sermon."

About the author: Art Toalston is senior editor of Baptist Press, news service of the Southern Baptist Convention.

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

Baptist Beacon classifieds are posted free of charge.

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.

Classifieds must be from a BSCM church.

Be sure to include thorough details of request, name of church, contact information as well as a point of contact.

Submissions must be made no later than the 10th of the month prior to publication.

Submit all classified ads to beacon@bscm.org

Pastoral Internship - Summer 2018

Cornerstone Baptist Church offers a 2-year Pastoral Internship to male seminary graduates who are pursuing pastoral ministry. This internship provides ministry experience, on-going training, assessment, and much hands on involvement with a well established church. The senior pastor has been at the church for 28 years and the staff, including other interns, offer multiple learning and training opportunities. The position is a full-time position and includes a salary, health insurance, and a house to use that is close to the church. If interested in reviewing a more detailed position description [please contact the church \(586\) 445-8910 and ask for Jan Alvaro.](#)

Associate Pastor of Worship and Discipleship

CrossPointe Church Overview: CrossPointe Church is 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). Our music style may be considered "contemporary" as we are led by a team of musicians (piano, guitar(s), drums, bass,

vocals, etc.). 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, Sojourn Music, Getty Music, Sovereign Grace Music, Indelible Grace Music). Please see the following website for more information regarding CrossPointe’s doctrinal statement, leadership, history, and various ministries.

CrossPointe Church Website: www.crosspointemonroe.com

Monroe, Michigan Overview: Monroe is a city of approximately 20,000 people located on the western shore of Lake Erie. It is equal distance from Detroit (MI), Ann Arbor (MI), and Toledo (OH). Monroe offers a great blend of outdoor activities, historical landmarks, and city life.

Position Overview: The associate pastor of worship and discipleship works with the lead pastor in planning and implementing all areas of the gospel-centered worship ministry at CrossPointe Church. The associate pastor of worship and discipleship also works with the lead pastor in developing and strengthening the various ministries at CrossPointe Church.

Qualifications:

The associate pastor must be a man who humbly and joyfully desires to serve as an elder in a local church (1 Tim 3:1, 6; Titus 1:5-9).

The associate pastor should be recognized by a local church through ordination (or willing to go through the ordination process at CrossPointe) as a man qualified for the office of elder (Titus 1:5; Eph 4:11-13; 1 Pet 5:1-3).

The associate pastor should be a man who is actively pursuing holiness of life by the grace of God (1 Tim 4:7-10).

The associate pastor should be evangelical, conservative theologically, and in agreement with the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.

The associate pastor should be proficient to lead vocally in gathered worship services.

The associate pastor should be proficient to lead instrumentally with guitar and/or piano in gathered worship services.

The associate pastor should have experience in leading a team of musicians.

The associate pastor should have experience with audio and video technology.

The associate pastor should have experience developing and leading discipleship ministries in a local church.

Gathered Worship Service Responsibilities:

Direct the planning, organizing, and evaluating of a gospel-centered worship ministry.

Recruit, train, and schedule the worship team members (music, sound, media).

Lead and oversee weekly rehearsals for the worship team.

Additional Worship Ministry Responsibilities:

Develop and manage all church media content (website, social media).

Work with the lead pastor and ministry team leaders to actively and creatively use all media content as a tool to communicate about the ministries of CrossPointe Church.

Supervise and maintain all supplies, instruments, and equipment related to the worship ministry.

Prepare an estimated annual worship ministry budget and administer the approved worship ministry budget.

Upon request, assist in musical preparation for weddings, funerals, and other church and/or denomination related activities.

Discipleship Ministry Responsibilities:

Disciple the worship team members and worship intern(s).

Work with the lead pastor to identify and train ministry leaders.

Work with the lead pastor to develop ministry vision for CrossPointe Church.

Work with the lead pastor to lead CrossPointe to fulfill the Great Commission.

Participate in scheduled ministry team leader meetings and staff meetings.

Maintain regular office hours for focused time of prayer, study, and counseling.

Perform other duties as assigned by the lead pastor.

Compensation:

\$30,000 per year (25-30 hours per week)

3 weeks of paid vacation per year

For more information or to apply, please contact Pastor Jay Anderson:

CrossPointe Church

[1675 Stewart Road](#)

[Monroe, MI 48162](#)

(734) 457-1024

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.

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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