

STARTING

Call Me A “Mom in Progress”

By Melinda Taylor

Burton - Being a “good mother,” the title we as moms hope to achieve is a whole lot easier said than done. It doesn’t just happen. My first year as a mother I felt mostly unprepared and inadequate to the task. To be honest, this still is a struggle for me from time to time. I had believed that I had a pretty decent grasp on the expectations of motherhood. I read the books and went to the classes, but this small yet potent gift of life still threw me curveballs every day. Not only this, but I also felt pressure from all directions about how this should be a “natural thing”, but natural doesn't equal easy.

And then the questions come especially for those who serve as the spouses of church leaders. On my first Mother's Day, I was asked what it meant to me to be a mother. Hmm? In one word, sacrifice. It's probably not the usual expected response, but it's a very real one. I began to realize that I couldn't be all things and do all things, or at least all the “expected things.” It was time to prioritize for my child(ren) or present the best acceptable image. I'm not a high maintenance person to begin with, but I still had some areas that needed to be scaled back. I placed a lot of weight on what others thought of me and my reputation (hmm... what's a people pleaser, again?).

But now here was this first baby (followed later by three more beauties) that did not always follow a schedule, and did not like to sleep in their crib. Added to this, the often disapproving looks would fall on my wee free spirit child(ren). I began receiving more advice and even more parenting books on how I could do and be better. As these children became the fiery strong-willed toddler, the quiet but rugged bam-bam, the care-free dancer, or the play-filled rascal, I have had much of my walls peeled back exposing my soft spots.

There have been many days I felt under attack for the actions of these little created beings. These children are who they were meant to be, not a blank slate to fill in what I wanted. Though God has charged me to guide, teach, and disciple them, I am reminded that it is God who has uniquely designed each of them in my womb (Psalm 139) and He has uniquely designed me (Ephesians 2:10) to parent them. God has a plan to better both the child and the mom.

Where you are not enough, God gives the extra measure. At the end of it all, we will stand before the all-knowing, all-powerful, always-present God and give an account of how we invested in His treasures. There will be no mother-in-law, Pinterest mom, or well-meaning older woman standing there for approval. Just the gracious King saying “well done” to His faithful followers. Seek wise counsel to be the sacrificial parent, but do not forget who is the wisest of Counselors. He is with you, child of God we call... mothers.

About the author: Melinda Taylor is a wife, a mother of 4, a homeschool teacher and a registered nurse in Flint, MI. She attends Eastgate Baptist Church in Burton, MI where she leads the Awana ministry.

Shopping Vice - Church Hopping

By Ian Minielly

Bessemer, MI - As a pastor, I encourage people to visit the churches in their area because different families and people have different personalities, and the churches in communities will appeal to different people for different reasons. As the leader of our family, when we move to a new area, we conduct internet searches and list a number of churches in our area we would like to visit before selecting a church to join. This can be a long process as we would not settle for one visit, but would make multiple visits to churches so we would have more than just a snapshot of their services. We wanted to make an informed decision.

Of course, if we found a church during our shopping we liked, we stopped shopping. There is no need to keep shopping when a fit is found. Hang a shingle and become active in the church. As Paul wrote in Ephesians 4: 1-6, there is one Spirit and one body, so get active and begin lifting others, growing in faith, and lifting the whole body. It is important to become active with the church as each believer has a role within the church. So many have forgotten they belong to something bigger than themselves in the church, instead focusing on themselves while shorting the rest of the body.

Like I said, I support shopping after a move because options exist. But once a fit is identified, make the relationship with the body personal. The problem occurs when people find a church, but elect not to get involved. What I witness happening with people that do not get involved is a problem of shallow faith. Not only is the faith shallow, it frequently also comes with an extra dose of judgment on others. The church hopper frequently recognizes the hopping tendency in their practices without seeing they might be the problem.

The hopper is not shopping for a church to get active in, the hopper is looking for their next reason to leave, and that reason is you or me, but seldom them. Maybe someone is wearing something they do not like, or the church does not play enough hymns, or the church plays too many hymns. The problem is not the church, even when the church has problems; the real issue is the hopper thinks the church exists to please them, instead of glorifying God. This is a terribly sinful way to avoid fellowship and membership in a body. Instead of getting active, bearing one another's burdens, and being part of something bigger than themselves (Gal 6: 1-10), the hopper leaves for greener pastures.

The church hopper finds reasons to leave, and before long, discovers they have exhausted every church in the community. What the church hopper is missing is the only reason to stay in any church. God took mercy on man and sent Jesus to die in our place. We could not earn or buy our way into heaven and eternal life, so God opened the door through the work of Jesus. In response, we sinfully put ourselves as the reason for the church and ignore the lesson of the nine lepers that did not return to glorify God and worship Jesus (Luke 17: 11-19). One out of ten recognized the mercy of God in his

restoration and went to the source. The others focused on themselves, ritual cleanliness, and went in search of a human priest.

About the author: Ian Minielly is pastor of Catalyst Baptist Church located in Bessemer, MI. He is also a NAMB/BSCM Church Planter to “the farthest northwest reaches of Michigan.”

STRENGTHENING

A Pastor's Wife

By Aryn Henry

Battle Creek - When my husband, Roy, and I married thirteen years ago, being a pastor's wife was not on my radar. Our plan was for Roy to finish up his PhD and become a college professor. That, however, was not God's plan for us, and after five years of marriage my husband submitted to his calling to be in ministry. That meant that me, with all my doubts, fears, opinions, and insecurities would stand alongside my husband with a new title of pastor's wife, and that caused me much uncertainty.

So what is it about the title “pastor's wife” that caused me, and probably many others, so much doubt and anxiety? I never used to worry or think twice about what people would think, but suddenly my life would be viewed under the microscope with the title of “pastor's wife”. For example, would others question my motives for working fulltime outside the home? For sending my kids to public school instead of homeschooling? Those concerns (and many more) flooded my mind. I felt that there had been a whole new set of expectations thrust upon me, and I had no idea how to live up to it all. In the days and weeks that followed, I prayed and began to explore what God's expectations were for me in this new role. Again and again, He revealed to me three simple expectations. Love Jesus. Love your husband. Love His church.

Love Jesus - The first and most important expectation is to love Jesus. In Deuteronomy 6:5 we are told to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, and might, meaning that we are to love God with all that we are and all that we have. Our love for Jesus must be the priority, above our families, above our jobs, above our to-do lists. Only when we love Jesus most completely, can we love others most honestly.

Love your husband - As pastors, our husbands are on the spiritual frontlines every single day and they need us to fight for them, not against them. The enemy would love to see a minister of the gospel proclaiming God's word crumble. We need to love our husbands in a way that encourages, strengthens, and enables them to stand strong. Respect their calling to ministry and support them as they meet the needs of the church, even during those days and weeks when it means we must sacrifice some of our wants. As a wife you know your husband better than anyone else. Love him in a way that points Him towards Christ so that he may be empowered to live out the calling as a Pastor from the Lord.

Love His church - Meeting this expectation can be tough. For so many pastor's wives, the church has been a source of judgment and pain. There are many demands and sacrifices that a pastor's wife must make for the church and it can be easy to allow those hard things to get in the way of seeing the church for what it is - the beautifully broken tool that God ordained to use to serve, edify, encourage, and evangelize to a bruised and broken world. So, love His church for what God created it to be. Find joy in being with His people. Forgive those who cause strife and pain, and remember no offense that has been committed against you is more severe than the offense we committed against Jesus that resulted in Him being nailed to the cross.

Meeting expectations is not always easy but we can always meet God's expectations through His love and grace.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR - Aryn and her family live in Tekonsha, MI and her husband, Roy, is the Senior Pastor at Faith Baptist Church in Battle Creek, MI. She is a mother a three, special education teacher in a small public school, and the women's ministry director at Faith Baptist.

Book Review: Preaching Tools

As a pastor, when I would attend a meeting with other pastors, the conversation would always find its way to the subject of preaching. Without fail, the question would arise, "Do you know of any good resources and or commentaries for....?" Together we would pool our knowledge and try to compile a helpful list.

I just received a copy of Dr. David Allen's book, **Preaching Tools**, published by Seminary Hill Press. It does an admirable job of listing the best commentaries and preaching resources for every book of the Bible. He has prepared the lists with the theologically conservative expository preacher in mind. What he does that is truly helpful is to compile them for each book under three different categories:

- Exegetical Commentaries.
- Expository Commentaries.
- Devotional Commentaries.
- And in some cases, Special Studies.

A brief one or two sentence description is provided, along with the author, title, publisher and date. It is my opinion that this book is a must for the library of every preacher and student of the Word. I wholeheartedly recommend Preaching Tools to you.

Timothy C. Patterson
Executive Director
Baptist State Convention of Michigan

Every Believer Witnessing By Jim Marcus

Flint, MI - Dennis Nunn recently presented his "Every Believer a Witness" training for pastors. This training was developed by Nunn. It includes a Bible study in which he compares Old Testament Evangelism with New Testament Evangelism.

In the Old Testament, God instructed the Israelites to construct a Tabernacle, which was later replaced by the Temple. Both of these structures had an outer court where the priests offered the sacrifices. Only the priests could enter the Holy Place inside the Tabernacle/Temple, and only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies, and then only once a year to make atonement for the sins of the people. In the Old Testament, worshippers were expected to come to the Tabernacle/Temple to worship God and offer sacrifices. The only Old Testament exception to "come and worship" was when Jonah was sent to Nineveh to tell them of God's pending judgment.

When Jesus came on the scene, the basic method of evangelism was still "come and see." "Nathanael said to him, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see.'" (John 1:46) This began to shift when Jesus sent His disciples out: "These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: 'Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'" (Matthew 10:5-6)

Jesus went to the cross and died for our sins. After He rose from the dead, and before He ascended to heaven, Jesus changed the "come and see" evangelism emphasis to the "go and tell" emphasis that we see in the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20). Following His resurrection and ascension, we don't see an emphasis on church members inviting people to come to Jerusalem, or to come to a gathering of believers in order to hear the gospel. Rather, we see the believers going and telling the good news. "Jesus said to them again, 'Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.'" (John 20:21) It seems today the primary focus of many churches is more like the Old Testament "come and see" approach to evangelism rather than the "go and tell" emphasis we see in the various Great Commission passages.

Dennis Nunn points out that a "come and see" evangelism emphasis has several problems and negative consequences. 1. It's not biblical -- there is not a single verse in the entire New Testament that instructs us to invite lost people to church. Instead we are to go and be witnesses. 2. The Greek word *ekklesia* (church) is a compound word that literally means "called out ones." Church gatherings are for those whom God has called out of the world (Christians) to come for worship and instruction in God's word. If the message heard at church is always evangelistic, then believers may not be receiving the "meat" of the word, which will be reflected in their maturity and lack of ministry involvement. 3. "Come and see" is not a very effective evangelism method. Most of us know from experience that inviting people to church doesn't produce a significant response. Unless the Holy Spirit is already drawing a person, most unsaved don't want to go to church. 4. "Come and see" is going to become even less effective as the lost increasingly reject as being hateful, intolerant and bigoted the biblical principles embraced by Christians and churches .

While not all Christians are called to be evangelists, we are all called to be witnesses. Dennis Nunn has developed Every Believer a Witness to make sharing our faith easy, fun and effective for all Christians. Consider having an Every Believer a Witness emphasis in your church, and contact me for more information.

About the author: Jim Marcus is the Director of Missions for the Genesee Baptist Association located in Flint, MI.

Michigan Pastors and Wives Get Away

By Staff

Fenton, MI - There are many demands on the time of not just Pastors, but their wives as well. Those demands can make it very difficult for them to just get away together for a few hours and focus on their own relationship. In the month of April, the Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM) partnered with Lifeway to make that get away a little bit easier. They sponsored two "Pastor's Date Night" events. One was held April 20th at the First Baptist Church of Dewitt in the Lansing area. The other was set at the Epicurean House in the Greater Detroit area.

Pastors and their wives were invited to enjoy a meal and childcare was provided. After the meal, a panel of seasoned, ministry couples took anonymous questions on such topics as; raising children in a ministry setting, when children rebel, romantic life, dating, balancing life and ministry, dealing with conflict, the wife's calling, and emotional struggles like depression. The panel included; Dr. Tim Patterson, executive director of the BSCM and his wife, Sabrina, Billy and Laurie Walker and Mark and Janet Dance. The three couples transparently shared about the highs and lows of serving Christ in pastoral and church staff ministry. To top off the evening, Lifeway gave each husband and wife gift boxes worth \$250.

One of the BSCM's major priorities in strengthening churches, and keeping the marriages of Michigan Baptist leaders strong is an important way to achieve that goal. BSCM State Director of Evangelism, Mike Durbin said, "It was great to see Michigan Baptist pastors and wives connecting with each other."

Motherhood - It all began with Eve

By Sabrina Patterson

Motherhood is very rewarding, but it can also be very demanding. Scripture shares that Eve was the first example of a mother. Poor Eve had many firsts! She was the first to encounter Satan, the first to be tempted, and worst of all she was the first to sin.

Because of her sin, she was also the first woman to go through a painful childbirth all by herself. No doctor, no one coaching her on correct breathing techniques and definitely nothing for the pain. But, the rewards were great. She had her precious son in her arms to raise into the man of God he was intended to become. Then came son number two. She experienced all the pain as before as well as the great reward in the end of holding another precious son in her arms. We are not exactly sure how many children Eve had,

but Genesis does tell us she had other children. You have to give this first mother some credit in rearing her children. She didn't have any examples or books to read on how to cope with a newborn that cries all night, or how to handle temper tantrums, little girls that cry over everything (and I mean everything), or how to deal with hormonal teenagers. No, she had to learn on her own. In spite of all the hardships and demands children can bring at times, I'm sure Eve had wonderful moments with all her children, as well.

But we can never forget, Eve was also the first mother to suffer heartache from her children. What heart terror just knowing that one of your sons had become so angry with his brother that he had killed him. Eve had the heartbreak of burying her firstborn son, but also the heartbreak of understanding the dreadful impact sin has on one's life. She lost both sons that day. Scripture doesn't give us much insight into her life, but it had to be difficult for her to bear.

In contrast, our 4-year-old granddaughter, Kailyn, was visiting at Christmas one year when we were making our annual Christmas traditional birthday cake for Jesus. When someone would come around she would announce, "Christmas is Jesus' birthday and we're going to make Him a cake." Then she got very thoughtful and proclaimed, "But He is up in the sky and cannot come down to eat the cake, so we have to eat it."

We do receive many blessings because of Jesus and some of them are as sweet as birthday cake. One of my sweetest blessings God has given me in this life is being the mother of my two sons and the grandmother of my six beautiful granddaughters. One of those joyous times came when the next to the oldest granddaughter, Sarah, was five years old. She was at my house spending the night, as she did on many occasions, and was doing one of her favorite things that she loved to do at my house, which was swim in my very large garden tub with her sister. On this one occasion, she had pulled the stopper to let the water run down the drain, so I picked up her sister to dry her off and get her something to eat. I could hear Sarah playing in the now waterless bathtub so I believed all was harmless. I kept checking on her, but didn't want to stop her fun as she was laughing, rolling around in the bottom of the tub and sliding down the back of the tub, as if she were having the time of her life. When she called me to come get her out I wondered then why she didn't just get out on her own like she always did. I quickly found out why she couldn't get out on her own. When I went to lift her out of the tub she slid right through my hands. She was one great big slime ball! You see, I had left the "Body" Baby Oil on the edge of the tub and she was just beginning to read. She looked at me when she saw the look on my face and quickly said, "It says body, so I used it for my body" and was so pleased with herself. Yes, it was for the body, but not half a bottle at one time. Do you know baby oil does not wash out? I washed her hair three times in dawn dishwashing soap and she still went to church the next day with very oily hair. It took over a week for the baby oil to wear off.

So we may not be going through a lot of "firsts" like Eve, but we are mothers who experience the same up and down emotions, feelings, childbirth, motherhood, child rearing, and then even becoming grandmothers as Eve did. We may not be the first mother, but in our "mothering", who is first in our lives? When we keep Christ first in our lives, that's when we can become the mother he intended us to become. When we keep Christ first in our lives, then we are able to deal with the temptations that come our way. When we keep Christ first, He will give us the strength to become the best mothers we

were meant to be. When we keep Christ first, then we can rest in Him when we go through the worst heartache we have ever experienced. My question for you, "Is Christ first in your life?"

About the author: Sabrina Patterson, wife, mother, grandmother, Bible teacher, and conference leader. Genuine lover of the Lord. Born and raised in Jal, New Mexico. She lived all her married life in Texas and Florida. She is the wife of Pastor Tim Patterson, Executive Director of the Baptist State Director of Michigan.

My Dream Job - Being a Mom

By Shar Durbin

As far back as I can remember, I wanted to be a mom when I grew up. That was my dream job--my plan. However..... life doesn't always work out the way we plan it. Proverbs 16:9 says, "The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps."

Mike and I married while in college. Our plan was to wait until he finished seminary before having children. Everything was going according to plan until..... Mike's 9 year-old brother came to stay the summer with us. After making some plans of his own, he approached us. "You know, I should go to school here. You'd be like my mom and dad. We could be a family." That's all it took for me. I tried so hard to be his mom, but I couldn't. He already had one and it wasn't me.

Sometime later, we decided we were "ready" to begin our family. Months went by and nothing happened. It never occurred to me that I might not be able to have children. "What if God doesn't give me any?" What if He wanted me to give all my motherly love to Mike's little brother? The reality of Sara, Hannah, and Elizabeth of ancient days became more real to me than ever. For the first time, I got a glimpse of what it's like to be barren.

Then, it finally happened! My folks came to visit and brought me all kinds of maternity clothes. But I miscarried. God showed the agony over loss of life before even holding your baby. Too quickly afterward, we conceived again. I was afraid I would not be able to carry this baby and would lose yet another. It wasn't until the 4th month we told people. Three weeks early, our 9 lb. son, Christian, was born. The doctor said, "It's a boy!", I shouted, "Praise God it's a boy!" Two years later, our son, Jonathan, was born, weighing in at 10 lbs, 9 oz.

Like so many American couples, we were done after two. It wasn't until years later it occurred to me: we never even asked our Heavenly Father about it. We just made our own plans. God gave us two beautiful daughter-in-laws: Brooke and Bonnie. Our family wouldn't be complete without them. Honestly, we couldn't have hand-picked them better. Being a mother-in-law is a whole different experience. For me, it's a joy.

A few years ago, Brooke's mom passed into eternity. She'd been ill most of Brooke's life, but no one expected she would die so young. I will never be her mother, but now my role has an even deeper meaning for both of us.

Grandchildren are one of God's best ideas. It's not just because you get to spoil them and send them home. (That is wonderful, though). The impossible task of being the "perfect parent" is no longer a burden. Through the years, we grow more patient. Priorities change. We're not in such a hurry all the time. When I'm with our grandchildren, I could let the rest of the world pass by. Grandma love is a very special, unexplainable love.

My mother is 84 years old. I don't know how much longer I will have her. She's a widow, she's slowing down, and needs help sometimes. "I hate to keep asking you to do stuff," she says. My repeated response is, "I'm sure we're not even yet, for all my diapers you changed." As my mom enjoyed living her dream of being a mom, I, too, have been blessed by how God made me and the privilege of loving on them, their spouses and now grandchildren.

Shar Durbin has served alongside her husband, Mike, in ministry in Kentucky, Michigan, Brazil, then back home in Michigan.

PARTNERS TOGETHER WITH GOD: THE ASSOCIATION AND THE STATE CONVENTION

By Chuck Turner

Over the last few years, there has been much discussion on whether we need associations or state conventions? There are as many opinions on this subject as there are many people involved in the discussion. I would like to share my opinion of this subject.

Let me give you some background that will help you know from which I speak. In 2002, I was invited to Springfield, Illinois to a meeting of Executive Directors, State Staff, and Directors of Missions. We were given an assignment to do a timeline of mileposts in our Christian journey and include the names of the individuals who had greatly impacted our lives. We were to write a paragraph from this to define our life's purpose. I soon discovered many of the people who had impacted my life the most were my Director of Missions- C.T. Edmondson Jr. in Wise, Virginia, Charles MacGruder and Ed Copeland in Columbus, Ohio and Richard Rogers in Michigan. After struggling and praying that afternoon in the hotel where I was staying, God showed me that I was to become a Director of Missions and work with Pastors, wives and families in the ministry.

Since June 2003, I have served the Pastors' families and churches of the Central and Lendale Baptist Associations. I have walked with them through personal struggles in the churches, personal lives, and death of family members as well as rejoicing with them in the victories in their personal situations, ministries and churches.

Throughout my ministry, local associations and state conventions have assisted me in my own ministry. In Virginia, the state convention supported me with a \$300.00 a month state assistance to help my family serve in a small church. They later, granted the first loan ever in their history, to build a parsonage for the Pastor and family. In Ohio, they helped with a scholarship to attend preacher's school and provided many training

opportunities for our church and assisted us in starting a new mission/church plant and truck stop ministry. In Michigan, our associations and churches have received funds from Frances Brown State Missions offering, The Baptist Foundation monies, Evangelism grants and mission/pastoral support to accomplish much in advancing God's Kingdom. In this past year, the greatest partnership has been in prayer ministry for my health and family.

I have seen what partnering together can do as we pray, give, and serve together. As associations, we have partnered with ministries in Argentina, Costa Rica, Ukraine, and Bulgaria. We have helped 3 of the churches in the Upper Peninsula with various needs of money, outreach, and supplies. We spent time in Oscoda at Fresh Start Fellowship helping with the building by providing workers, building materials, and paint.

We could not have done what God has led us to do without all the partners, churches, Pastors, BSCM, other Director of Missions, and NAMB. So from my years of experience I can without hesitation state I have seen the investment of associations on the local church and ministry. Associations are more important today, than ever.

Chuck Turner is the Director of Missions for Central and Lendale Baptist Associations. He is the husband of Debbie, father of 4, grandfather of 10, and great grandpa of 4.

Redreaming the Dream of the Genesee Baptist Association

By Jim Marcus, DOM

At our Annual Meeting last fall we celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Genesee Baptist Association. I have served as Director of Missions of the GBA since February of 1999, which means I have led the GBA for more than 18 years. A lot has happened in our world and our denomination since 1999. Even more has happened since 1957 when the GBA came into existence. While various people in Michigan tell us that the GBA is one of the strongest Baptist Associations in Michigan, I find no great encouragement in that. While we may be healthier than many other associations, we are in a slow decline rather than experiencing vibrancy as an association -- which, by the way, is also the condition of nearly 90% of SBC churches.

As I considered the condition of the GBA, I was burdened by the fact that as an association we were still structured and operating in basically the same way we had for the majority of our 60 year existence. While that has enabled us to maintain a measure of strength, compared with many other associations, it will not enable us to be effective in the future, nor even that effective in the present. So I recommended to the messengers to the GBA Annual Meeting that we empower our moderator to appoint a group of pastors who would look at our past, and our present, to determine where we have been, and where we are currently. Then they will look toward the future to determine where we need to be if we are going to be relevant to our pastors and churches, and effective for them as an association in the coming years.

A group of five pastors, plus the moderator and me, are meeting every other week to work through this process with the hope that we will have a recommendation to bring to

the messengers at the 61st Annual Meeting of the GBA this fall. The recommendation will likely include a revised mission statement that will guide what we do and how we are structured as an association. If approved, it will also guide the development of our annual associational budget, as well as result in a new structure that will have fewer, but more effective, empowered ministry teams rather than the committees we now have.

When the Genesee Baptist Association was started, the founders wanted to see new churches started in order to reach and disciple the lost population of mid-Michigan, which was growing as many moved here to work in the auto-industry. The desire of our founders was on target, and they were highly effective in their efforts. The structure of the association was typical and effective for that time. But the world has moved on, time has passed, and gradually our focus shifted more to maintenance of the existing churches through resourcing and strengthening efforts. However, those efforts are seldom sought and implemented by churches which are content with maintaining their existing programs and buildings.

I don't think that maintenance brings as much glory to God as does new life, especially if our maintenance only slows the decline of our churches and associations. My desire is to see the churches of the Genesee Baptist Association healthy, growing, and relevant to the culture that surrounds us today. Just as churches need to be relevant to the culture surrounding them, our associations need to be relevant to our churches and pastors today and tomorrow. This is why GBA leaders are working so hard to re-dream the dream that brought us into existence more than 60 years ago. Stay tuned for more details!

About the author: Jim Marcus is a native Michigander. He has served as a church planter, in church revitalization, as a Church Planting Catalyst, and in associational missions in Michigan since 1988.

Staggered & Humbled

By: Jonathan Akin | NAMB Director of Young Leader Engagement

I took Intermediate Greek in seminary with Dr. John Polhill, and we did our work in Philippians for the entire semester. Each student had to select a passage in Philippians on which to write three exegetical papers. I grew up listening to my dad preach a wonderful message on [Philippians 2:1-11](#), so I selected that passage for my papers. That beautiful passage that some think was an early Christian hymn tells all about the humility of Christ and how he voluntarily set aside privileges that were rightly his in order to serve humanity.

I was pumped about digging into the Greek syntax and learning more about it. I studied that passage for four months. I did lexical work, syntactical work and exegetical work. I knew the ins and outs of all the Greek clauses. In fact, I memorized the passage in Greek. You could say I was an expert on Philippians 2.

The problem is that while I worked hard to become an intellectual expert on Philippians 2, I didn't work hard to become a practical expert on it. Far from having the mind of Christ ([Philippians 2:5](#)) and far from displaying the humility of Christ, I actually became

more arrogant and prideful. Despite Dr. Polhill's best efforts to challenge the students, including me, to make this more than an intellectual exercise, I failed to adequately apply the passage to my life.

Regretfully, as a young minister, I have often been guilty of arrogance and pride. I have often thought I knew better than my elders. I have often been cocksure that my solutions to the problems were always the correct ones. I still have [Philippians 2:5-11](#) memorized, at least in English, but I often fail in having the mind of Christ. And yet, the other day I was convicted and challenged anew to apply Philippians 2 in my life when I got to see firsthand a brother in Christ powerfully demonstrate the humility of Jesus to me.

I met recently with some state convention executive directors. Backstory: I have at times been very critical of state conventions and state convention leaders. So, I was meeting with some men who had every reason to be upset with me. One of the men in the room was Dr. J. Robert White, the executive director of Georgia's state convention, and he asked to go first. I braced myself wondering what he would say. However, Dr. White turned the conversation on a dime and changed the temperature of the room with his first sentence, "Jonathan, I want to ask you to forgive me." I was caught off guard and humbled within seconds.

Dr. White went on to say that I had written some hurtful things about the Georgia Baptist Convention, and he said that instead of doing the biblical thing that he knew to do—call me or come see me to talk it out like brothers—he chose to just be upset with me. For that he said he was sorry and sought my forgiveness. It was such a powerful moment. I was almost moved to tears and did choke up when it was my turn to speak (especially since it's a ministry of Georgia Baptists that led my mom to faith in Christ while she lived at the Georgia Baptist Children's Home). It was a powerful moment because Dr. White displayed the mind of Christ. Dr. White is a man in a very important position. He is my elder. He has tenure in ministry longer than I have been alive. He honestly didn't owe me anything. I hadn't had the respect or courtesy to call him or sit down with him before I wrote those things. And yet, he voluntarily humbled himself before me. He apologized to me. He sought my forgiveness. In that moment I was reminded of Philippians 2 again, and I knew that's the kind of man I want to be.

I was staggered. I was humbled by Dr. White. Of course, I forgave him and I sought his forgiveness in return. In my zeal to see more resources get to the places with little to no gospel witness, I have sometimes been guilty of being uncharitable to other brothers and have arrogantly thought my proposed solutions are the only right ones. Dr. White graciously forgave me as well. It was an encouraging and convicting meeting—one I'll never forget. And it's a reminder to me that knowing the Word is one thing but practicing the Word is quite another.

I hope this will be a challenge to all students and young pastors. I know it's a challenge to me. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" ([Phil 2:5](#)) and "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only" ([James 1:22](#)).

About the author: Jonathan Akin, pastor of Fairview Baptist Church in Lebanon, Tenn., since 2011, has been named to begin a young leader initiative of the SBC Executive

Committee and North American Mission Board to better engage pastors between the ages of 25-45. This article first appeared in The Christian Index, newsjournal of the Georgia Baptist Convention and more recently in the Southern Baptist Texan newsjournal.

We Need Each Other

By David Roberts

MIDLAND - Southern Baptists have long insisted that the local church is primary in our denomination and that associations and conventions are secondary – existing to serve the local church so it can carry out its mission. The local church does not exist to serve associations and conventions. (Jesus never said, “I will build my association” or “I will build my convention.”) Since denominational entities exist to serve the churches, we believe churches should be directing the convention rather than the convention directing the churches. Southern Baptists also believe that stronger, healthier churches result in stronger, healthier associations which ultimately result in stronger, healthier state and national conventions. In other words, it is advantageous for associations and conventions to serve and invest in the churches because, in the long run, they will benefit from it.

Associational leaders across Michigan believe that the local Association can play a vital biblical role in helping our churches fulfill the Great Commission. We desire to see Associational Champions arise, receive training and take leadership in the Associations that lack Associational Missionaries. This Champion would become a Pastor-to-Pastors and attempt to build community, trust, fellowship and relationships. As this occurs, he would learn and understand the uniqueness of each pastor and his church, their needs, and how the Association could best serve them. Occasional Association-wide events could serve to rebuild relationships, trust, provide opportunities for networking between churches and pastors, and such events would allow everyone to celebrate what God is doing in the local churches. Things like this would strengthen and encourage the churches and pastors in that area.

Bay Area Baptist Associational missionary, David Roberts, says, “We believe there needs to be more ‘cooperation’ among our churches and less ‘program’. We need more associating so we can get more done together than we can do alone. Sometimes churches and pastors needlessly suffer and struggle because they feel they are alone in the work. Listen... YOU ARE NOT ALONE! And the best way to experience the reality of cooperation where you are is to get involved in your local Association and start fellowshiping with other pastors and other churches. If the Association you are a ‘member’ of is not functioning, START A NEW ONE! You don’t need anyone’s permission to do that. You know what you need where you are and you know what you have where you are. How can you use that to elicit, combine and direct the energy of the Southern Baptist pastors and congregations in your part of Michigan?”

If any of your state Associational Missionaries can help you revamp and revitalize your Association (or start a new one), reach out to them and let them know. We want to do whatever we can to make that happen. It’s time to move forward in Michigan. We need each other. Let’s do it together!

There are five associational missionaries who serve across Michigan:

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COLUMNS

Horton Hears a Who!

By Tony Lynn

Horton Hears a Who! was written by Dr. Theodor Seuss Geisel and published in 1954. Born in 1959 the book was one of my childhood favorites. Today when I close my eyes, I can still hear my mother's sweet voice reading those famous words, "a person's a person, no matter how small." The book's struggle to save Whoville is enclosed in the efforts of two individuals: Horton the Elephant and Jojo, who stopped playing with his yo-yo long enough to utter the word, "Yopp!" Jojo's one additional, tiny voice caused all of Horton's skeptical friends to finally save Whoville because "a person's a person, no matter how small."

This month, as we celebrate Mother's Day on May 14 and the Baptist Association Emphasis from May 21-28, we are celebrating powerful collaborations like that of Horton and Jojo. Here are two examples from my history.

First, my mother was a peacemaker and created partnerships out of moments of occasional discord. When one of my sisters and I squabbled over something Mom would say, "Okay you two. There are dishes to wash. Get in the kitchen. One of you

wash and the other dry. Get going.” If you knew my mother you would understand her smile never left her face while she gently gave those directions. She knew what she was doing. In seconds, whatever had put my sister and me at odds vanished. We would grumble in whispers, “She waits for us to fight just so we will do her dishes. That’s not fair.” Today, my mom reports that she was willing to be the bad guy so that my sister and I would rally together.

Second, after I decided to follow Christ as member of the First Baptist Church of Swartz Creek I joined the church’s youth group. I learned the joy of being connected with other teens. To this day, I especially remember the precious couple that persuaded our youth group to interact with the other youth groups in the local area. We called that group of churches an association. The couple that enlarged our naïve, adolescent idea of God’s Kingdom was Brother Dwain and Dawn Lairamore. This precious couple made time for teenagers after spending long hours at the office and in meetings with adults who led associational churches. Brother Dwain and Miss Dawn invested their lives in teenagers of the seventies in Genesee Baptist Association. Today, as a result of their investment and belief in us, many of us are serving the Lord in churches throughout Michigan, throughout the world, and on mission fields where other languages are spoken.

As we move into the future, I want to say thank you to those who partnered together and contributed to my life. Each individual contributed something worthwhile. I have learned something from every person in my life. I am the total of all that I have experienced from those who loved me. From the very first who held me upon my birthday to the ones who continue to speak into my life and share my experiences, to all of you I am grateful.

Let me encourage you in something important as I reflect on the collaborations my mom created, the partnership of churches, and the imagination of Dr. Seuss with Horton and Jojo. Here in Michigan we pride ourselves on being self-reliant. As individuals we boast, “Count on me I can do it.” Or we utter, “Even if no one else commits, I will.” Those phrases are heroic and inspiring. But might it be that collaborations between the smallest to the biggest of us are the strength of our future? I hope as members that we will collaborate. I pray that as churches we will cooperate. I want to see our congregations associate, doing more together than each church could ever do apart from one another.

Paul wrote in Romans 15:5-6 (NLT), “May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus. Then all of you can join together with one voice, giving praise and glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Did you catch the condition within these verses? We can give praise and glory to God after we live in complete harmony with each other. What might that praise and glory look like in your life? In your church? In Michigan? In the world? Join a partnership this summer and attempt something risky for the Lord.

Thankful for a Praying Mom

By Mick Schatz

With Mother's day just around the corner I have been thinking about my own mother and qualities that make her so special. As a boy I was stubborn, threw temper-tantrums, kept a messy room, well, I think you get the picture. Obviously just being my mom gives her the distinguished title and position of "special". However, among the many things that endear her to me, the one trait I have come to appreciate the most, is her prayer life. No matter the circumstance or situation, she is fully confident her Father in Heaven is listening and active in the moment.

I have seen her walk through financial woes, health setbacks, family drama and the passing of my dad with a humble boldness and peace that only comes from a strong personal prayer life. Even now she faithfully prays for my brother, myself and our families.

In 1 Thessalonians 5 we are encouraged to rejoice always, pray constantly and give thanks in everything. I believe praying always is the key. It's hard to feel hopeless when you pray. It's hard to be ungrateful when you pray. Continually communicating with our Heavenly Father is the bedrock of a growing, authentic relationship that allows us to filter every situation through His eyes and rely confidently on His strength for each day. I have seen my mom personify this in her life and I hope one day my kids will say the same thing about me. Thanks, Mom.

There's Value in the local Association

By Mike Durbin

One of my first experiences as a follower of Jesus with our larger Baptist family was at Bambi Lake. The Genesee Baptist Association scheduled a winter youth retreat. Students from churches all over Genesee County packed the retreat center for an incredible weekend of worship, fellowship, and fun. Our youth group (First Baptist Church of Swartz Creek) was scheduled to present the plan of salvation in one of the sessions. I remember getting the assignment to lead none other than Dr. Tony Lynn to Jesus (I got to baptize him too, but that's another story). I had only been a believer for a few months, but I accepted the challenge. There in the downstairs chapel of the Lodge at Bambi, I shared the Gospel with Tony. To be totally transparent, he had to help me get through parts of the presentation, but I did ok for a new believer.

That retreat made an impression on my life. It was encouraging to see scores of other teen-aged believers together. God was moving in our lives as we gathered around His Word and worshipped. I learned that the retreat happened because local churches worked together through their association to plan the event. Our youth group wasn't big enough to put together a retreat like that on our own. I doubt that any of the other churches were able to do so either, but together they did an awesome job. A sense of community and mission was established as sister churches worked together. It was the first of countless times I experienced an association at work.

I learned quickly that sharing Christ was at the heart of bringing churches together in associational life. The Genesee association asked me to share my personal testimony at an event they planned. It was scheduled for the night of my 18th birthday. I had been looking forward to that day for many years. It meant no more sneaking around, fake ID's, or having to get someone to buy for me. On the night that I became "legal", I stood before a packed church and shared how I came to Christ. Jesus dramatically changed my life and I wanted everyone to know Him. It was the first of many evangelistic emphases I have participated in with other associational churches.

God called me to preach as I neared the end of high school. In my college and seminary days, I had a lot more enthusiasm than experience or knowledge. The English Baptist Church called me as their pastor. It wasn't long before there was a death in the church family, and I got a call asking me to officiate the funeral service. If memory serves me, the only funeral I had ever been to at that time was my grandmother's when I was twelve. I had no clue what to do or say, so I called a retired pastor who was serving as the Director of Missions for our local association. He gave me an outline for the service, scriptures to use, and some helps for the message. Years later, I got a similar call from a young pastor needing help for one of his first funeral services. I learned early in ministry that the local association connected me to people who could help me and people I could help. Some of the most practical and beneficial training I've experienced has been in the association.

The local association is a champion for missions to our churches. It was the local association that gave me the opportunity to really interact with some Southern Baptist Missionaries. The churches we served faithfully supported missions through the Cooperative Program. We read stories about our missionaries and prayed for them during our mission emphases. There were hundreds of them, but we didn't really get to know one until our association had a World Mission's Conference. The church planned special services so we could hear from North American, International, State, and Associational Missionaries. We listened as they told stories about their ministries, shared meals together, and transported them to other churches to speak. I can still remember the first time one of them asked, "Have you ever considered missions?" I hadn't, but the question immediately grabbed Shar's heart (my wife).

The association brought missionaries to our churches, and God used them to speak to our lives. For many of us, it made missions come alive. We felt the heartbeat of God for a lost world as they shared. They challenged us to pray more fervently, give more generously, and serve more willingly. Our lives have been forever impacted by the association and their work with local churches. We are living proof of just how valuable the association is to the local church yesterday, today and for tomorrow.

Embarrassment

By Tim Patterson

I have done some pretty lame things in my life that to this day still send a rush of blood-surgingly embarrassment through my being. Now these acts of misguided judgement were not really malicious or done with evil intent, but were just not real smart.

Like the time several of my high school freshmen friends and I decided to sneak into the county pool late one hot summer night for a cool respite from the oppressive heat of a West Texas night and to have a few laughs. Everything went well until the evening police patrol noticed the highly agitated water in a pool that should have been calm and proceeded to investigate. We saw the headlights from their cruiser turn toward the pool enclosure, which caused us to scramble like a covey of quail. When the officers entered the pool area, they simply followed the wet foot prints we left behind, to an equipment shack where they found us huddled together, wearing only smiles and our goose-pimpled birthday suits.

That was embarrassing enough, but the embarrassment intensified when they marched us down the sprawling boulevard of School Street, in nothing but our underwear. There, in all of our damp and almost nude bodies, a group of cheerleaders, who just happened to be out painting the street at 1:00am in the morning, gained new insight into what freshmen boys looked like without their clothes. It has always been my belief that some of those cheerleaders were never the same again, and required months of psychological counseling to help them cope with the horror they had witnessed. It was not a pretty sight.

I heard of another embarrassing situation that occurred in a large regional airport. It was the kind of thing that I probably would have done. It seems as though while waiting at the airport terminal for her plane to begin boarding, a woman sat reading a newspaper. Earlier, she had purchased a package of cookies in the airport snack shop to eat after she got on the plane. Out of the corner of her eye, she noticed that the man sitting next to her was eating a cookie. She looked down and noticed that her package of cookies had been opened and the man was eating them. The woman couldn't believe that the man would have such nerve as to eat her cookies. So that she wouldn't lose all of her cookies to the man, she slowly reached over, took a cookie, and ate one herself.

To her amazement, the man continued to eat more cookies. Getting more and more irritated, the woman removed all but one cookie from the package and ate them. At that point, the man reached down and took the last cookie. Before eating it, though, he broke it in half and left half of the cookie for the woman. This made the woman so angry; she grabbed the empty package with the half cookie and crammed it in her purse. Then, to her shock, she noticed that there in her purse was her unopened package of cookies.

My mother always told me to "look before you leap." I thought that only applied to my physical escapades as a child, but as I have grown in stature and maturity, I have come to understand that it has much more to do with life than leaping. In my estimation, we as a nation, have become a people who react to things instead of making thoughtful responses. Facts, circumstances and history have little to do with our reactions. We immediately assume the worst in a matter or of a person, and then let our emotions

dictate our actions. This kind of reasoning or the lack of, will create an atmosphere that is ripe for embarrassment. I know. I excel at this! It has and will cause embarrassment not only for us but also for our Lord and His church.

If there is one thing that I have learned in life it is I don't like to be embarrassed and to keep that from happening, I would do well to follow my dad's advice. "Son, don't never assume nothing and don't mess with another man's cookies." Think about it. Proverbs 12:18

Book of the Month: Be sure to check out Tim's recommendation for valuable resources you should have on your bookshelf.

MICHIGAN NEWS

Michigan Pastors and Wives Get Away

By Staff

Fenton, MI - There are many demands on the time of not just Pastors, but their wives as well. Those demands can make it very difficult for them to just get away together for a few hours and focus on their own relationship. In the month of April, the Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM) partnered with Lifeway to make that get away a little bit easier. They sponsored two "Pastor's Date Night" events. One was held April 20th at the First Baptist Church of Dewitt in the Lansing area. The other was set at the Epicurean House in the Greater Detroit area.

Pastors and their wives were invited to enjoy a meal and childcare was provided. After the meal, a panel of seasoned, ministry couples took anonymous questions on such topics as; raising children in a ministry setting, when children rebel, romantic life, dating, balancing life and ministry, dealing with conflict, the wife's calling, and emotional struggles like depression. The panel included; Dr. Tim Patterson, executive director of the BSCM and his wife, Sabrina, Billy and Laurie Walker and Mark and Janet Dance. The three couples transparently shared about the highs and lows of serving Christ in pastoral and church staff ministry. To top off the evening, Lifeway gave each husband and wife gift boxes worth \$250.

One of the BSCM's major priorities in strengthening churches, and keeping the marriages of Michigan Baptist leaders strong is an important way to achieve that goal. BSCM State Director of Evangelism, Mike Durbin said, "It was great to see Michigan Baptist pastors and wives connecting with each other."

My Dream Job - Being a Mom

By Shar Durbin

As far back as I can remember, I wanted to be a mom when I grew up. That was my dream job--my plan. However..... life doesn't always work out the way we plan it. Proverbs 16:9 says, "The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps."

Mike and I married while in college. Our plan was to wait until he finished seminary before having children. Everything was going according to plan until..... Mike's 9 year-old brother came to stay the summer with us. After making some plans of his own, he approached us. "You know, I should go to school here. You'd be like my mom and dad. We could be a family." That's all it took for me. I tried so hard to be his mom, but I couldn't. He already had one and it wasn't me.

Sometime later, we decided we were "ready" to begin our family. Months went by and nothing happened. It never occurred to me that I might not be able to have children. "What if God doesn't give me any?" What if He wanted me to give all my motherly love to Mike's little brother? The reality of Sara, Hannah, and Elizabeth of ancient days became more real to me than ever. For the first time, I got a glimpse of what it's like to be barren.

Then, it finally happened! My folks came to visit and brought me all kinds of maternity clothes. But I miscarried. God showed the agony over loss of life before even holding your baby. Too quickly afterward, we conceived again. I was afraid I would not be able to carry this baby and would lose yet another. It wasn't until the 4th month we told people. Three weeks early, our 9 lb. son, Christian, was born. The doctor said, "It's a boy!", I shouted, "Praise God it's a boy!" Two years later, our son, Jonathan, was born, weighing in at 10 lbs, 9 oz.

Like so many American couples, we were done after two. It wasn't until years later it occurred to me: we never even asked our Heavenly Father about it. We just made our own plans. God gave us two beautiful daughter-in-laws: Brooke and Bonnie. Our family wouldn't be complete without them. Honestly, we couldn't have hand-picked them better. Being a mother-in-law is a whole different experience. For me, it's a joy.

A few years ago, Brooke's mom passed into eternity. She'd been ill most of Brooke's life, but no one expected she would die so young. I will never be her mother, but now my role has an even deeper meaning for both of us.

Grandchildren are one of God's best ideas. It's not just because you get to spoil them and send them home. (That is wonderful, though). The impossible task of being the "perfect parent" is no longer a burden. Through the years, we grow more patient. Priorities change. We're not in such a hurry all the time. When I'm with our grandchildren, I could let the rest of the world pass by. Grandma love is a very special, unexplainable love.

My mother is 84 years old. I don't know how much longer I will have her. She's a widow, she's slowing down, and needs help sometimes. "I hate to keep asking you to do stuff," she says. My repeated response is, "I'm sure we're not even yet, for all my diapers you changed." As my mom enjoyed living her dream of being a mom, I, too, have been

blessed by how God made me and the privilege of loving on them, their spouses and now grandchildren.

Shar Durbin has served alongside her husband, Mike, in ministry in Kentucky, Michigan, Brazil, then back home in Michigan.

Redreaming the Dream of the Genesee Baptist Association

By Jim Marcus, DOM

At our Annual Meeting last fall we celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Genesee Baptist Association. I have served as Director of Missions of the GBA since February of 1999, which means I have led the GBA for more than 18 years. A lot has happened in our world and our denomination since 1999. Even more has happened since 1957 when the GBA came into existence. While various people in Michigan tell us that the GBA is one of the strongest Baptist Associations in Michigan, I find no great encouragement in that. While we may be healthier than many other associations, we are in a slow decline rather than experiencing vibrancy as an association -- which, by the way, is also the condition of nearly 90% of SBC churches.

As I considered the condition of the GBA, I was burdened by the fact that as an association we were still structured and operating in basically the same way we had for the majority of our 60 year existence. While that has enabled us to maintain a measure of strength, compared with many other associations, it will not enable us to be effective in the future, nor even that effective in the present. So I recommended to the messengers to the GBA Annual Meeting that we empower our moderator to appoint a group of pastors who would look at our past, and our present, to determine where we have been, and where we are currently. Then they will look toward the future to determine where we need to be if we are going to be relevant to our pastors and churches, and effective for them as an association in the coming years.

A group of five pastors, plus the moderator and me, are meeting every other week to work through this process with the hope that we will have a recommendation to bring to the messengers at the 61st Annual Meeting of the GBA this fall. The recommendation will likely include a revised mission statement that will guide what we do and how we are structured as an association. If approved, it will also guide the development of our annual associational budget, as well as result in a new structure that will have fewer, but more effective, empowered ministry teams rather than the committees we now have.

When the Genesee Baptist Association was started, the founders wanted to see new churches started in order to reach and disciple the lost population of mid-Michigan, which was growing as many moved here to work in the auto-industry. The desire of our founders was on target, and they were highly effective in their efforts. The structure of the association was typical and effective for that time. But the world has moved on, time has passed, and gradually our focus shifted more to maintenance of the existing churches through resourcing and strengthening efforts. However, those efforts are seldom sought and implemented by churches who are content with maintaining their existing programs and buildings.

I don't think that maintenance brings as much glory to God as does new life, especially if our maintenance only slows the decline of our churches and associations. My desire is to see the churches of the Genesee Baptist Association healthy, growing, and relevant to the culture that surrounds us today. Just as churches need to be relevant to the culture surrounding them, our associations need to be relevant to our churches and pastors today and tomorrow. This is why GBA leaders are working so hard to re-dream the dream that brought us into existence more than 60 years ago. Stay tuned for more details!

About the author: Jim Marcus is a native Michigander. He has served as a church planter, in church revitalization, as a Church Planting Catalyst, and in associational missions in Michigan since 1988.

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Through the Eyes of a Child

By Grace Ferraro

Introduction by Tony Lynn: Every now and then you see the right thing. That is how Grace Ferraro, her family, and her church captured my attention. This 11 year old has been shaped by God through the ministry of her family and church. I am dreaming of a day when all of our families and churches are developing more young women like Grace.

Garden City, MI - Hi, my name is Grace Ferraro and I would like to tell you a little bit about myself. I am 11 years old and I am in the 6th grade. I live in Garden City, Michigan. I am a member at Merriman Road Baptist Church. I am homeschooled along

with 5 brothers and a sister. In my free time I enjoy doing ballet. I love missions and telling people about Jesus.

I will first tell you about how I made jewelry for the More Beautiful than Diamonds Boutique. At a women's event at our church I was in the kitchen helping to cook the food. I saw the ladies out in the gym selling items. I asked them why and they told me they were giving it to a shelter for women and girls who were taken and forced to do things they did not want to do. I wanted to help so that weekend I went home and made about 30 pieces of jewelry for the boutique.

Another mission activity that I did was help my dad with a backyard Bible club in Dearborn. The kids that were invited were Muslim, and some of them did not speak English. To tell the Bible stories we used a big picture Bible. We played games, made cupcakes, and colored with chalk. The children were happy that we came even though most of them did not understand us.

My dad and I also got to attend the North American Mission Board's SEND Conference in California. The first night we were at dinner and we invited our waiter Saul to the conference with us. He had attended Bible College and was very excited to go with us. I really liked hearing David Platt speak and hearing the bands. It was a wonderful experience.

On Wednesday nights, at my church, I attend Girls in Action. During our class we study missionaries, pray for them, and do mission projects. This past year we collected food for the food pantry, hosted a tea party for the girls who attend our Vacation Bible School, we went to the nursing home to hand out Christmas mugs, decorated bags for children in foster care and filled them with items that would be their own, we hosted a car in our city's Trunk or Treat, handed out water at the local 5k race, and we made cards for our pastors to hand out when they visit the hospital. My teachers, Mrs. Maureen Gray, Mrs. Jessica Kogelmann, and Ms. Erica Horton take a lot of time to prepare all the mission activities we do with our group. I learn so much about doing and giving to others.

I also enjoy reading missionary stories with my family. We usually read these with my mom before bed. My mom also took me to a women's retreat at the Bambi Lake Retreat and Conference Center where I learned and talked about missions.

My favorite missionary story is Temple Runaway. It is about Amy Carmichael. When she was a young girl she wished she had blue eyes like her mother. She prayed over and over again that God would change her eyes blue. Amy grew up to become a missionary in India. God used her to help save almost 1000 children from slavery in Hindu temples. If God had changed her eyes to blue, she would not have been able to sneak into the Temples dressed as an Indian woman and save the children. It makes me sad that girls and women are being kidnapped, children are forced to be slaves, and people die because they are Christians.

If I could have my mission dream it would be to start a church among the Amish. My favorite time period is the 1800's. I love the way they dress, how they cook and grow their own food, how they have farms, the way they go to school in a one room schoolhouse, and the slower way of life. The Amish live very similar to the way they did

in the 1800's. The Amish need a missionary that is willing to live like them, so they would be willing to listen to them. I pray that God would open the door one day for me to go and serve among the Amish.

I hope that churches in Michigan keep giving to our missionaries so they can keep helping the woman and girls that are being kidnapped, children that are stuck as slaves, and people that die because of their lack of faith in Jesus Christ.

If you want to know how to impact girls in your church contact Sue Hodnett, our BSCM Women's Ministry and Women's Missionary Union consultant at sue@bscm.org

SBC NEWS

Collegiate Mobilization

By NAMB.NET

What would it look like for a generation of collegiate Christians to live their lives on mission? What would happen if this generation leveraged their careers, their majors and the places they live for the sake of the gospel and for the needs of their neighbors? These are the years when you can discover your place in God's great work, to see where your gifts and passions intersect with the greatest needs in North America. We want to connect you to opportunities to "taste and see" what it looks like when you live your life on mission.

It might be in one of the great urban cities of North America or in the rural hills of Appalachia. It could be helping to plant a church, meeting the needs of refugees, rebuilding a community after a disaster or freeing those trapped in human trafficking. In the end, it is all about being the hands and feet of Christ and taking the gospel to those who need to hear the good news of a great Savior. If you are ready to take the next step in leveraging your life for your King, take a look at the opportunities to serve.

Come join us! Let's see what an army of collegians can do in the hands of an almighty and unstoppable God. Get involved, learn more:

https://www.namb.net/send-relief/simple-start-guides?send_relief_simple_start_guides=Collegiate%20Mobilization

GENSEND

By NAMB.net

The world is in desperate need of more men and women to respond to His voice when He asks, "whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" The millennial generation is ready to answer the call.

The GenSend 6-week summer program is designed to be one of the most exciting, intense and unique student missionary experiences in North America. It immerses young adults into an urban context in one of 15 cities where they gain practical knowledge of the realities of missions and leadership. Participants will spend their time learning to live

life on mission under the guidance of urban ministry leaders. While reinforcing gospel foundations and simple missiological practices, the intention of GenSend is to be an extension of the local church's church planting and mission efforts, allowing students to taste what it is like to be a church planter or missionary.

Matthew 9:37-38 "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."

How you can help: "Invest"

Support these students financially while they go out to cities across North America. Would you consider giving, or sponsoring as a group, the approximate \$3,900 to send one student as he or she seeks to answer the call of missions?

Estimated Costs for six weeks:

Lodging: \$1,600

Food: \$1,200

Travel and Commuting: \$1,100

Total: \$3,900

To learn more, sign up or give visit: <https://www.namb.net/send-relief/generation-send>

Restrictions, hostilities increase for people of faith

By Tom Strode

Washington, DC (BP) - Among the Pew Forum's findings for 2015 in its study of 198 countries:

40 percent of the world's countries have "high" or "very high" levels overall of restrictions/hostilities, a rise of six percent from 2014.

79 percent of the world's population lives in these countries, a hike of five percent.

53 percent of countries reported "widespread government harassment of religious groups," an increase of 10 percent.

12 percent of countries documented more than 200 cases of the use of government force against religious groups, a growth of one percent.

Among factors in the global increase in social animosities were rises in religiously related mob violence, assaults against and displacement of people of faith, and attacks to impose religious rules. Southern Baptist religious freedom leader Russell Moore said in response to the Pew report, "For millions, including many of our Christian brothers and sisters around the world, conscience freedom is constantly in peril. This new data confirms how urgent the need is for advocacy on behalf of so many who face danger for their convictions.

"I pray that the United States would continue its important work for global religious freedom and, more importantly, that the church of Jesus Christ would tirelessly work and pray for our fellow believers who are being persecuted by Caesar," said Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, in written comments for Baptist Press.

Government harassment and use of force against religious groups surged in 2015, Pew reported. Four of the five geographic regions examined in the report -- the Middle East-North Africa, Asia-Pacific, sub-Saharan Africa and Europe -- had increases in these categories. Europe experienced the greatest growth in government harassment or use of force against religious groups, with 53 percent of its countries showing such increases in 2015, according to the study. Sub-Saharan Africa was next, with 48 percent of its countries experiencing growth in such actions.

The Middle East-North Africa, however, continues to lead all regions, with 95 percent of its countries marked by government harassment or use of force against religious bodies. In Europe, Jews and Muslims experienced social hostilities in more countries than did Christians, according to Pew. Such animosities against Jews were found in 33 of Europe's 45 countries and against Muslims in 32 European countries. Christians experienced such hostilities in 21 countries.

Harassment and the use of force by European governments against Muslims came in a year when 1.3 million immigrants -- more than half from the Muslim-majority countries of Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria -- sought asylum on the continent, Pew noted. It also was a year marked by threats and deadly attacks by Islamic terrorists in European countries. Worldwide, Christians and Muslims continue to be harassed in the largest number of countries, according to the study. The number of countries in which Christians were harassed jumped from 108 to 128 in 2015. For Muslims, the number surged from 100 to 125.

Twenty-three countries had "very high" levels of government limitations in 2015, an increase of seven from 2014. At the top of the list were Egypt, China, Iran, Russia, Uzbekistan, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Syria and Morocco. Last year, the U.S. State Department designated 10 "countries of particular concern," a category reserved for especially severe violators of religious liberty. They were Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

For its study, Pew relied on nearly a dozen sources, including annual reports from the State Department and the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom.

The Pew study may be accessed at http://www.pewforum.org/2017/04/11/global-restrictions-on-religion-rise-modestly-in-2015-reversing-downward-trend/?utm_source=adaptivemailer&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=17-04-11%20religious%20restrictions&org=982&lvl=100&ite=947&lea=204503&ctr=0&par=1&trk=.

Tom Strode is Washington bureau chief for Baptist Press, the Southern Baptist Convention's news service. BP reports on missions, ministry and witness advanced

through the Cooperative Program and on news related to Southern Baptists' concerns nationally and globally.

Supreme Court to Hear Oral Arguments in Major Religious Freedom Case

By the ERLC

Washington, DC - The U.S. Supreme Court will soon hear oral arguments in the remaining religious freedom case to be heard this term—and one of the most significant religious liberty cases to be decided in years.

Here is what you should know about this case:

What's the case about?

The case, [Trinity Lutheran Church of Columbia v. Comer](#), involves a religious preschool that was rejected from a state program that provides reimbursement grants to purchase rubberized surface material (tire scraps) for children's playgrounds. The preschool was ultimately denied the grant for its playground solely because the playground belongs to a religious organization. The church is being defended in the case by [Alliance Defending Freedom \(ADF\)](#).

Trinity Lutheran Church in Columbia, Missouri applied for Missouri's Scrap Tire Grant Program so that it could provide a safer playground for children who attend its daycare and for neighborhood children who use the playground after hours. The Scrap Tire Grant Program is otherwise neutrally available to a variety of nonprofits and Trinity's application was ranked fifth out of 44 applications (in total, 14 grants were awarded).

Although the grant was for a secular use (i.e., making a playground safer), the state of Missouri halted the application process and denied Trinity's attempt to participate in the program solely because Trinity is a church. The state based this exclusion from the program on Article I, § 7, of the Missouri Constitution, which states, "no money shall be taken from the public treasury, directly or indirectly, in aid of any church, sect or denomination of religion." The Eighth Circuit affirmed that denial by equating a grant to resurface Trinity's playground using scrap tire material with funding the devotional training of clergy.

Why did this case go to the Supreme Court?

The Supreme Court often hears cases when there is circuit split (i.e., when different federal courts of appeal have reached different outcomes). According to the case filing, three lower courts—two courts of appeals and one state supreme court—interpreted the relevant Supreme Court precedent (*Locke v. Davey*) as justifying the exclusion of religion from a neutral aid program where no valid Establishment Clause concern exists. In contrast, two courts of appeals remain faithful to *Locke* and the unique historical concerns on which it relied.

Why should the Christian school be eligible for the grant?

According to ADF, the preschool has an "open gate" playground policy. The playground is open to the community and is frequently used by children in the neighborhood after-hours and on the weekends. Because the use is for the "wholly secular benefit of providing safe play areas for kids," there is no justification for claiming that the use of the

recycled tires is to aid a religious purpose. Every person in Missouri is required to pay a fee on their tire purchases, and these fees fund the grant program. Thus religious believers in the state are expected to “put money into the pool, but the playgrounds at their religious organizations can’t benefit from it.”

The government is constitutionally-required to treat religious organizations equally, notes ADF. The government isn’t being neutral when it discriminates against religious organizations by treating them less-than-equally.

What are the broader implications of this case?

At its core, says ADF, the Trinity Lutheran playground case strikes at the heart of American jurisprudence, asking: What is fair play in a pluralistic society? Can a state prohibit police from responding to a burglary at a Catholic school? Can a city stop the fire department from putting out a fire at a church?

The outcome of the case will determine whether the government can discriminate against religious organizations and exclude them from receiving a generally available public benefit simply because they are religious. A loss could mean that religious nonprofits could be excluded from government programs meant to serve their communities and even be denied basic safety services like fire and police protection, says ADF.

This article comes from “The Weekly,” a rundown of news by the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission highlighting the week’s top news stories from the public square and providing commentary on the big issues of our day.

Staggered & Humbled

By: Jonathan Akin | NAMB Director of Young Leader Engagement

I took Intermediate Greek in seminary with Dr. John Polhill, and we did our work in Philippians for the entire semester. Each student had to select a passage in Philippians on which to write three exegetical papers. I grew up listening to my dad preach a wonderful message on [Philippians 2:1-11](#), so I selected that passage for my papers. That beautiful passage that some think was an early Christian hymn tells all about the humility of Christ and how he voluntarily set aside privileges that were rightly his in order to serve humanity.

I was pumped about digging into the Greek syntax and learning more about it. I studied that passage for four months. I did lexical work, syntactical work and exegetical work. I knew the ins and outs of all the Greek clauses. In fact, I memorized the passage in Greek. You could say I was an expert on Philippians 2.

The problem is that while I worked hard to become an intellectual expert on Philippians 2, I didn’t work hard to become a practical expert on it. Far from having the mind of Christ ([Philippians 2:5](#)) and far from displaying the humility of Christ, I actually became more arrogant and prideful. Despite Dr. Polhill’s best efforts to challenge the students, including me, to make this more than an intellectual exercise, I failed to adequately apply the passage to my life.

Regretfully, as a young minister, I have often been guilty of arrogance and pride. I have often thought I knew better than my elders. I have often been cocksure that my solutions to the problems were always the correct ones. I still have [Philippians 2:5-11](#) memorized, at least in English, but I often fail in having the mind of Christ. And yet, the other day I was convicted and challenged anew to apply Philippians 2 in my life when I got to see firsthand a brother in Christ powerfully demonstrate the humility of Jesus to me.

I met recently with some state convention executive directors. Backstory: I have at times been very critical of state conventions and state convention leaders. So, I was meeting with some men who had every reason to be upset with me. One of the men in the room was Dr. J. Robert White, the executive director of Georgia's state convention, and he asked to go first. I braced myself wondering what he would say. However, Dr. White turned the conversation on a dime and changed the temperature of the room with his first sentence, "Jonathan, I want to ask you to forgive me." I was caught off guard and humbled within seconds.

Dr. White went on to say that I had written some hurtful things about the Georgia Baptist Convention, and he said that instead of doing the biblical thing that he knew to do—call me or come see me to talk it out like brothers—he chose to just be upset with me. For that he said he was sorry and sought my forgiveness. It was such a powerful moment. I was almost moved to tears and did choke up when it was my turn to speak (especially since it's a ministry of Georgia Baptists that led my mom to faith in Christ while she lived at the Georgia Baptist Children's Home). It was a powerful moment because Dr. White displayed the mind of Christ. Dr. White is a man in a very important position. He is my elder. He has tenure in ministry longer than I have been alive. He honestly didn't owe me anything. I hadn't had the respect or courtesy to call him or sit down with him before I wrote those things. And yet, he voluntarily humbled himself before me. He apologized to me. He sought my forgiveness. In that moment I was reminded of Philippians 2 again, and I knew that's the kind of man I want to be.

I was staggered. I was humbled by Dr. White. Of course, I forgave him and I sought his forgiveness in return. In my zeal to see more resources get to the places with little to no gospel witness, I have sometimes been guilty of being uncharitable to other brothers and have arrogantly thought my proposed solutions are the only right ones. Dr. White graciously forgave me as well. It was an encouraging and convicting meeting—one I'll never forget. And it's a reminder to me that knowing the Word is one thing but practicing the Word is quite another.

I hope this will be a challenge to all students and young pastors. I know it's a challenge to me. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" ([Phil 2:5](#)) and "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only" ([James 1:22](#)).

About the author: Jonathan Akin, pastor of Fairview Baptist Church in Lebanon, Tenn., since 2011, has been named to begin a young leader initiative of the SBC Executive Committee and North American Mission Board to better engage pastors between the ages of 25-45. This article first appeared in *The Christian Index*, newsjournal of the Georgia Baptist Convention and more recently in the *Southern Baptist Texan* newsjournal.

AROUND THE STATE

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

LifeChangers 2017 – Youth Mission Trip – Since 1996

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

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

CLASSIFIEDS

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Free Books

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

Senior Pastor Needed

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

Part-time Worship Leader

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

We offer two identical gathered worship services on Sunday mornings which include; biblical preaching, scripture reading, prayer, theologically rich music, and regular observance of the biblical ordinances (Lord's Supper and Baptism). Please visit www.crosspointemonroe.com for more information regarding CrossPointe's doctrinal statement, leadership, history, and various ministries. To apply for this position or request more information, please email resume along with links to samples of your worship leading to crosspointeworshipleadersearch@gmail.com.

Bi-vocational Pastor Needed

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

Senior Pastor Needed

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