

## COLUMNS

### **Childlike faith**

By Tim Patterson

FENTON, MI - I have often thought about Jesus' words; "Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." (Mark 10:15 KJV). At times that has been a great comfort to me because those who know me best have said that I have never grown up. I'm a little child at heart in a grown up and rapidly deteriorating body.

If I had it my way, I would play all day, eat junk food and sleep until I wanted to rise. I would still believe in Santa Clause and really want birthdays to come around. If I could get away with it, I would keep a good supply of water balloons in one of my filing cabinets just in case a need for them might arise. I am also still of the opinion that "recess" should still be scheduled twice a day and Saturday mornings should be reserved for cartoons. I hold that the Roadrunner and Bugs Bunny are classic actors that rank among the leading men of Hollywood today.

I still get a kick out of riding bikes, but today I like the kind with big motors and the name Harley Davidson emblazoned on their tanks. If I weren't afraid of breaking some ribs, as did my father-in-law, I would have a Slip-N-Slide permanently installed in my backyard. I like going to movies, but I miss the cartoon features that precede the major attraction, and I am highly disappointed that they have been replaced by commercials. I get enough of those on broadcast television.

But like most adults, my life and its perspective has drastically changed. That childlike innocence, faith, and unquestioning love have been tainted by time and the frailty of fallen humanity. Thank goodness there are still children in this world. Children who still love unconditionally and trust totally. Children who believe what they are told and see life simply.

The kind of childlike and loving faith that children possess are reflected in the life of one such child. Some years ago, a little girl named Liz was suffering from a rare and serious disease. Her only chance of recovery appeared to be a blood transfusion from her 5-year old brother, who had miraculously survived the same disease, and had developed the antibodies needed to combat the illness.

The doctor explained the situation to her little brother and asked the little boy if he would be willing to give his blood to his sister. He hesitated for only a moment before taking a deep breath and saying, "Yes, I'll do it if it will save her." As the transfusion progressed, he lay in bed next to his sister and smiled, seeing the color return to her cheeks. Then his face grew pale and his smile faded. He looked up at the doctor and asked with a trembling voice, "Will I start to die right away?" Being just a child, the little boy had misunderstood the doctor; he thought he was going to have to give his sister all of his blood in order to save her.

I don't know about you, but I'm a pretty selfish individual. I want to think that I would do the same thing for someone else, but could I? Or would I if I could?

When I see life from the eyes of a child then I begin to better understand our Lord's admonition to become as a little child. He was God's child in a grown-up body. Oh, how I need to be a child again. Not childish, but childlike. I believe my Father would really enjoy that as so would I.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13 KJV)

## **7 Marks of Effective Michigan Churches**

By Tony Lynn

FENTON, MI - As I visit churches throughout the region, from the cold waters of Lake Superior to the Ohio border, from the edge of Wisconsin to the shores of Ontario, I've compiled a list of the characteristics present in effective churches. By effective, I do not mean exclusively large; I mean healthy and growing churches, in depth and in size, regardless of their number of attendees and members. Here is what I found:

1. The leader has a map.
2. New people feel welcome.
3. The Bible is the content.
4. Spending is meaningful.
5. Teamwork is obvious.
6. People share life.
7. The Gospel gets priority.

### **Leader and His Map**

The most effective leaders maintain focus on a few priorities. One wears skinny jeans. One has a midlife prosperity bulge above his waistline. Another is withdrawn and quiet. One is in his 50's and the other is in his 20's. Yet every one of them influence a variety of people to keep going in the same direction. It is not about a series of themes or flashy publicity. It is about keeping the main thing the main thing all the time. I know I am in a church with an effective leader when during the course of conversations, the members of the church naturally repeat the focus of the church's leadership with an excitement in their hearts. Leaders who articulate well where the church is headed are easy to spot.

### **People Feel Welcome**

Either you feel it, within the first 2-3 minutes, or you do not feel it: Welcomed! Some churches have greeters in the parking lot, on the sidewalk, at the entrance, and in the worship center. Others let you find your own way into the entrance and worship center where they greet you in a chain of sincere, personal greetings. Regardless of the greeting system, you know quickly as a guest or newcomer whether people are happy to see you. Members of the church can splash cold water on the leader's warm greeting at the start of a worship service by ignoring guests, casting glares, and being self-absorbed

in their own conversations with other church members. Congregations show love when they assimilate guests and newcomers into church.

#### Bible is Central

There is something powerful about the Word of God. When worship leaders read Scripture during musical sets something special is felt. When leaders make the Bible text central to their message lives are transformed. When small groups look to verses in the Bible for guidance lives are strengthened. The translation does not matter as long as it conveys the Bible's original words. I love to see the glow of devices lighting up faces, or hear the rustling of pages when the leaders make reference to a passage and people look at Scripture for themselves. The best churches and leaders let their illustrations, testimonies, and personal stories take a back seat to the importance of Scripture when they preach and teach.

#### Meaningful Spending

Generosity thrives within effective churches. When people in the church believe in the direction, in the leadership, and in the priorities of the church, funds are present. When leadership focuses on the few priorities the congregation can do with their own resources the people take ownership and enjoy making a difference in the world. Ministries that use the monies within the congregation are better planned, always shared, and frequently evaluated. Annual budget planning meetings include church members who are spiritually mature, well respected by others, and forward-thinkers. That same group periodically meets with leadership when making plans for expansions, new ministry initiatives, and major purchases. More people share more of their money when eternal and effective ministries are carried-out.

#### Teamwork

I know the danger signs when teamwork is absent. The pastor is the cheerleader for every effort. The pulpit is more of a publicity center than a preaching site. I also know when I am surrounded by a team working harmoniously together for God's glory. The Gospel remains central to all of the large conversations. Worship and preaching are experienced without interruptions and commercials. Enlistment, promotion, and conducting ministries is achieved through vibrant, social connections within the church. There are talented humble people leading particular ministries throughout the church. Everyone is working toward the same few priorities of the church. The primary leadership and the second and third ring of leadership have a shared calling to lead well and to lead as one united team. Those same rings of leadership share life at a deeper level than everyone else because they share a calling and burden to see the church become more effective and healthier.

#### Shared Life

Bible study at 9:45. Sunday worship at 11:00. All meetings are on the church property. That is not shared life, those are merely appointments and meetings. Sharing life is bigger than schedules. Effective churches love and care for one another in the midst of daily living. Men help one another with home improvement projects. Mothers carpool one another's children to school activities. Young parents share free-babysitting services. Couples go out on dates together. Teenagers who meet at church become friends at school. The most effective churches give pastoral care to one another before church

leadership can respond. Meals are provided for friends after they return from the hospital. Friends gather at someone's home when they hear someone lost a loved one. Churches that transform their local community include people who are not yet followers of Christ. Some are persuaded to believe by the spoken word while others are persuaded by seeing love-in-action. Effective churches are filled with friendships, old and new; and there is always room for one more friend.

#### Gospel Priority

Effective churches share the good news of Jesus Christ in coherent ways that persuade people to believe and follow Christ through with baptism directly into enthusiastic service. The Gospel is heard when listening to leaders, teachers, and members. That miracle of life to death through Christ saturates every message and many casual conversations within the church. You can hear it being spoke of as if it is an ongoing celebration. Everyone understands that continuous, eternal changes come from encounters with Christ. Leaders and members who share the good news of Christ in their daily, Monday through Friday, lives as well as during church meetings are making the biggest difference. It is not a cliché to me so I enjoy it when a pastor and the members of a church say, "Our goal is to make Jesus famous!" I get it. It is not about them. It is not about the leader nor is it about the activities at the local church. It is about people considering Christ as Savior.

As the summer begins, long sunny days allow for deeper contemplation and reflection. I encourage you to spend some time thinking; Is the church, where you attend, an effective church? If so what characteristics are making it effective. Protect those traits. Participate in those efforts and add to the strength of your church.

If the church is not effective, what needs to change? How can you make a difference? To whom do you need to speak and include in the improvements? What actions are you going to take? What kind of schedule toward change is reasonable when including others in the move toward a healthier and more effective church?

I am praying during the summer that more of us will reset the priorities of our ministries. That we will take the steps to ensure more salvations, more disciples, and more called out to serve in ways that boggle our imaginations.

## **Acts 2:41 Sunday**

By Mike Durbin

FENTON, MI - We are encouraging Michigan Baptist churches to set aside Sunday, October 7<sup>th</sup> as Acts 2:41 Sunday. It's a day to celebrate the work of Christ as churches all over the state baptize new believers on this common Sunday. "Those who accepted His message were baptized, and that day about three thousand people were added to them" (Acts 2:41). If first century Jerusalem had a newspaper, the headline about the Day of Pentecost would have declared, "3000 Baptized! It was an incredible move of God!"

Early followers of Jesus were together when they heard a sound like that of a "violent rushing wind\_" and "saw tongues like flames of fire that separated and rested on each one of them." They'd never experienced anything like it. Jesus promised they would be filled with the Holy Spirit and it happened in a powerful, dramatic fashion! It was a day that changed Christianity forever.

The new church was alive with the Spirit, ready to share the Good News and it didn't take long. Jerusalem was filled with people from all nations for the Day of Pentecost. The noise of what was happening to the disciples caught their attention. Surprised and confused, they heard in their own language followers of Jesus speaking. Peter, full of the Spirit, stood and addressed the perplexed crowd. He told them Jesus died on the cross for their sins, and rose again for their salvation. The simple, straight-forward message of the Gospel pierced their hearts and they responded by asking what they should do. Peter replied, "Repent\_ and be baptized, each of you, in the name\_ of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

Thousands responded to the Good News message resulting in this massive baptism service. I imagine that cisterns, pools, and creeks all around the city were used to baptize new believers. It was an incredible moment for the early church as they celebrated the saving work of Christ and welcomed new believers to the family of God. That's what Acts 2:41 Sunday is all about. It's a day, October 7th, for Michigan Baptist churches to baptize new believers. Imagine the joy it will bring as we celebrate the work of Christ in the lives of those who follow Him in baptism!

Here are some keys to making Acts 2:41 Sunday a success at your church:

**BAPTIZE 5%** - Set a yearly goal to baptize 5% of your church's average worship attendance. It's SMART - Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely. Set aside some of those who follow Christ to be baptized on Acts 2:41 Sunday, October 7th.

**PRAY 4** - Challenge every believer to pray for four people in their lives to come Christ. Give them an Acts 2:41 Prayer sheet to write down the names of those loved ones who need Jesus.

ENGAGE 3 - Engage your community through evangelistic events, mission service, and relational opportunities to experience Biblical community. Take Christ to the streets, the community and neighborhoods that surround your location.

SHARE - Intentionally share the story of how you came to Christ 2 times with people who need Him.

LEARN 1 - Go to [BSCM.org](http://BSCM.org) and click on the Mi Moment picture for free resources to share your faith. Learn one way to have a Gospel Conversation then go do it.

The early church celebrated as they watched God move in the lives of those who responded to the Gospel on the Day of Pentecost. The cisterns, pools and streams of Jerusalem were filled with people following Jesus in baptism. There were “amens” and tears of joy as these new followers of Christ were enthusiastically welcomed to the family of God.

Acts 2:41 was a time of rejoicing. It was a time of celebrating the work of Christ. It's what, we as Michigan Baptists want to experience as our family, friends, and neighbors publicly profess their faith in Christ on Acts 2:41 Sunday, October 7th.

## **Bonding at Bambi Lake**

By Mick Schatz

ROSCOMMON, MI - Bonding together through camping, retreating, and hanging out at Bambi Lake, makes us who we are.

“I remember staying in Pinegrove as a kid. My mom stayed there years before me,” states Kevin Gaby. That legacy at Bambi Lake continues, as Kevin brings his kids to stay in Pinegrove. His family has been coming to Bambi every Memorial Day and Labor Day for 22 years. It won't be too long before grandchildren will be joining this picture! “I came to Bambi for the first time as a new bride with Kevin to a marriage enrichment retreat just a few months after we were married,” shared Lisa Gaby.

“Our kids have grown up there. We have pics of our son in a recycling bin stuffed with pillows and strapped to a wagon with a bungee cord as we made the rounds visiting at the campground. Our close knit young couple's class camped for years together as our kids got to experience a little freedom and independence for the first time. My mother in law and Kevin have attended Bambi for RA and GA camps. My daughter's first night away from home was at GA camp. So many memories! WE LOVE BAMBI!!!” Camping, the cottage by the lake, the lodge, the chalets – the Gaby family has stayed in most accommodations offered at Bambi. “And actually Bambi is the reason we don't have an “up-north cabin.” Why would we - when we have Bambi?”

Many families have a heritage, a legacy of togetherness, that includes great memories at Bambi Lake Baptist Retreat and Conference Center. From camping in the campground, to attending family camp, leadership training, and coming “just because,” people have a

love of this camp. “Unplugging’ with my kids from the phones, television and video games, living in the campground for two weeks where they are safe; where they can have freedom to roam around and be surrounded by creation – this has been very special to my family,” shared another frequent guest.

Campfires by the beach, cooking hot dogs in the pavilion, roasting marshmallows and making s’mores, hiking on the trails, singing camp songs by the Wilson building steps or in the amphitheater, searching for Petoskey stones in the gravel pit, a fast-paced game of ping pong, swimming and kayaking are all part of the camp experience here. It is not unusual to see deer darting across the road and into the wooded areas, or wild turkeys strutting through the field as wildlife flourishes on the property. The whippoorwill’s call signals 10:00 pm. It is very dark and still, and the coyotes’ howl sing you to sleep. The early morning alarm may be the tapping of red-headed woodpeckers on a nearby tree. Nature lives is our best alarm clock.

One recent camper shared, “I remember when the Human foosball building housed the chapel, and then, meeting in the Hubbs Chapel in the Lodge downstairs, and now, the Wilson building is the chapel.” She had come to girl’s missions camp with her sister for years. As she brought her mom back to visit the camp, she noted, “Things have really changed since I was a summer missionary here.” Yes, Bambi Lake is always changing.

Every time people come to Bambi Lake, there is something that is new. Right now, changes are transforming the camp, with the diligence of volunteers, as new life is breathed through the dreams and visions of the new camp staff. Excitement is on the horizon as the plans come to fruition.

Just wait for your next family gathering at Bambi Lake. You will not regret the time that you have spent-away from the noise of your city, your work and your busy life-to enjoy the blessings of nature and family that God has prepared for you. Make your plans to come to Bambi Lake to refresh your spirit.

## STARTING

### **Seven ways your church can start a compassion ministry**

By Josie Rabbitt

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP) -- Starting a compassion ministry at your church is about expressing the heart of God with others in a real way. When your church initiates a compassion ministry, a door is opened in the local community where people witness Jesus' character through your actions and hear about His gift of salvation, some for the first time. The North American Mission Board's (NAMB) Send Relief compassion ministry strategy encourages churches to expand their community engagement while delivering the gospel. "As Southern Baptists we are good at making the call to missions around the world and across our continent, but we also need to be careful not to miss the needs right in the shadow of our own steeple," said Kevin Ezell, president of NAMB.

Like thousands of other SBC churches, Mobberly Baptist Church in Longview, Texas, engages in missions holistically. The church is fully invested in connecting with unreached people groups through the International Mission Board and is involved in church planting locally and across North America. The church also engages in a full range of Send Relief ministry, including everything from grief and divorce care to foster care, adoption and crisis pregnancy support. "One of our greatest traits as a church family is that we care for and support each other during times of trouble and hardship," said Tony Puckett, develop ministry coordinator at Mobberly Baptist Church. "We have support ministries for the entire family, from pre-k through adulthood, to aid those who are struggling. As a church, we are firmly committed to helping others get back to a place where they can chase their purpose with passion and confidence.

Here are seven ways every church, regardless of size or budget, can embrace Send Relief and meet physical needs and share Jesus' love to all through compassion ministries.

1. Look inside your church—Have you ever stopped to wonder what the needs of your fellow church attendees are? Start asking around and find what needs can be met inside your church—be it a clothing drive, a paid dental trip or specific prayer. Seeing the needs of those nearest you will open your eyes to the broader needs of your community.
2. Plan around holidays—Think ahead toward Thanksgiving, Christmas and other holidays. Compassion ministries are greatly appreciated and put to good use year-round, however, it's never too early to plan an outreach around the holidays when research shows people feel the most alone, overwhelmed or in need. Ask your church family to plan a compassion ministries event for a holiday and use it as an opportunity to share the love of Jesus with others.
3. Team up with another church—The Bible tells us two are better than one. What better way to further your reach in the community than by working with another church?



That means more volunteers, more equipment to pull off the event and a larger audience to broadcast God's message of hope.

4. Make calls—Make a few calls to local shelters and non-profits in your community that could use church support and involvement. Ask your church leaders and congregation to organize a group to serve on projects in the community that bring hope to those who need it. Some compassion ministry initiatives include medical and dental services, car maintenance for single moms, yard work for senior citizens or meeting another specific community need.

5. Offer a relationship—The most loving thing we can do is offer a relationship with a loving God. But it starts by offering up a relationship with ourselves first, and living out that relationship as a godly example. If someone around you is looking for a friend, be that friend. Tell them about Jesus. Ask them to coffee and bring up His name. Listen to someone's problems and pray over them, in private and with them if he or she is willing. With this new budding friendship, God will do great things!

6. Visit the sick—This, first, requires listening. When people offer up prayer requests on the behalf of others, stop and listen. Then, if you're able, make a trip to visit whomever is sick or hurting. Compassion ministry is often about meeting the needs of others in creative ways, including sharing your time and attention.

7. Make, bake and take—Food is definitely a part of compassion ministries; it is a great expression of love and caring and it can warm the soul. Offer expecting parents a meal (better yet, organize a meal train online) or bake a surprise cake for a friend. Compassion ministries is also about doing, rather than saying. Take a trip to see someone you haven't seen in awhile or visit a children's ward in the hospital. Learn how your church can become more involved in compassion ministries.

So, what does being the church look like in your community? What needs are going, largely, unmet and how might you and your congregation begin to embrace the need and those impacted? Jesus stopped to care for the ones society had forsaken, shouldn't we do likewise? To learn more visit [namb.net/SendRelief](http://namb.net/SendRelief).

About the author: Josie Rabbitt writes for the North American Mission Board.

## **The Highest Form of Hospitality**

By Colleen Riddle

Desdin, FL - I grew up with parents who spent their lives serving the community. We housed athletes who my father had coached plus various youth in the community. My mother fed everyone in the neighborhood. We drove people to church and Sunday school.

Shane, my would be husband, started attending the church I was at when we were in high school, and his family had another high school student living with them. I'm pretty sure his mother has fed half of Florida. So, we both experienced very giving environments early on. Our parents were very hospitable people. I had always wanted to pursue some sort of serving career working with underprivileged youth or children. So, it made sense when I ended up in the field of criminal justice. I started working for Department of Juvenile Justice at 21 years old.

I thought I was doing great work running transition therapy groups. I was helping youth prepare to transition back into their homes and communities. About a year into working there, some girls came back. That really surprised me because I had thought, "Oh, these girls are going to be successful; they have the skills and they know what they need to know." I dug a little deeper and quickly learned we were sending them out on their own. They had no support system. Most of the crimes they committed were in conjunction with their parents or older siblings. Saddled with this epiphany I took the opportunity to change career paths. I asked myself, what if I worked with the entire family?

Two years into my career with Department of Juvenile Justice, I transitioned over and started working for the child welfare system. I was a case manager then a supervisor. I worked in adoptions for a while as a training manager before becoming a program manager for a case management organization. It's an emotionally intense field, but I had interesting experiences as a case manager and as a program manager.

Shane and I had been married four or five years when a couple in our church approached us about a teenager in need of housing and some welfare services. We had no children at the time and plenty of space in our home. So, we agreed to meet to see how we could help. When we met for dinner, it was very clear this young man should move in with us and become a part of our family. He had aged out of the foster care system and was supposed to live with former foster parents, but they were moving. He was going to be homeless. So, Shane and I had a quick discussion. We decided it's time to say, "Yes!" We have a home. So, we need to open it.

We were both 26 years old, and he was 18 when he moved into our home. Corey became our first child. He's the same age as my youngest sister. So, it became a very interesting family dynamic. We affectionately call him our man child. We had to set some non-negotiables—house rules. You have to have those boundaries. I think that's a protection around them. Someone cares enough about me to keep me in boundaries. They may not always verbalize that, but I see with my own children "someone cares enough about me to keep me safe."

Then, we were just really flexible from there. Most of our parenting came after we built a strong relationship. He didn't know us; we didn't know him. We were strangers in a long line of strangers he had lived with; so, it took awhile for him to realize we cared about him. We cared about his future. We had to do a lot of work to prove we were committed to him and were invested in his character growth and long-term outcome.

If God has called you to be a foster parent or to adopt, then He will provide a way. God will provide the support, the babysitter and the finances to make whatever changes you need to make for your home. People in your church will encourage you. It's not about trying to find the right time; it's about just doing it and letting God take care of the details. Don't simply say no. Pray and follow God's leading. Experience the highest form of hospitality.

About the author: Colleen Riddle is the director of Foster Care Ministries for the Florida Baptist Homes for Children. Her and her husband, Shane, have three children. God built their family in an unusual and unexpected way.

## **STRENGTHENING**

### **Changing Shoes**

By Becky Swain

WATERFORD, MI - Being a parent is hard work. Being a single parent or a stepparent, even harder. Take it from someone who has walked in all of these shoes!

I was 20 and had been married to my children's father for 2 years when we had our first baby, in 1982. We were so young, but naïve enough to believe that we were ready to wear the huge shoes required for the job. Little did we know how complicated life would become.. Sleepless nights, no money and constant worry became our norm. In spite of it all, I loved being a mom to our sweet, little Amy.

Ben, who was born six years later in 1988 and was a completely different child from his sister. Have you ever heard of Dr. Dobson's book, "The Strong-willed Child?" I'll bet you didn't know that it was written with my son Ben in mind. Even though he could have tried the patience of Job, I loved being his mom, too.

Amy would soon be 11 and Ben had just turned 5 when I was forced to wear the ugly single parent shoes, and life as we knew it changed forever. Wearing these horribly uncomfortable shoes was very stressful, but not without joy. We struggled, but always found ways to have fun. Our church family blessed us in so many ways during those trying years. I am forever grateful for their love and support.

For the first eight years as a single mom, I had absolutely no desire to be in a relationship. My marriage had left me afraid of being hurt again so I didn't trust anyone. It

took a long time for God to heal my heart, but by the time I met and married Gary, I was ready to love and be loved. 4 of our kids were either in college or married, 1 lived with his mom and my Ben, the youngest, was in middle school.

Slipping into the step-parent shoes felt great at the beginning, but sometimes a rock would sneak in and cause a blister. Ben had a very hard time accepting a man in his life, and not getting his way all the time. Also, a couple of the older kids began to feel that their dad loved his new family better and didn't care about them anymore. It took quite some time to work through all these issues, and I am happy to share we are at a very comfortable place now. The kids are spread out all over the country, and we love getting to visit all of them; our 7 grand children and 1 great grandchild. (Grandparent shoes are the best!)

If you or anyone you know is trying to get used to wearing either the single parent or stepparent shoes, please accept a bit of advice. Don't try to suffer through the pain and hardships alone. Allow your church family to help you. Someone told me once that I was preventing others from being used by God to be a blessing. I hadn't looked at their support in this way so those words of wisdom have stuck with me and I have shared it with those I've been led to bless. Stepparents, don't get discouraged. There will be times of trial, but just make sure everyone feels loved and accepted and it will all work out.

Yes, being a parent is hard work, but there is no other job in existence that is as rewarding and important. Wear your shoes with pride and remember to give God all the praise and honor for allowing you to love your beautiful, strong-willed, entertaining, exasperating, wonderful children. We wouldn't be parents without them!

About the author: Becky is a soon-to-be retired Special Education teacher who lives in Waterford with her husband Gary, her grandmother and 2 crazy cats. Becky serves at Springview Community Church in Davisburg as Nursery Coordinator and VBS director. She is also the Michigan WMU Children's Missions Consultant.

## **Domestic violence: Ministry advice for pastors**

by David Roach

Date: May 08, 2018 - Tuesday

NASHVILLE (BP) -- As discussion of domestic violence persists among evangelicals, seasoned pastors and others who minister to families are advising their ministry colleagues on what to do when they encounter physical abuse in a marriage. At issue in evangelicals' discussions are controversial comments by Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary President Paige Patterson regarding women, divorce and domestic abuse. See Baptist Press' reports [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

"When we have a case of domestic violence, my recommendation is that we immediately deal with making safety the number one priority" for the "spouse that's being abused physically," said South Carolina pastor Marshall Blalock, whose state was called by Charleston's Post and Courier "among the deadliest states in the union for women" in terms of domestic violence.

"In some cases," creating a safe environment "may mean law enforcement is involved," Blalock, pastor of First Baptist Church in Charleston and president of the South Carolina Baptist Convention, told Baptist Press. "... We've learned in South Carolina domestic violence oftentimes leads to very serious cases, even people being killed. So you never want to put yourself in a situation where you underestimate the gravity of domestic violence." Blalock, a 30-year pastoral ministry veteran, said his state's laws require reporting domestic abuse any time it involves a child. He recommends reporting abuse of a spouse any time children are present in the house.

Two studies by LifeWay Research -- one in 2014 and another in 2017 -- highlighted pastors' views on domestic violence. Last year's study found 89 percent of American Protestant pastors believe their churches regularly communicate that domestic violence is not acceptable. Still, 45 percent say their churches have no specific plan to help victims of abuse. The 2014 study found 62 percent of pastors have provided "couples or marriage counseling" to those experiencing domestic violence, and 56 percent address the subject in messages at least annually.

Joanna Berry, vice president of family and international ministries for South Texas Children's Home Ministries (STCHM), a ministry partner of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, told BP pastors should both address domestic violence from the pulpit and prepare to point abuse victims to resources. "From the pulpit a pastor can present how women should be treated, using many examples, including Jesus," Berry said in written comments. "Testimonies from recovering women are extremely impactful. The church can also provide counseling services, a confidential phone line and a list resources on their website. Resources should include where a mother with children could go for respite and healing, keeping in mind that most women will not have financial resources to pay for this." STCHM and some other Baptist children's homes -- ministries affiliated with more than 20 Baptist state conventions -- offer abused women "a safe environment, counseling, spiritual and practical training to rebuild their lives and ... skills to help with a variety of issues, including job skills -- all at no cost," Berry said.

LifeWay Research found that among churches with resources for domestic violence victims, 76 percent have a referral list for professional counselors, 64 percent have finances to assist victims and 61 percent can find victims a safe place to stay. Fifty-three percent have a referral list for legal help.

Tony Rose, a 31-year veteran of the pastorate with a master's degree in conflict management in addition to his theological training, noted "the pain and effort and energy and angst it causes a pastor who's willing to step into the messes of people's lives and walk with them." But he said the effort is worth helping hurting people. "We do not need to hide" domestic abuse, Rose, pastor of LaGrange (Ky.) Baptist Church, told BP. "We don't need to fear making abuse public. The church doesn't have a reputation to guard. She has a character to guard. Reputation is what people think of you. Character is what you really are." After a report of abuse is confirmed, "the first thing" a pastor should do "is get the couple to separate for safety's sake," Rose said, adding separation is not the same as divorce.

During the separation, both the husband and wife should get counseling -- either from their pastor or a Christian provider the church recommends, said Rose, who chaired the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee's Mental Health Advisory Council. The goal of counseling a couple dealing with domestic abuse is to preserve the marriage, Rose said. Yet he believes in severe cases there is "freedom of conscience to grant divorce and remarriage" for "something as far out and against Christian truth and the covenant of marriage as abuse." Like Rose, Blalock said he believes divorce is justifiable in some cases of abuse, though some godly pastors disagree. He called physical abuse "a serious violation of the marriage covenant."

Alan Branch, an ethics professor at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, noted the variety of views among evangelicals about abuse and divorce, but he said a wife is never "required to stay in a situation where she is in physical danger." "There is no specific passage of Scripture which addresses divorce and domestic violence," Branch told BP in written comments. "There are two issues: What is one's stance on divorce and what is one's stance regarding domestic violence. There are a wide variety of moral stances regarding divorce among Southern Baptists.

"In 1 Corinthians 7:15," Branch said, "Paul says that if a non-believer chooses to leave a believing spouse, the believer is no longer bound to the marriage. The situation Paul has in mind seems to be case where two non-Christians get married, and then one of them comes to faith in Christ after they are married. If the non-believer decides he or she doesn't want to be married to a Christian, many Baptists understand Paul to be giving an allowance for divorce. For some, physical abuse is considered a kind of 'abandonment' and thus an allowance for divorce in cases of physical abuse."

Other Southern Baptists, Branch said, "do not see any allowance for divorce in the Bible. For people with such a moral stance, the idea of a permanent separation is often suggested" in cases of physical abuse.

Regardless of their views on divorce, Blalock said, pastors should always get abuse victims to a safe place and never "make people feel like if you're a good Christian, you

shouldn't say anything about" domestic violence. Silence "is not helping our families." The SBC last spoke to domestic violence in a 1979 resolution which recognized it "as one of the serious moral issues of our time," encouraged pastors and churches to minister to domestic violence victims and urged "clear and responsible public policy related to domestic violence" at the local, state and national levels.

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

## **FATHER'S DAY: The Character Challenge**

By David H. McKinley

AUGUSTA, Ga. (BP) -- What makes a good father? In one word, I believe it is character. Nothing has contributed more to the destructive trends of social poverty, perpetual anxiety, sexual identity, personal insecurity, rage, rebellion, anger and even insanity than failed leadership in the home because of an absent or aloof father. Earlier this year, I read the book, "Becoming a Leader of Character" by Gen. James Anderson and his son Dave. Their thesis was this: "Most leadership failures are character failures." This is certainly true in life, but it is especially true in the home and family.

Dwight L. Moody defined character as "what you are in the dark."

This year we saw national headlines unmask the shame of some of the highest profile celebrities, personalities and success stories. Marriages, families, careers and brands were destroyed once impulsive and indulgent acts were exposed. In the aftermath of these stories, I felt it important to gather a group of men at my church in order to address the topic, The Character Challenge. We examined four essential aspects of character:

### **1. RESPONSIBILITY.**

Each of us has to take responsibility for who we are. We cannot pass this off or blame it on others. As grown men, we have to own our lives, our decisions, our commitment -- our character! We embrace words like relaxation and recreation, and often resist words like responsibility. But responsibility has everything to do with character. Other people hold us to accountability; we hold ourselves to responsibility. Responsibility is akin to the four-letter word, DUTY! Duty is doing what needs to be done without waiting for directions. It is taking responsibility for both the big and small things.

While emotions matter, they cannot and must not dictate what we do every day. Every time we choose duty over delinquency, we pass a test of character. "You have to DO what you want to BE," as James and Dave Anderson write.

## 2. RESPECT

Respect has everything to do with values because we honor, protect and guard what we respect. Respect begins with God our Creator, and He is our Father through Christ our Lord. It is the knowledge and awareness of this relationship that changes everything about how we live. With respect for God and as men of character, we respect women. In February, I wrote an article for Baptist Press to husbands and said, "Your wife needs your respect more than roses." But this is not limited to our wives. Women deserve our respect as counterparts in God's creation and co-recipients of His grace in salvation. While I fully subscribe to a complementarian view that God made us different to make us one in His design, I believe we are distinct, but equal.

Galatians 3:28 exhorts us to honor and respect women, and it disallows any place for demeaning, dishonoring or abusing others. Men of character must reject and repent of

the all too common misogynistic attitudes and frequent objectification of women. Our society is filled with multitudes of little girls and women who suffer emotional pain and physical or sexual abuse because they are devalued as human beings and disrespected because of their gender. This is more than an issue of culture; for men, it is an issue of character.

## 3. RESTRAINT

Restraint applies to both responsibility and respect, and it is the opposite of selfishness. Many character flaws come from selfish impulse and indulgence. Lives are saved and reputations are forged through selfless acts of sacrifice, while lives and reputations are lost and destroyed by selfish acts of indulgence. Restraint understands that life is not just about us. Unrestrained lives communicate life is all about us. We need something greater than our own best efforts to overcome our self-driven impulses. Divine intervention and motivation change us from the inside out. Only God can do this through His saving grace and by the indwelling presence of His Holy Spirit.

Character is something we need God to shape in us -- not something we simply squeeze out of ourselves. Character building is what God does in the lives of all who come to Him in Christ. This is what makes the Gospel both powerful and personal.

## 4. RESILIENCE

Character is forged and seen in endurance. We face the relentless realities of fatigue, frustration and failure while seeking to be faithful to each task. We must be resilient to stay the course as we struggle with endurance. Character development is hard, but remember this: The road of life is littered by the debris of many men who have been talented and successful but failed because of their flawed character. My charge to men, to fathers, is to step up to The Character Challenge.



Watch The Character Challenge in its entirety: <https://warrenbaptist.org/media/mens-media>.

About the author: David H. McKinley is pastor-teacher at Warren Baptist Church in Augusta, Ga.

## **Mi Moment Touching Lives**

By Staff

St Joseph - Church planter Kevin Hester was volunteering as a hole captain for the Senior PGA Championship tournament in Benton Harbor. One day he was standing by at a driving range as the golfers were practicing. Hester was wearing his MI Moment rubber bracelet as he watched.

MI Moment is a tool to help believers share their faith in a natural, un-intimidating way. It is specially designed for Michigan Christians, in that, it uses the state's unique geography with the Upper Peninsula to illustrate the gap between humans and God. It goes on to explain that like the Mackinac Bridge, Jesus is the only way to overcome that gap. Hester helped develop the MI Moment tool along with the Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM).

So the church planter was standing by as players were getting ready for the tournament, when one of them stopped what he was doing to ask Hester about his MI Moment bracelet. He answered the way he typically would with that opening question, by saying, "It is celebrating great moments in Michigan", he added, "this is a pretty great moment, huh?" After a short conversation about other great moments, Hester told the man, "My greatest moment was when I accepted Jesus Christ into my life." The two men continued to talk, and then right there on the driving range, the professional golfer prayed and asked Jesus into his life.

Hester says, "This man was 60-years old, and he said that no one had ever shared with him this message of salvation in his lifetime. I believe that every person needs a moment like that in their life, and many of them are just waiting for us to tell them about it."

Some estimates say as few as 2% of believers have ever witnessed to another person. Hester is the pastor of The Shore Church in St. Joseph, and he has used the MI Moment tool to encourage members of his church who have been intimidated about sharing their faith. MI Moment has a number of different approaches to help Christians enter into conversations about Jesus.

Besides using the bracelets as conversation starters, willing witnesses can go to [www.MIMOMENT.today](http://www.MIMOMENT.today), and record a 2-3 minute audio or video to share their moment of accepting Jesus. They then can print MI-Moment business cards with a link to their testimony, and can pass out those cards to people they encounter.

For more information about Mi-Moment, just go to [www.bscm.org/mimoment](http://www.bscm.org/mimoment).

## **Motherhood, in retrospect**

By Karen Villalpando

STERLING HEIGHTS, MI - My children are grown. I am at that awkward stage of parent life where we say, in honesty and humility, we know less now than we thought we knew when we started. Is anyone with me on that? Pride says we knew it all and did it all right. But that is dishonest, really. No perfect parents exist. We all miss some things. We are all still learning, at all stops along the way.

When my pregnancy was confirmed for my first-born, I spent considerable time pondering Hannah, the Biblical mother who in faith waited for a child and then gave him back to the Lord. And I went back to Hannah again with my second child. The lessons remain, 35+ years later.

What do I know now that I could not have known then, in the first blush of baby-love?

1. The giving them back to the Lord never ends. It's a daily and sometimes moment by moment offering. When they are so sick your heart aches. When they are hurt by this world. When you want to punch (or worse) the ones who hurt them. When they are so obedient to the Lord your heart bursts with pride, when they stumble and fall so hard it takes your breath away, and you are face down on the floor. You just keep giving them back.
2. They don't belong to me. Never did, never will. I was privileged to be responsible for my care of them when small, my slow release of them as they grew and the balancing act that all became. I am honored to have become their adult friend. I am and always will be their mom, but I am NOT their God and they are not MY God. I cannot make them into idols to be adored, and cannot make them the center of my universe. Only the Lord God can occupy that throne.
3. My primary identity is not found in my motherhood, as precious as it is to me. I am a child of God, redeemed by Jesus Christ, led by the Holy Spirit. I am a wife, a daughter, a sister, a servant of the Church, a friend to many, on mission in the world. And I am a mother to two beloved children. I hold the history of those two in my heart, like Mary hid the life story of Jesus in hers.
4. Their primary identity is not found in me, although they each say I am the voice in their heads more often than I would think. My main job is to keep pointing them to Jesus. To pray. To try not to meddle. To be ready to encourage, advise when permitted, to be honest, and to live for Jesus, modeling for them what their next stage of life should look like.
5. Perfect children don't exist. All of us are wounded by the fall. In our DNA exists the sin of Adam; a rebellious spirit that leads to eternal death unless surrendered to the Savior who died for us. The best I can do for my children is to pray, not for perfection, but for holiness as they submit to the One who made them.
- 6.

I still wonder how much of it I got right, but we don't get do-overs, just memories. And forgiveness. And new starts. And lifelong friends. And maybe grandchildren. And we leave a legacy.

About the author: Karen Villalpando is a member of Memorial Baptist Church, Sterling Heights, where she serves as a Bible Teacher, Mission Team Leader and child Care Center Administrator, Michigan WMU/women's MINISTRY Team member, WMU Acteen Camp program leader, BSCM preschool/children's ministry consultant, and IMB Trustee, 2013-2021. She is the wife of Leonard Villalpando and mom to Lucas Villalpando, Ellen Skidmore and her husband Jason, as well as Lifelong follower of Jesus and servant in his church.

## **Parenting with Diligence**

By Chad Holmgren

ROSEVILLE, MI - When my wife and I were expecting our first child we received a lot of counsel from many different sources about parenting. Sometimes this counsel would come whether we asked for it or not. Friends, further along on the parenting journey, would admonish us to enjoy every moment because time would pass quickly. Others would counsel subtly by asking questions about what type of schooling we had planned for our child. There was certainly no shortage of counsel given in the endless supply of parenting magazines, articles, books, and blogs. If you are a parent you have probably experienced this as well.

In Deuteronomy 6: 4-9 we read these words, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all of your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command to you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and your gates."

When Moses spoke these words, he was doing more than giving Israel some wise counsel on how raise well behaved children or some gimmicky parenting tips to help things go well in the home. God's people were on the border of Canaan anticipating entering into the land that God had promised them. If you were looking for a nice, comfortable place to raise your children, where they could be insulated from a culture opposed to God, Canaan would not have made it on the top of your list. It was a land fraught with temptation that would potentially lure the hearts of God's people away from following Him.

It was with this in mind that Moses urged Israel to diligently instruct their children about God and remind them of the work of redemption God had accomplished on their behalf in Egypt. Moses knew there would be a battle for the hearts of the generations that would come. He knew if God's people were passive in their responsibility to teach their children, their children would be prone to forget God and chase after worthless things. Tragically, as we read on in the Old Testament, we find out this is just what happened. After the death of Joshua, Moses' successor, we read these tragic words in Judges

2:10, And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, or that work that he had done for Israel.

We are far removed from Canaan by time, but not by experience. The same battle Israel would face for the hearts of their children is the battle we are in for the hearts of our children. This world is not a friend to the Gospel. Moses' instruction to Israel, on the border of Canaan rings, true for us today.

We are often diligent in choosing the right car seat, the right baby monitor, or what we believe is the right schooling option for our children. How much more important is it that we are diligent in teaching our children about the great work of redemption God has accomplished through Christ for all those who believe? There is no greater advice that we can heed as parents than the call to shepherd the hearts of our children.

About the author: Chad Holmgren serves as the Family and Children's Ministry Pastor at Cornerstone Baptist Church in Roseville, Michigan. He and his wife Sarah have three children ages 7, 5, and 3. Chad grew up in the state of Michigan and enjoys reading, following Detroit sports teams (Including the Lions), and hunting and fishing.

## **Parenting not by birth**

By Melanie Duletzke

GREATER DETROIT - My husband and I became first-time parents to a 5 and 8 year old, both at the same time, through the gift of adoption. We were overcome with mixed emotions, thrilled that we would finally be parents, and petrified that we didn't know what we were doing. Although most parents might not adopt, I think those feelings are common to all new parents, no matter how they get the title.

Parenting is hard, and parenting children through adoption creates some additional, and often unique challenges. It is important to remember that adoption is born out of grief and loss. My being able to become a parent came at the expense of another family not being able to parent their children. My children lost everything they knew when we became their parents. Because they lived in another country, they even lost things like their language, their food, and their culture. In addition, many adopted children encounter neglect and trauma; therefore, their earliest template of a family is not a good model. As a result there are many barriers to overcome and simply taking a child and placing them in a loving family does not ease or erase those barriers.

When we look at scripture, we see that God obviously has a tender spot toward the fatherless or orphans. James 1:27 says, "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after the orphans and widows in their distress."

So how can the church "look after" or help adoptive families?

1. Understand that the process of becoming a family is most often slow with many steps forward and back, especially when the children are older when they are adopted. It is much easier to become a family on paper than it is to become one in the heart and mind. I remember one day when my kindergartener came to the car after school and said, "They called me Duletzke today. I do not want to be Duletzke tomorrow." Parents and children need grace as the process unfolds, and many times this process can look anything but smooth along the way.
2. Provide support and encouragement to the family, just as you would to a family who has brought home a newborn. Bring them a meal. Ask if you can watch the children so the parents can go for coffee or dinner. Provide a listening, non-judgmental ear to them as they walk out this process of becoming a family. Send a text or card to encourage them. Above all, pray for these families. God is the one who can bring healing to broken families and broken people.
3. Be sensitive in your language. Don't use terms like "real parents" or "real children." Be understanding that there may be some stories in the Bible even that are hard for the children to hear, such as when baby Moses was put in the river by his mother. Things you might not anticipate may trigger feelings of rejection.

I have often thought the best representation of my family is a mosaic: broken pieces, fitted together to make an amazingly beautiful picture. But isn't that a picture of the church too? Adoptive families and the church need each other. If you or your church are interested in discovering more about how you can support adoptive families, please visit: <https://www.namb.net/news/adopting-and-fostering-podcast-breaks-myths-shares-insights/>

About the author: Melanie Duletzke is passionate about ministry to women and ministry to families. She has served on staff at the church and/or associational level in Michigan, Texas, and Idaho and has a degree in Religious Education from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. In addition, she has taught at the middle school, high school, and university level, and she is currently a district director of special services. She has been married to her husband, Rob, for fifteen years, and she is the mom to two amazing children, Leydi and Christian.

## **TITUS 2 – A Retreat for Women of all Ages**

By Nancy Spears

ROSCOMMON, MI - The tables were set for dinner and the chicken was in the smoker as women began arriving at the first Titus 2 Women's Retreat. The women and girls, ages 8 and up, were anticipating the unknown as they approached the lodge. More than half of the women attending were first timers at Bambi Lake.

Unlike many retreats, most of the women arrived at the earliest check-in time. Taking advantage of the free time, they explored the camp. They climbed on Noah's Ark, enjoyed the swings, and played Family Feud in the Lodge Family Room. Others made new friends in the newly remodeled lobby or relaxed in their rooms while last minute details were finished in the workstations, and readied for dining room.

At dinner time, the salad bar was plentiful. As salad bowls were filled, smoked barbecue chicken, roasted red potatoes, and a blend of vegetables were served to the tables. Then, dessert was served, key lime or tiramisu.

A time of worship began with camp director, Mick Schatz, leading in a few worship songs before Sharon Hessling shared scriptures and life stories to encourage and challenge. Sharon served as an IMB missionary for many years and, now retired, serves the Lord in Port Huron and also makes fabulous pies! In later sessions, she shared stories of women through the Bible, leading from Eve and the first sin, to the cross where our redemption from sin was paid by Christ. She also shared stories of women impacted by expectations and culture, and how women impact women working and sharing life side by side.

Activities planned for the weekend? First, lunch preparations were on the agenda, with several opportunities to participate. Karen Villalpando guided a group making four delicious salads and soups including Crock Pot Zuppa Toscana Soup. Tablecloths and flower arrangements were added to the tales as they shared about hospitality. Katie Nettle worked with a group making bread dough. After the dough had risen overnight, it was baked in 15 mini-loaves. Sharon Hessling taught her special techniques for making flaky crust, making apple and blackberry pies. These pies were served for dessert. She even blessed those who follow a gluten free diet with heavenly apple pie.

While lunch preparations were proceeding in the kitchen and eating area, craft activities were taking place on the other side of the room. "I really like the vast amount of choices of things to do" said Abigail, age 15.

Elaine Hill encouraged women to show appreciation through the special gift of a handmade, unique card. She also offered opportunity to work on scrapbooking pages. First time crafters in this area were delighted with the use of an embosser and a cricut. As a leader of a break-out session, Elaine reflected on one meaningful encounter at the retreat. "As the ladies went from project to project learning different crafts, I noticed a young woman sitting at my table. She looked miles away in her thoughts. As I walked over, she smiled and apologized for not having started her card. I told her I could help her, but she asked to "just talk". I sat down by her, and she began to share about her

family and things that were burdening her heart. I learned that she was a new Christian, but struggling. She had so many things she didn't understand. After sharing some verses with her, I asked if I could pray for her. We prayed for wisdom, and thanked God for our new friendship. After that session, as I walked back to the lodge, I realized, sometimes we need to bend with the plans, and sometimes women need to be allowed to "just talk." Sometimes God has a whole different purpose for a retreat. I'm glad I listened."

Christine Witt led groups of women, step by step, through a flower arranging experience. Beautiful creative arrangements were taken home by their creators. Denise Smiley patiently worked with knitting and crochet. Hot pads and dishcloths were the featured projects, and others joined in with projects of their own. "It was kind of making me mad at first," said Emily, age 13, "but once I could get it, it was OK!" Although it looks easy, it is harder than it looks. Yarn and needles or hooks were taken home to continue developing the skills learned. "It looked like a scarf for a ceramic dog," Katie began, "but now it looks like a half of a washcloth." Katie continued, "It made me think of the things that I do that I could teach."

Would they come again? Was it a great experience? Resounding YES!!! Hannah, age 11, says "It was fun. It was really good. I liked it. I enjoyed the crafts, and just everything!" Theresa attended with her daughter. "I enjoyed the fellowship with Godly women, the light flexible schedule and the side by side mentoring. It is a must for women of all ages to attend."

"We were very excited for the opportunity to partner with Bambi Lake to offer the multi-generational retreat for ladies. It surpassed our expectations! A huge thank you to Nancy Spears and Karen Villalpando for directing this event. We look forward to offering the Titus 2 retreat again next spring," says Sue Hodnett, Women's Ministry Director.

The next Titus 2 Retreat is scheduled for April 26-27, 2019. Reserve that date on your calendar today! You will want to be a part of this event. Then invite friends and family to join in. Go online, make your reservation and pay your deposit. Women of all ages having side by side experiences - there isn't anything like it!

About the author: Nancy Spears serves as administrative assistant to Mick Schatz, director of Bambi Lake Camp and Conference Center. She coordinates communications efforts for the camp as well as participating in many of the camps and activities throughout the year.

## **Wild Weeks at Bambi Lake**

By Staff

ROSCOMMON, MI - There are a couple of wild weeks coming this summer at Bambi Lake, you don't want to miss. No, really, wild! Crazy wild! These are week-long camps for students grades 6 through 12. Wild Week is described as an "amazing, Christ-centered and fun-filled week" and there are, not one, but two opportunities to go.

National student speaker, Ken Freeman will be leading both weeks. Despite an abusive childhood, Freeman accepted Christ into his life and for the past 30 years of ministry has been preaching that same gift of salvation to others. The evangelist describes himself as having a passion for the lost and the brokenhearted, and that is evident in every day of his ministry. Ken loves the Lord and he loves people. You will come to love him as well during Wild Week!

The first Wild Week is scheduled for June 18-22. The second week is planned for July 16-20. All middle and high school students are encouraged to attend. The cost of the week is just \$219 per camper. A \$25 non-refundable deposit is required no later than 10 days prior to the event.

For more information and to register visit [www.bscom.org/bambi](http://www.bscom.org/bambi).

## **SENDING**

### **Mi Moment Touching Lives**

By Staff

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continued to talk, and then right there on the driving range, the professional golfer prayed and asked Jesus into his life.

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## **MICHIGAN NEWS**

### **Dan Gramm Resigns**

By Jamie Lynn

FENTON, MI - Dan Ghramm has been serving as a Church Planting Catalyst with BSCM/NAMB in Southwest Michigan. His wife Amanda, a sign language interpreter, and their five children live in Hudsonville, Michigan. They have found great joy worshipping and serving at Redemption Church, a three-year-old church plant in Grandville, a suburb of Grand Rapids.

We regret to let you know that Dan has offered his official resignation as a full time Church Planting Catalyst with the Baptist State Convention of Michigan and the North American Mission Board effective July 31, 2018. His hard work in the southwest corner of Michigan will continue to see fruits from his labor of coordinating church planters, sending churches, training facilities, and so much more.

On August 1, 2018, Dan will begin his duties as the lead pastor of Gateway Church in North Ridgeville, Ohio.

Not only will Dan be lead Pastor, but he and Gateway Church are pursuing a partnership between Cleveland Hope, the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio, and the North American Mission Board where he will become a church-based Church Planting Catalyst for SEND City Cleveland. Church planting and reaching people with the Good News is in his blood, no matter where he is.

Dan writes, "I have thoroughly enjoyed my time serving in Michigan and have appreciated Dr. Tony Lynn's leadership. I'm grateful for what we have accomplished together. We are excited about these changes and look forward to what God is going to do. I'm confident that our partnership in ministry will continue."

Dan's enthusiasm for the things of God will be missed. We pray for his wife and family to have a good transition to a new area of service. May the Kingdom of God increase because of his ministry.

About the author: Jamie Lynn, Administrative Assistant/Communication Coordinator BSCM. Served 18+ years as Pastor's wife and 13 years with the IMB in international missions including Niger Republic, West Africa and Paris, France.

## AROUND THE STATE

### **Harper Creek Baptist has a new pastor**

Harper Creek Baptist Church, located at 13222 Beadle Lake Road, Battle Creek, Michigan, welcomed Jeffery Renard, M. Div., as its Pastor on Palm Sunday (March 25, 2018). Brother Jeff is a graduate of Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Missouri, and graduated with a Master of Divinity degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. His wife, Sharon, is also a graduate of Southwest Baptist University with a degree in Elementary Education. They are originally from Wichita, Kansas.

Jeff and Sharon, will be moving to Battle Creek, from Albertsville, Alabama. They served for 21 years as missionaries in Brazil with the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. They have four adult children.

Harper Creek Baptist Church is affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention. Please visit their website at [www.harpercreekbaptist.org](http://www.harpercreekbaptist.org) for more information.

## CLASSIFIEDS

### Classified Ad Submission Guidelines

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

## ABOUT US

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

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