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How do mothers measure a godly home?

by Jamie Lynn

PLYMOUTH, MI – How does a godly woman and mother build up a strong home life? With all the craziness going on in our world and local communities, it's difficult to know what the priorities are.

Probably the easiest standard to evaluate your family and home life is by talking with other women and mothers while waiting to pick your kids up from school, chatting with your neighbor, or over coffee with your bestie. You weigh if the difficult things that are going on in your family are worse or better than your conversation-friend. If everything is going better than the lives of your friends, then you think you're doing well enough. But is that the standard we should evaluate our home lives and family with?

There are so many questions to consider when working to improve your home life. These questions below only touch the surface of what we need to work on with our families and take to God for wisdom and direction. But these are the current issues that cry out to me and affect our home life. May God lead us even in the small things to do what's right and beneficial for ourselves and our families.

MEDIA

Where do we draw the line with screen time and content? What kinds of things should we allow and where should we draw the line and say these TV shows, videos or games aren't good for us? With our kids, how do we decide about internet use, what age, how long, late-night texting friends, etc...? What is the best standard for us to use as Jesus followers? Since the Bible was written before the internet came into play, how do we find wisdom in leading our families?

GAMBLING

What about the battle of something being legal versus if it's good for us and our family? Michigan Gambling is promoted constantly on TV. They even say they'll front you the first \$100. It is online and easy access on your phone 24/7. It is definitely a subject for your family conversations. It would be good during your family devotion time to search the Bible for what it says about gambling/money (I Timothy 6:9-10; Proverbs 13:11; I Timothy 6:10).

MARIJUANA

Marijuana is also legal in Michigan. Used for recreational use, is it helpful or hurtful to our families? It is a subject that is important to talk with your family about. With more and more people deciding to smoke/eat marijuana, you need to have set your standard on the Word of God and not on what the public chooses. These verses speak to the theme of marijuana use, Galatians 6:7-8, 2 Timothy 4:5, I Peter 4:1-6, Peter 5:7 and many more.

Mothers, for all your questions about your family, search the Bible for Scriptures and ask God to help you know if it will build up your family or tear it down. God's word says,

"A wise woman builds her home, but a foolish woman tears it down with her own hands."
Proverbs 14:1.

Think about the things you can do with your family to help build a strong godly home life. Make a list of those things with your spouse and kids. Find unity in what would make your family healthier. Start by choosing one thing from your list to work on or add to your family's time together.

Here's some good options:

- Pray and read Scripture together each day (mealtimes or other)
- Attend church together
- Have family conversations over issues that arise
- Make your home safe/peaceful/joy-filled
- Remove cussing and add in polite words
- Build each other up
- Spend time together as a family (not too busy in sports, clubs, separate activities)
- Have rules for resolving conflict
- Express your love for each other

Here are some great guiding Scriptures:

Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you. Ephesians 4:32

So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. Ephesians 5:33

Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins. 1 Peter 4:8

Honor your father and mother. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the Lord your God is giving you. Exodus 20:12

Let's not allow our family life to slowly decay and evolve into something that isn't healthy. God is willing to help us. He not only created us, offered salvation from our sinful selves, but also gave us His Word to read for guidance and help with our families.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jamie Lynn is the Communications Director for the BSCM. Jamie loves working for the Michigan churches at the State Convention Office. She is married to Dr. Tony Lynn, State Director of Missions and enthusiastic follower of Jesus Christ. They have 3 married children and 9 amazing grandchildren.

Answers to “How Could You Let this Happen?”

by Philip Goldsmith

SHELBY TOWNSHIP, MI – Nancy Reagan said it best: Facing dementia and Alzheimer's with someone you love is like a [“long goodbye.”](#)

My faith was tested and tried by events not on my radar. Through it all I've been reminded that when I choose to put my faith and trust in God's goodness, love, and omnipotence, He gives me strength and grace to navigate safely.

Like a newborn baby totally dependent on its mother, when I cry out to God and stretch up my arms to Him in faith, He picks me up, nourishes me and surrounds me with His arms of love.

On June 15, 2020, I watched my dad take his final earthly breath.

The essence of my dad's wisdom and physical functioning are no longer. I love him; I miss him. He was a strong, successful, compassionate, sincere, steady, and confident man.

My dad proved to be a respected leader working for the government then retired as a GS-15 which is the highest civilian rank in the United States.

My dad was a thoughtful man of integrity, living out a life of unconditional love with a servant's heart. He read and meditated on the Scriptures daily. He instilled to our family the importance of reading from the book of Proverbs each day for wisdom, and a Psalm a day for a renewed heart.

There was constant joy in his life for Jesus, my mom, and for others.

My sisters and I watched closely, and have chosen to live by these traits. He was a faithful man to the local church through attendance and involvement. A man who would sing the loudest in church, but was never on pitch.

When COVID hit U.S. soil, my dad was considered “high risk.” I knew his health was declining and I wanted to be close to him, but there were certain restrictions that would hinder that desire.

Some restrictions were lifted on Mother’s Day weekend, so I drove to spend that week with my parents. I observed what I had always known: the unconditional love my parents had for one another.

There were hard moments watching my mom take care of the shell of his body day after day while his brain was slowly dying from Alzheimer’s. We have been on this path for more than four years.

Although the road had been rocky and steep, I can honestly say God continually sent peace, calmness, quietness, and affirmations through His Scriptures to show me He cares.

Earlier in 2020, I was sitting in the Ft. Lauderdale airport with friends waiting for our flight home to Detroit. While in the terminal, I received a text from my mom to call her. For the next 45 minutes I paced the terminal listening about the return of my dad’s cancer.

Because of Alzheimer’s, they could not do surgery, but were looking for alternative treatments. After the update I asked to talk with him.

“His voice is weakening, Phil.” Mom said. “I can put you on speaker, but he may not be able to verbally respond.”

One moment I am having an amazing time with wonderful friends, and the next moment I find out the most amazing dad and my hero could no longer speak to his son. For the next several minutes tears filled my eyes.

“I love you dad.” I told him. “God is great, and God is good, and I thank Him for you.” Through the wide range of life’s emotions, working through layers of grief and working through each trial since then (some with zero explanation), I’ve cried out to God, and He continues to work in me through the Scriptures. God answers the “How could you let this happen to me and why?” question.

Only through God’s Word does He remind me of God’s precious thoughts and promises:

- “Cry unto me” – Psalm 34:4; Psalm 18:6; Psalm 77:1
- “Rest in me” – Matthew 11:28-30; Psalm 4:8; Psalm 23; Psalm 37; Psalm 34:18

- “I am near the brokenhearted” – Psalm 46:10; Psalm 147:3
- “Be still and know that I am God.” – John 14:27-29; Exodus 14:14; Psalm 37:7
- “Peace I leave with you.” – John 14:27; John 16:33; Romans 15:13; Isaiah 26:3

God is truly good!

He is a good God who chips away a heart of stone (Ephesians 4:18; Proverbs 28:13-14).
He works miracles of what we believe is impossible (Luke 18:27; Matthew 19:26; Ephesians 3:20).

He restores (Psalm 51:12; Hosea 6:1) and we choose to draw back (James 4:8) to His loving and secure arms through times of trials and grief.

Satan knows no good.

He seeks out to destroy all good including healthy vertical (God) and horizontal (people) relationships (First Peter 5:8).

He is the father of confusion, deception, assumptions, gossip and lies (John 8:44).
He is the author of sin, sickness, sorrow, doubt, hatred and death.

Satan gets his foot in the door of our imaginations and thoughts then wants us to believe bad things happen because God is not good, but the truth is because Satan is evil.

God created the world and mankind to be beautiful, to have order, and to live in harmony.

It has been a difficult couple years for all of us.

Though we don't understand the “why,” we should focus on the “what.”

What does the Lord want us to be reminded of? What is He teaching us? The answers are clear through the preciousness of Scriptures.

My friend, God is a faithful God (Deuteronomy 7:9) whose mercy is new every morning (Lamentations 3:22-23).

His grace is sufficient (2 Corinthians 12:9).

His love is everlasting (Jeremiah 31:3).

Through these promises, we have a renewed hope (Isaiah 40:31).

You are loved.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Phil Goldsmith hails from Shelby Township, MI where he is an active member of Lakepointe Church under the leadership of Scott Blanchard. Phil travels the country sharing his personal story of grace. He loves to coach couples who are struggling in their relationships, and mentoring men in furthering their relationship with Jesus. He has three adult sons. His oldest is a Pastor in Hilliard, Ohio. His middle son is an Engineer for Proctor and Gamble in Cincinnati, Ohio. His youngest is serving in a church reboot in Minneapolis, MN. There is no greater joy than to see your children walk in truth (Third John 4). Phil is available for speaking engagements. For more information, log on to www.philgoldsmith.com.

Five joys of raising your child in a church plant

by Emily Guyer

ANN ARBOR, MI - I was really afraid to raise pastors' kids.

The narrative surrounding the experience of pastors' kids has been disparaging. I didn't know if it was possible to raise children who genuinely loved the Lord and the local church with parents in ministry. Over the years, I have gone on my own journey gleaning wisdom about how to point my kids to Jesus. I am not sure I'm doing any of it "right" per se, but I can say that I am more hopeful and rejoice in the environment that I get to raise my children than I have ever been before.

As a church planter's wife with four children, I often have conversations with other Christians about what it's like to raise children in a church plant setting. We have had solid Christian families who wanted to partner with us in ministry in our city ultimately decline the invitation to join us because they were hesitant to put their children in this type of church context.

I get it. Honestly, I do. Each family situation is different, and I wholeheartedly applaud whatever a parent does to discern where the Holy Spirit is leading their family. However, we need to rewrite the narrative about what it means to raise children on the front lines of ministry--either as a pastors' kid, missionary kid, or member of a church plant.

The other day, a fellow church planter said that we have to redirect the conversation from "isn't it terrible to be a pastor's kid" to "look at the potential in pastors' kids to go way further than their parents!" I agree wholeheartedly. Children with families in active ministry have a unique privilege to see faith in action and the gospel at work up close during the formative years of their life. With (1) a heart for the Lord and broken people and (2) the apprentice-level insight

into what life in ministry looks like, they have the potential to be some of the best church leaders in the future.

So, here are five reasons why It's a joy to raise your child in a church plant.

In a church plant setting, every member is an active participant in the work of ministry, though not all are full-time pastors or staff members. So, I pray these encouragements are for full-time church planters and lay members of church plants– or those considering the opportunity.

1. Children are surrounded by people who desperately need Jesus.

There's nothing known or a playbook on what to do in a church plant — it is pioneering work. Church plants are pushing back the kingdom of darkness, taking the gospel to those who have not yet heard, so naturally, they are a significant target of spiritual warfare. There are attacks from the Enemy and discouragements around every corner. This produces broken yet faith-filled parents and church leaders who need the Lord desperately. As a result, children get parents and leaders who are clinging to Jesus. They are witnessing authentic faith up close and a gospel that really works.

2. Family discipleship is essential.

There isn't a plethora of kid's programming or activities that keep the calendar full that you can drop off children without much thought. A lot of the programming in established churches is a blessing to the church members. I've often longed for support and resources for my own children. However, because of the lack of programming, families in church plants feel an urgency to roll up their sleeves and disciple their children. It also creates an urgency to partner with the church to provide truly essential resources. As a result, children get programming intentionally developed to meet their spiritual needs, and parents actively discipling them in their homes.

3. Children get a front-row seat to God at work.

They witness people going from death to life by believing the gospel. They witness their friends get baptized. They see broken relationships restored. They see needs met, and God answers prayers. As a result, children see God's character clearly and the power of the gospel to transform people's hearts.

4. Children learn that their faith compels them to act.

Members of a church plant are well-accustomed to doing the unseen work of ministry. However, the children are also often included in the work of ministry too. My favorite part of Sundays is to witness our children helping with setup and tear down, helping with greeting, and having a blast while doing it. These are their earliest memories. They love being at church-- helping and working with their friends. They talk about sharing the gospel with their friends.

They raise money for the persecuted Church to have Bibles, because their faith doesn't sit on the sidelines. They sincerely believe that there are real people, whom they love, that need Jesus-- and they are compelled to do something about it. As a result, children learn their faith leads them to action.

5. Children have meaningful relationships with people older than them.

Because church members are a close-knit family and are deeply invested in serving, adults rub elbows with children all of the time. Adults really know the children. They play in the hallways together. They eat together at dinner tables. In a church plant, the church is not just a place you go, but a family to whom you belong. As a result, children have aunts, uncles, brothers, and sisters in the family of God investing in them and pointing them to Jesus.

There is so much hope and potential with children raised in a church plant.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Emily Guyer serves at Treasuring Christ Church (TCC), a church plant in Ann Arbor, MI, as the Director of Kids Ministry and Women's Discipleship. She is married to Michael, lead pastor of TCC, and together they have four children. She is passionate about partnering with parents in discipling their children and also has a heart to see women grow in their relationship with Jesus. Prior to serving at TCC, Emily has served alongside Michael in Student and College Ministry at Open Door Church of Raleigh, NC, as a freelance graphic designer, an event planner for Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Women's Ministry Associate at Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano, TX.

Becoming a multi-generational church

by Illinois Baptist staff

SPRINGFIELD, IL – “When a church closes its doors, it says something about the power and glory of God that we don't want to say.”

Mark Clifton, Senior Director of Church Replanting and Rural Strategy at NAMB, said that when a church closes its doors, it undermines the message of the power of God in the community. “They hear you preaching that God is the answer to your problems, but he can't keep this church open.”

Pastors need to be equipped to revitalize churches because it magnifies the true glory of God. One of the essential qualities needed by pastors in church revitalization, Clifton said, is an

affinity for multi-generations. A pastor must possess a love for both younger and older adults, as well as understand how to lead them together.

Practically, he advises two starting points for pastors seeking to become multi-generational in a church revitalization: First, focus on reaching and discipling one young man. Second, love older people for who they are.

When trying to reach young men, “don’t try to dress like them,” Clifton urged, instead “listen to them.” Young men want to be discipled by older men and they want the opportunity to lead.

An affinity for multi-generations recognizes that for a church to become vibrant for the next generation somebody must let go, and somebody must grab on. But if the older generation does not let go of leadership, he cautioned, the younger generation cannot grab on.

Only valuing young people will not create a multi-generational church. Change is often difficult for an older generation, where their church seems like the only thing in their world that hasn’t changed. Clifton said pastors need to recognize how difficult change is for older members. But instead of avoiding change, he said, “an older generation needs to be loved into change.” The older generation will find joy in the multi-generational church that will never exist if changes aren’t made.

An effective revitalization pastor will lovingly help older members make changes because it is what is best for them, not bad for them.

Clifton gave his presentation at the 2022 Midwest Leadership Summit held earlier in the year at the Crowne Plaza in Springfield. Watch Clifton’s entire presentation below or at MWAdvance.org.

Will your bridge always be there?

by Tim Patterson

PLYMOUTH, MI – Sabrina and I have been blessed to serve in ministry in various capacities and locations. On two separate occasions we had the privilege of serving in South Texas. We first moved to the lower regions of our nation when I was called as the Youth and Music pastor at First Baptist Church of Odem, Texas. It was a small farming community just about twenty miles from Corpus Christi.

We lived there for several years before we moved to Oklahoma to pastor Emmanuel Baptist Church of McAllister. Following the Oklahoma pastorate, we were called to pastor Calvary Baptist Church of Kingsville, Texas.

We loved the climate and culture of South Texas. It was very similar to our place of service in Florida. One of Sabrina's favorite topographical characteristics of this area was the beaches and especially South Padre Island. She is fully convinced that almost any difficulty can be remedied by a few days of sun, sand and surf.

Now, most of you know of South Padre Island because of its notoriety concerning the wild and wooly spring breaks that saturate the island with hundreds of thousands of college students, who unwind like the rubber winding on the inside of a tightly wrapped golf ball. They come from all over the United States, Canada and Mexico once a year to bake in the sun, play in the sand, and get saturated with suds. (And I'm not talking about soap!)

But South Padre Island has been a haven for a great number of people for decades. Before it became a popular tourist destination, hundreds of folks lived there and scratched out a living the best they could or commuted back to the mainland for employment.

The only way across the Laguna Madre to the island was by way of the Queen Isabella Causeway. At one time, it was Texas' longest bridge. People just took it for granted that the bridge would be there every day and every night as a means of traversing the waters between the two lands.

One evening in 2001, four fully-loaded barges crashed into the bridge taking out a 240-foot section. The Brown Water V tug and its barges crashed into one of the columns toppling two 80-foot sections of the bridge. The third 80-foot section collapsed later. Eight people lost their lives in the incident as they plunged 85 feet to the 50 feet deep waters below. Thankfully, thirteen people were rescued from the waters.

Sabrina and I have crossed the Queen Isabella Causeway on many occasions and thought nothing of it. We just assumed, as did countless others, that it would always be there and that it would be available for us to traverse the laguna, any time we needed it. One day it was there and the next it was gone. That which we thought was so reliable and sure was rendered useless in a matter of minutes.

Many of us depend on a great many things in our lives, and to be quite honest, take them for granted. We just assume they will always be there. We put faith in our automobiles to take us from point "a" to point "b". We believe our loved ones will be ever present and that our employment is steady and true. The fact is, I could fill pages with items we assume will be consistently present.

There is only one thing I know of that will always be there. There is only one thing that will never fade or falter. Only One that never sleeps or slumbers. Only One who keeps constant watch over those in His charge. That one is God the Father.

He is far more than a bridge over troubled waters and is everlastingly constant in His presence and power. Some things falter and fail. He does not. Take time today to thank Him for just being there. Eternally constant. Psalm 121:4

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tim Patterson is Executive Director/Treasurer of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan. Elected unanimously in May of 2015, Patterson formerly served for 9 years as pastor of Hillcrest Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Fla. He also served as trustee chair and national mobilizer for the North American Mission Board.

Tongues

by Dr. Tony L. Lynn

PLYMOUTH, MI – From Revelation 7:9-10, John describes a scene and a sound unlike I have ever seen,

“After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes and held palm branches in their hands. And they were shouting with a great roar, “Salvation comes from our God who sits on the throne and from the Lamb!”

I love the look of that heavenly mob but more than what my sight can imagine, I conceive of a thunderous praise echoing all around me. The kind of sound that you feel in your chest, brings tears to the eyes, and goose bumps on the skin. I can hear it. I can feel it. And I want to join the blast of voices by shouting praises to the Lord with my fist pumping into the air, while tears roll off my cheeks like an infant.

Peoples with an “S”

Lately, my daily life has once again reminded me that our God is a God of the peoples of the world. Those who speak different languages, who come from other places, who have customs that are unlike my customs – are just as loved as any in my family, in my church, and in my neighborhood.

Don't get me wrong, I think I am always aware of God's constant love for all peoples, but sometimes I push back the sorrow that fills my heart because the peoples of the world in Michigan do not have an easy way to learn about Christ. They are busy trying to maneuver their daily lives: school, raising children, work, purchases, legal processes, all the while living as strangers in a new country.

There are also those who have lived among us for many years, but speak their native language at home and among their loved ones because it's the language with which they connect with people in whom they have trust.

Because we want to see churches helping churches take their next step to accelerate the Gospel movement, I am celebrating a recent event and two upcoming events during May.

Spanish Movement Underway

Feel free to scan the images slowly before reading more. The people in the images can speak two languages. On a cool Saturday during April, a Hispanic/Latino congregation in Detroit hosted over 60 adults, led by a NAMB missionary from Delaware who talked about evangelism.

I watched as the dozens of people sat with rapt attention listening to every word, their words, their childhood-tongue coming from the speaker's mouth. They asked questions freely, shared thoughts, interacted, and made new friends. The entire day carried-out in Spanish with English translation reminded me of my early days when I lived life in Africa working in three languages simultaneously: English, French, and Zarma.

Back then during the 90s and the early 2000s, I could switch from one language to the other two languages without missing a syllable. Today, my ear for language is not as sharp, yet the melody of people speaking about the things of God and praising God in song will always make me cry. I am reminded of how great a God we follow and how much all of us have in common with our hunger to know God more. I am thrilled that a church-planter-in-training and his family will be moving from Houston, TX to join us in Michigan.

Residency and Leader Multiplication Workshops, May 5 & 6

A Residency and Leader Multiplication Workshop will be held in two places on May 5 & May 6. The entire event will be conducted in English, but the workshop will present two powerful solutions for building up more people of godly influence within the church. Who wouldn't like to have more volunteers and leaders in the church?

Two experienced and talented men will explain the pathway that will bring healthy leaders forward to serve in your church. Scan the image. Maybe you and another from your church can come on Thursday or Friday. Your effort could radically change the future of your church. Click on the link and register of your choice so we can prepare a meal and materials for you. Please

feel free to share this information and links with others on social media, through emails, and as a text message:

Detroit – May 5, 2022 - <https://www.cvent.com/d/wkq0pt>

Grand Rapids – May 6, 2022 - <https://www.cvent.com/d/qkq016>

Multilingual Conversation, May 21

We will have special music performances in three languages while being captioned in English, along with three life-changing testimonies in three languages, translated into English. During the day, three hosts from the North American Mission Board (NAMB) will meet in smaller groups because they want to hear your ideas and needs for ministry. At this event, another free meal will allow time to make friends over light conversations. Scan the image and follow the link to register for the event.

Conversations & Celebrations

"We want to hear your ideas and your needs for your ministries!" -Dr. Osorio

- 8:30am - 8:55am Free breakfast & beverages
- 9:00am - 10:10am Worship & testimonies in multiple languages
- 10:15am - 11:45am 3 breakout groups: Dr. Osorio, Dr. Sin, and Pastor Masih
- 11:50am - 12:30pm Free lunch and beverages
- 12:35pm - 1:30pm Worship & prayers of support for one another WHERE?
Bethlehem Baptist Church 960 East Huron River Dr. Belleville, MI 48111

The Lord is on the move among the peoples of Michigan who speak different languages. We request your prayers, participation, and provisions. If you would like to get involved in helping language churches contact us for guidance. [REGISTER NOW](#)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Tony L. Lynn is the State Director of Missions for the Baptist State Convention of Michigan. Before coming on staff at the BSCM, Tony served as lead pastor for more than six years at Crosspoint Church in Monroe, Michigan. He and his wife, Jamie, also served with the International Mission Board in Africa and in Europe.

Benefits of affiliation with the BSCM

by Mike Durbin

PLYMOUTH, MI – Recently, we met with a pastor who is interested in affiliating with us - becoming a part of our Michigan Baptist family. It's a conversation we are having more often as churches look for a network where they can connect.

As I gathered materials to share with him, I reread a document, *“Benefits of Affiliation with the Baptist State Convention of Michigan,”* to make sure that it was up to date. It so encouraged me that I decided to share it with you.

We identify with the national Southern Baptist Convention (the largest Protestant denomination and largest missionary sending body in America) which brings with it a commitment to Biblical orthodoxy and the reputation of diverse and autonomous Baptist churches working together to fulfill the Great Commission both locally and around the world.

As a cooperating church of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan (agree with the Baptist Faith and Message 2000, give to Cooperative Program, and complete an Annual Church Profile), you enjoy many unique benefits:

1. Worldwide missions investment.

Your church's gifts through the Cooperative Program (CP) help support more than 6,000 missionaries in Michigan, North America and the world. These missionaries share the Gospel, make disciples of Jesus Christ, and help plant new churches, all from a foundation of sound, Baptist doctrine as expressed in *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000*.

2. Worldwide missions involvement.

These 6,000+ missionaries also form a network throughout the world for your church to be personally involved in missions, through praying, giving, going on short-term trips or as missionaries themselves. In addition, coordinated SBC and BSCM ministries such as Disaster Relief, women's ministries, church planting, church revitalization, and collegiate ministries give churches many connections and opportunities for mission service.

3. Training for effective ministry.

Your church's Cooperative Program (CP) giving helps support more than 24,000 students training for ministry in six Southern Baptist Convention seminaries, and that discounted education is available to members of your church as well. In addition, BSCM staff, supported through the CP, are available to help your church discern and clarify their next step forward in their vision. Webinars, distance learning, and downloadable web resources from BSCM and its partners can bring customized training right into your church or home.

4. Tax exempt status.

If your church does not have its own 501(C)(3) non-profit status, you may qualify for that status under the umbrella of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). Each church is required to have their own Employee Identification Number (EIN).

5. Church staff benefits.

Qualifying church staff who participate in the GuideStone Retirement plan will receive protection benefit (death and disability) insurance through the national SBC's GuideStone Financial Resources. GuideStone also offers health insurance.

6. Networking and fellowship.

BSCM has about 290 member churches and is starting new churches each year in Michigan. BSCM can connect you quickly with other churches or experienced church leaders who can assist your church in whatever challenges it faces, from pastor search processes to church conflict mediation to church finance and management issues. And when your church is ready to relocate, expand to a new site, or plant a new church, BSCM can assist you with those processes as well.

7. Quality communications.

In addition to the informative and helpful BSCM website, <http://www.bscm.org>, we have a monthly online news journal, the Baptist Beacon, baptistbeacon.net, that has encouraging, practitioner articles from Michigan Pastors and Church Leaders.

8. BSCM facilities and camps.

The State Convention Office is at 41100 Plymouth Rd., Bldg. 1, Suite 315, Plymouth, MI 48170. You are welcome to stop by for conversations or lunch at any time. We also have the Bambi Lake Retreat and Conference Center in Roscommon, MI. This facility is available to your church for its own training and retreats. Several pre planned events and retreats are provided each year in this relaxing getaway location. For current events, please check the website : bambilakelife.squarespace.com.

9. Financial ministry assistance.

Churches involved in evangelistic, or church planting strategies may receive financial grants or assistance from the BSCM in support of those efforts.

10. Fellowship and Encouragement.

Isolation can be devastating for pastors leading a church in today's culture. Being part of the BSCM provides the opportunity for true Biblical fellowship, inspiration and accountability for pastors and leaders through associational, regional, and state-wide gatherings. There are regional pastor cohorts that foster peer learning, sharing and encouragement that help strengthen pastors.

11. Connection and Collaboration.

Here are some great connection points:

- Tim Patterson, BSCM Executive Director, tim@bscm.org, 904-408-9521
- Tony Lynn, Church Planting Leader, tlynn@namb.net, 734-770-0608
- Mike Durbin, State Director of Evangelism, mike@bscm.org, 248-631-7154
- Coye Bouyer, Diversity Ambassador, bouyerfamily4@yahoo.com, 517-402-1191
- Bob Kiger, State Disaster Relief Director, bob@bscm.org, 586-381-0626
- Susan Hodnett, State Women's Ministries/WMU Director, sue@bscm.org, 586-219-4192
- Jamie Lynn, Executive Assistant, jamie@bscm.org, 734-770-0587
- Dan Carty, Ministry Assistant, dan@bscm.org, 734-776-6495

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mike Durbin is the State Evangelism Director for the Baptist State Convention of Michigan. Before joining the state convention staff, Mike served as Church Planting Catalyst and Director of Missions in Metro Detroit since 2007. He also has served as a pastor and bi-vocational pastor in Michigan, as well as International Missionary to Brazil.

Be the Church in the marketplace

by Coye Bouyer

LANSING, MI – Joe, a taxi owner and driver in the Philippines, was recently converted to Christianity. While praying one morning he sensed God telling him to serve right where he was. Since he was a new believer and the marketplace was what he knew best, he decided to visit a local bar where he began to fellowship and pray for those he met.

Every day he would go into the bar, order a soft drink, and pray peace over the place, its employees, and the customers. After a few days of doing this, he befriended the manager, Brian, who was homosexual, a gambler, a drug user, drug dealer, and pimp with 35 prostitutes.

Their relationship grew and after some time Joe was able to lead Brian to Christ and even baptized him at a nearby beach. As Brian emerged from the water, the power of God came upon him, and he experienced instant transformation. His homosexual drives disappeared, he stopped gambling, and stopped selling and using drugs. He even stopped being a pimp which is what had been supporting most of his lifestyle.

Brian's transformation was so unexpected that those around him knew something had happened in his life. So influenced by him, the 35 prostitutes also gave their lives to Christ and began reading the Bible together. Joe and his wife, realizing that all these individuals were going to need a church home, decided to move into a neighborhood near the bar so that they could minister to what everyone was calling, an unusual gathering of Christians. Joe's wife baked rice cakes and prayed over each of them before distributing them among the neighbors and those who were coming.

One of their neighbors was Teddy, he was a lawyer and the actual owner of the bar. He later testified that when he ate one of those rice cakes something happened to him, and he became more interested in what Joe had been teaching the employees of his bar. Teddy decided to join the Bible study, and before too long, he too became a Christian. Because of the Bible study and Joe's faithful teaching, Teddy began to realize that his current establishment was not pleasing to the Lord and therefore decided to turn it into a church.

Joe preached, while Teddy, Brian, and those who had already been impacted were the first members. Each of them continued to invite others, and before too long many of those who had once come to get drunk with wine were now coming to be filled with the Spirit.

This is a classic story of what God can and will do when lay people begin to take seriously the Lord's call on their life to go and make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19). Too often we think that if we are not called to a pulpit in a church, then we don't have the opportunity or responsibility to intentionally share the Gospel and develop disciples. Jesus has given the church (individuals, not buildings) the charge to go and make disciples.

Much of Jesus' ministry was not in a synagogue, but in the streets. Most of Paul's preaching was done in the marketplaces of multiple cities, and not only in the churches he was establishing in each city.

Furthermore, Jesus appears to give His disciples this charge to make disciples in their neighborhood, the marketplace, and in the city wherever they are at. Just like Joe, if we take seriously the commission that has been given to us to go be the church as opposed to simply sitting in the church. Then who knows what God will do and how He may use you to punch holes in the spiritual darkness of men and women in your community as YOU go and make disciples of all nations. God Bless You!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pastor Coye L. Bouyer is the founding pastor of Kingdom Life Church in Lansing, MI where he has served since March of 2010. Pastor Bouyer recently stepped into the Diversity Ambassador

role for the BSCM and firmly believes that he was not only called to Preach the Gospel as part of the process of reconciliation of man to God, but also using any platform as a bridge of reconciliation of man to man, and even more so amongst the brethren. Pastor Bouyer and his lovely wife Keturah (Gen. 25:1) have been married four over 20 years and have four children; Sierra, Seth, Cayla and Coye II.

Potholes and tree trunks

by Mick Schatz

ROSCOMMON, MI – It's Springtime at Bambi Lake Retreat and Conference Center! At least it is trying to be. Barring any new "polar vortex", most of the snow has melted away revealing multiple shades of brown in its absence.

The roads once frozen with ice and snow are now muddy and bumpy with potholes. To combat the potholes and keep our vehicles from bouncing apart we periodically drag the road and grade it to fill the holes and make the road as smooth as possible.

Over the past few years, I have discovered that no matter how many times I drag dirt into certain potholes, they always seem to form again in a few days. This can prove very frustrating.

When you spend several hours pulling dirt around and filling holes only to have them open again within a few days it can be very annoying. On the surface it makes sense that if you fill the hole with dirt, it should stay filled and level out with the rest of the road. Nevertheless, no matter how much dirt I put in the holes they always seem to form again.

Being very curious about this phenomenon, I sought answers from some of the great minds who work with me. I was informed there was probably an old tree stump or trunk that had been buried years earlier and was in a constant state of decay. In other words, it was rotting slowly away underneath causing the hole to continually form. No matter how much dirt I put in the hole it would always sink away because of the rotten decay underneath. The hole will never fill up.

This never-ending, hole filling exercise has served as an object lesson for my heart to contemplate. The lesson being this: if we allow unconfessed sin to remain in our lives, it will rot and decay in our souls and produce potholes in our life.

Our natural inclination is to cover-up or rationalize our sin and put on a pretty face so that on the surface we look great. We try to fill the pothole with anything that will take the focus off

our sin and maintain appearances. We try to fill the hole with worldly pleasures, relationships, work, or even religious activity the list could go on.

How exhausting it is to keep filling a hole that will never stay filled. How exhausting it is to keep up appearances, and continually display a fraudulent face. However, no matter how much time and energy we expend filling the hole, it will never stay full.

Confession and the forgiveness of Christ by His grace and mercy is the only permanent solution. Only He can forgive and only He can satisfy. Ephesians 1:7-8 puts it this way:

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence”.

It's time to stop wasting our energy filling the hole - we need to receive forgiveness and start overflowing with the riches of His grace into the lives of others.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mick Schatz serves on the staff of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan. He is the State Director of Spiritual Enrichment and Retreats and lives at Bambi Lake.

“God, if there is a church...”

by Chris Peoples

ADRIAN, MI – The seeds of this story's blossoms were planted during the summer of 2020, long before the fruition was realized. It is only possible through the outpouring of God's grace upon our church.

I was serving as an associate pastor yet believed God had called me to serve as a lead pastor. This calling became stronger and stronger. So, we began to pray for what God might have for our family.

We felt a strong sense to stay in our community and possibly plant a church. For more than a year, my wife and I asked God to lead us to a core group of people who were open to planting a church with us. We wanted that group to value expository preaching and to reach the community – in our current school district.

Meanwhile, every day I drove by a church building that appeared to be vacant. I began to pray, “God, if there is a church there, and the pastor is ready to retire, I would go there.” This was a continuous prayer for many months.

In April 2021, I received a phone call from the Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM) office. “Chris, would you be willing to consider a church in your current community? I cannot tell you which church, but the pastor is retiring, and I would like to give them your resume.”

It didn’t take much time for me to know which church we were talking about. It was the church I drove by every day. The church I prayed for daily. The church that had a core group of people who valued expository preaching. The church knew they needed to reach the community if they would continue to operate as a church. God had answered our prayer, although differently than we had asked. That is how God operates at times, is it not?

Six weeks after the former pastor officially retired, the church voted to call me as their next lead pastor. **Six weeks.** Let that sink in for a moment. God was so intentional about what he was doing that he allowed an unthinkable short vacancy. I am forever grateful for this opportunity.

The first time that I preached at Trinity Baptist Church in Adrian, Michigan, there were seventeen people in attendance. On Easter Sunday, there were fifty-two in attendance. We had students gathering in the building. We had children running out of the auditorium to be taught by our children’s workers. We had babies crying in our building. Every piece was beautiful, and we deserve none of it. Jesus Christ gets the glory for all of it.

I have been asked how we are growing. What is our secret recipe? Often, my response is that we pray for God to increase our territory. My second response is that we want our community to know that we exist and care deeply for them. We attempt to show that care in tangible ways.

We hosted a summer party and gave away backpacks, free food, and provided entertainment for the whole family. We handed out custom bottled water at our local fall festival. We partnered with a local coffee shop, and bought coffee for teachers to show our appreciation for them. We hosted a nativity with live animals, cookie decorating, and free food. We hosted an Easter party. Each event has introduced us to new faces in our community.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chris Peoples serves as the lead pastor at Trinity Baptist Church in Adrian, Michigan. He has been married to Bridget for twenty-five years. They have four children. You can contact Chris at cpeoples@trinitybaptistmi.org or 517-263-0345. We prioritize our social media presence and run FREE ads on google. If you would like to improve your online presence, please reach out. I would love to help.

Discipleship begins at home

by Karen Blanchard

SHELBY TOWNSHIP, MI – I am a mom with two amazing kids! Nathan is 15 and Abigail is 9. Over the years, my role as their mom has looked different for whatever season of life they were in. With each new developmental stage, I am learning how to adjust to meet their needs. When they were babies, they literally depended on me for food and survival. As they began to grow, they have become more and more independent. My 15-year-old likes to think he doesn't need me at all, but he does... he just might not realize it!

No matter what stage of life our kids are in, our greatest responsibility is leading them to the heart of Jesus. Discipleship begins when our kids are young. The songs we sing and the books we read, all play a part in shaping our children's hearts. Church plays an important role in the lives of our children, too. It teaches them from a very young age, what matters most in life. As culture changes and more and more compete for our attention, as parents, we have to make a choice of how we lead our kids.

What is the message they are receiving from you?

Do you make it a point to be in church every Sunday no matter what?

Do you choose to only go to church when it is convenient with your schedule?

Do you constantly put sports or other activities over church?

The last few years my heart has been burdened in the area of discipleship. However, God has shown me that I need to disciple my kids first.

And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. – Deuteronomy 6:6-8

Life can be very busy, and this is something we have to fight for. Find a great devotional that is geared for the ages of your kids and begin to teach them what it looks like to have a quiet time with God. Take the time to pray with your kids on a regular basis. Encourage them to journal out their thoughts and feelings to God. It is also important for us as parents to model this for them. Let them see you sitting with God and reading the Bible. Share with your children what God is teaching you and let that become part of your regular conversation.

About a month ago, my son was going through a tough time. I thought the toddler years were bad! I am learning that every stage has its challenges; the challenges are just bigger as they get older. As we walked through these hard days with him, God gave me insight with what he was going through, and it allowed us to have some really great conversations. I was able to share with him how God helps me through tough times and how he has taught me to shift my mindset when I feel down about something.

My greatest desire for my kids is not to just know about God, but to truly know Him in their hearts. I want them to realize there isn't anything they can ever do that will make God love them any less. When life seems overwhelming, I want my kids to know they can run to Jesus and not the things of this world. The only way we can help our children get to that point in their relationship with God, is by being intentional with the way we disciple them and by surrounding them with a community of believers that will pray for them and lift them up.

Proverbs 22:6 says, Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.

It is never too late to start! You can begin by reading a family devotional at night before bed and praying with your kids. This can be a great time to let your kids share what is on their hearts. If we don't teach our kids how to do this, then who will? Our kids are always learning and growing. Would you rather them learn how to grow closer to Jesus or be influenced by the world? Our first and most important role as parents is to disciple our kids to know Jesus.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Karen is married to Scott Blanchard, pastor of Lakepointe Church, and moved from Florida to Michigan in the summer of 2009 to plant Lakepointe Church in Shelby Township. She enjoys mentoring and discipling women and also leads women's life groups through her church. She is passionate about helping women find their purpose in who God created them to be. She is on staff at Lakepointe Church and loves being part of what God is doing in the Metro Detroit area!

First-Person: How to keep next gen leaders at your church

by Shane Pruitt

ALPHARETTA, GA (BP) – Everyone has seen or heard the stats about the short tenures of pastors to children, youth and college students. The common narrative is that they spend two to three years on average at any given church. There also currently seems to be a shortage of these next gen leaders across the nation. I'm personally getting three to five calls a week from churches and ministries looking to hire someone to lead these ministries in their churches.

Sadly, when this issue is brought up, many focus on the deficiencies of next gen leaders who are leaving, citing their lack of long-term commitment, seeing the ministry as a "stepping-stone," an inability to work under a senior pastor's authority or just being flat out restless.

Don't get me wrong, there are certainly times when these criticisms are warranted, but what if there's more to it? Is it possible that the tenure of these younger leaders might be strengthened and extended if senior leaders, personnel teams and churches take some proactive steps that could help change this narrative?

I believe there are some things that we can all do to help change the narrative surrounding next gen leaders. If a church has a great next gen pastor, then that congregation should do everything within their power to cultivate a favorable environment for the pastor to have a long, fruitful ministry in the church.

Here are five practices that will help a church begin to cultivate that kind of environment.

1. Value their family.

Whether married or single, there are also others in a next gen leader's life who need time, attention and love. Value the people they value. Make important the things they make important. Honor their "family time." Honor their "down time." Honor their "vacation time." It's nearly impossible for leaders to lead a healthy ministry if they have an unhealthy home or lifestyle.

2. Treat them like a pastor or minister, not like a babysitter.

With 77 percent of Christians becoming followers of Jesus before the age of 18 and 95 percent before the age of 30, now is the time to reach the next generation with the Gospel. Next gen pastors are primarily evangelists and disciple makers – not entertainers, hirelings, or glorified babysitters who keep young people distracted so parents can attend "big church." These servants are vital to the health of our churches and ministries, they should be treated and respected as such.

3. Pay them like adults, not teenagers.

Inflation and the rising cost of living are affecting everyone, including next gen leaders. They are adults with adult responsibilities like mortgages, cars and doctor visits. Most churches are doing the best they can with what they have, squeezing the budget in order to have full-time or even part-time positions available for this all-important calling of reaching students. We must also recognize there is no such thing as part-time ministry – it's a 24-hour-a-day calling.

We should, however, also have realistic expectations on those leaders. If you tabulated the hours that many of them are putting in against their compensation, then you'd discover many of them are making significantly less than minimum wage. This would mean that fast-food restaurants are compensating our teenagers better than we are compensating our next gen ministers.

This isn't about money. It is about recognizing the value of these important roles. If our desire is to reach young people, then are our resources appropriately going toward that desire?

4. Protect them from the wolves.

Satan targets all leaders. If he can destroy a leader, it impacts a lot of people. Don't forget these next gen leaders are missionaries going after a harvest of young people. Based on the stats I mentioned earlier, if we don't reach young people with the Gospel, then we'll risk losing a whole generation. The enemy knows this, too. So he is going to try to disrupt, divide and distract. One of the most strategic ways he'll do this is by sending wolves. Sometimes, these wolves may look like critical parents, deacons or other church members.

Of course, there will be times when all next gen leaders need to be corrected or even rebuked. We may also wisely discern moments that they're just being flat-out attacked in a way that's harmful to them, the ministry and the Kingdom. One of the most loving and morale-boosting things a lead pastor, elder or deacon can do for their next gen pastor is to defend against unfair critiques. Protect them when it's apparent that they're being inappropriately targeted. Disciple and train them anytime they need correction. Next gen leaders are hungry for both.

5. Celebrate them leaving if God is leading them.

Sometimes, God does call a leader to move from one role, local church or ministry into another. No matter how healthy the church culture is, or how hard you've worked to keep them – God still moves them. He is allowed to do that.

So, here is an honest question about when that happens in your context: does your church or ministry honor and celebrate them, or are they portrayed as guilty traitors? Others take notice of how your church or ministry responds in those moments, and your response either boosts or kills morale. That reputation of how a pastor or church handles transitions spreads like wildfire. Next gen leaders from other churches will always take that into consideration when they pray about joining your team. Have they heard positive or negative reviews about how your church or ministry handles transitions?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shane Pruitt is executive director of next gen evangelism at the North American Mission Board.

What money cannot buy

by Dr. David L. Thompson

NASHVILLE, TN – What do you really have? No really, I'm not talking about a bird in the hand is better than two in the bush. I'm talking about what do you really, really have? Someone wisely said, "All you really have is what money can't buy and death can't take!" If that is true, and I believe that it is with all my heart, then it may benefit you to focus on the things that really matter in life.

I can think of a few things that really matter in life. I have a new hero named Sydney. Sydney Michelle McClaughlin is the fastest woman hurdler in the world in the 400 meter. She ran for the University of Kentucky, and then a few years ago represented the United States of America in the Olympics... she is not my hero because she ran faster than anyone else, she is my hero because of what she said after she won the gold medal. She said, "What I have in Christ is far greater than this gold medal." Sydney has something money can't buy, and death can't take away.

Florida's beloved Coach Bowden got it right—When asked about what he said to his players, he replied "Your dad gum right I preached to those boys. I cared about where they would spend eternity." (Bobby didn't always just say "dad gum".) Coach had something money can't buy, and death can't take away. No doubt he helped shape a generation of young men that would go on to become great leaders and godly husbands and fathers.

Do you have a life? Business and Christian leader, Dennis Phillips says, "A job is what you are hired to do, a career is what you're paid to do, but a life vocation is what you are called to do". You, my dear friend, are called to pursue your purpose in life with incredible passion. That is something that no one can take from you.

I guess you could say Walt Disney had that. Disney believed if you could dream it, you could do it. He never saw the great Disney Park with his own physical eyes. Shortly before the grand opening he passed away. There, on inauguration day, a ticker tape parade ensued which lasted for days it seemed, all in Walt's honor. There, his wife was told by the CEO, "I wish Walt was here to see all this." She replied, "Oh he saw it, that's why it's here".

If you have a dream, be passionate about it because no one can take that from you. I guess what I'm saying is, it is not your relationship to things, but to people that matter now and for all eternity.

While I served as Secretary Treasurer for the Pastors Conference of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville, Tennessee, I had the great privilege to lay hands on my mentor, Adrian Rogers. He had been diagnosed with cancer. I will never forget what he said, "I am in a win-win situation: If I live, I win. If I die, I win!"

That's the way it is for every child of God, only our Heavenly Father's heirs have something that money can't buy, and death can't take away. So, I ask you one more time, what do you really have in life? Don't wait for "Michael" or "Fred" or "Sandy" or some other storm to hit to alter your life. With God's help, you too can have something money can't buy—and death can never ever take away—a beautiful and passionate life that belongs to Jesus Christ and a loving relationship with those around you—that will last forever!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. David L. Thompson holds an undergraduate degree from Belmont University in Psychology and Religion, a graduate degree from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Education, and a doctorate in Counseling and Pastoral Psychology. He has served as a chairman of the Church Planting Group and Executive Committee Chair at the North American Mission Board for 10 years. He has been a Police Chaplain since 1991 and served as a Corporate Chaplain to the Coca Cola Bottling Company in Nashville, Tennessee where he resides with his wife. He has six children and five grandsons.

Stress tops mental challenges pastors face

by Marissa Postell

NASHVILLE, TN (BP) – In the current fast-paced, high-pressure American culture, pastors are stressed, and they know that needs to change.

According to the latest release in Lifeway Research's [2022 Greatest Needs of Pastors](#) study, of all the mental challenges U.S. Protestant pastors face, stress stands out above the rest. Distractions and discouragement are also significant factors for pastors when it comes to mental challenges in ministry.

Top mental challenges

In this study, Lifeway Research interviewed 200 U.S. Protestant pastors who identified 44 issues they face in their roles and then surveyed 1,000 additional pastors to determine the greatest needs U.S. Protestant pastors face today. The nearly four dozen needs were divided into seven categories: ministry difficulties, spiritual needs, mental challenges, personal life, self-care, people dynamics and areas of skill development.

Of these seven categories, 6 percent of pastors say mental challenges are currently the most challenging area for them or the area that requires the most attention. This study identified six

specific mental challenges in ministry: depression, discouragement, distraction, loneliness or lack of friendship, lack of contentment and stress.

Most pastors point to stress as a mental challenge they are facing in ministry (63 percent). Nearly half of pastors say discouragement (48 percent) and distraction (48 percent) are ministry mental challenges, while less than one-third of pastors point to loneliness or lack of friendship (28 percent), depression (18 percent) or lack of contentment (17 percent). Another 14 percent aren't sure or say none of these are mental challenges for them.

The youngest pastors (ages 18-44) are most likely to say they deal with stress in ministry (78 percent), while the oldest pastors (ages 65 and older) are the least likely (47 percent). Furthermore, pastors of the smallest churches (with worship service attendance of fewer than 50), are less likely than pastors of churches of any other size to say they face stress in their pastoral ministry (52 percent).

Age similarly affects a pastor's likelihood of saying they face discouragement in ministry, with pastors over the age of 65 being least likely to say they struggle with this issue (35 percent). Pastors with doctoral degrees (30 percent) are also less likely than pastors with any other educational background to say they face discouragement.

Younger pastors are also more likely to say they face distractions and loneliness in ministry. Pastors ages 18 to 44 (54 percent) and 45 to 54 (51 percent) are more likely to say distractions are challenging for them compared to pastors over 65 (39 percent). Furthermore, pastors ages 18 to 44 (37 percent) and 45 to 54 (30 percent) are more likely than pastors over 65 (20 percent) to say loneliness and lack of friendships are a challenge for them.

"Americans have become much more aware of mental wellbeing, and young pastors have grown up in a culture with much greater transparency around these challenges than previous generations," said Scott McConnell, executive director of Lifeway Research. "The high number of young pastors wanting to address these mental challenges means although awareness is higher among them, many have not yet successfully embraced the boundaries, habits and preventative measures they need."

In half of the categories of mental challenges explored in this study, white pastors were more likely than African American pastors to say they face that challenge in ministry. Whereas half of white pastors (50 percent) say they face discouragement in ministry, 35 percent of African American pastors say the same. Similarly, nearly half of white pastors (49 percent) say distractions are a challenge for them, while 37 percent of African American pastors agree. When it comes to stress, the most cited mental challenge in this study, white pastors (64 percent) are once again more likely than African American pastors (52 percent) to say this is a ministry challenge they face.

Greatest mental challenge

When asked to narrow it down to the area of mental challenges they most need to address today, stress, distractions and discouragement top pastors' list. More pastors identify stress (31 percent) as their greatest mental challenge in ministry than any other challenge. Nearly 1 in 4 pastors (23 percent) say distraction is their greatest mental challenge in ministry, and 18 percent say discouragement.

Fewer identify loneliness or lack of friendship (9 percent), depression (2 percent) or lack of contentment (2 percent) as the mental challenge they most need to address today. And 15 percent of pastors say they're not sure or none of these are their primary mental challenge in ministry.

"Being a pastor is stressful," McConnell said. "It's important for pastors to learn healthy ways of maintaining their mental health amidst the variety of pressures that continue to come their way. Ignoring stress is not the answer. Resilience requires investment."

Once again, younger pastors are more likely than the oldest pastors to say stress is the primary mental challenge they face in ministry. Whereas 37 percent of pastors ages 18 to 44 and 33 percent of pastors ages 45 to 54 say stress is their greatest mental challenge, 23 percent of pastors over the age of 65 say the same.

Pastors of large churches are also more likely to identify stress as their greatest mental challenge than pastors of smaller churches. While 41 percent of pastors of churches with attendance greater than 250 say stress is their primary challenge, pastors of churches with attendance of 0-49 (22 percent) and 100-249 (31 percent) are less likely to agree.

"While the Word certainly calls us to lean on the Lord in times of trouble, Scripture also reminds us we are not an island," said Ben Mandrell, president and CEO of Lifeway Christian Resources. "When the weight of feeling overwhelmed seems too much to bear, I encourage pastors to seek the help of trained professionals to help navigate mental challenges."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marissa Postell is a writer for Lifeway Christian Resources.

New Mexico Baptists serve, share hope in aftermath of latest wildfires

by Mike Ebert

RUIDOSO, NM (BP) – As Southern Baptist volunteers sift through the remains of home sites in the aftermath of recent wildfires that claimed two lives and destroyed more than 200 homes, they can't tell much about what the house looked like or who lived there, but the complete and thorough destruction tells a story of its own.

"The wind that was pushing this fire was gusting up to 80-90 miles an hour," said Ed Greene, who is leading efforts in the area for the Baptist Convention of New Mexico. "Sometimes people only had minutes to get out. One of our volunteers lives here. He and his wife came home and their house was on fire. They had to evacuate with only the clothes on their backs."

Now Greene and his volunteers use heavy machinery, shovels, wheelbarrows and buckets to haul away what's left. At the request of a homeowner, they carefully sift through specific parts of the homesite, trying to find a family heirloom or a significant piece of jewelry that might have survived.

"Mainly it's just a pile of debris – concrete block, wood, metal, ash," Greene said. Ruidoso is located 180 miles southeast of Albuquerque in the Sierra Blanca mountains. Some of the homes impacted serve as mountain getaway vacation homes and are only inhabited for part of the year. But most are the only residences owners had.

"Most lost everything they had," Greene said. "There was no time to salvage anything. There are some distraught people."

The McBride fire that ravaged much of Ruidoso is now 95 percent contained. It is one of at least five blazes that have already been burning in the state this spring torching thousands of acres. High winds and abnormally high temperatures have created dangerous conditions and made the work of firefighters all the more difficult. Simultaneous fires in Colorado and Arizona have caused similar destruction.

New Mexico's volunteers serving with Southern Baptist Disaster Relief (SBDR) began service to residents of the area by removing downed trees that had been toppled by the high winds that are driving these fires. Teams completed 43 chainsaw jobs, praying with homeowners and distributing Bibles along the way. So far, they have seen 11 people make professions of faith as a result of their ministry. More than 2,300 volunteer work hours have already been served.

SBDR volunteers from Texas and Arizona are serving alongside New Mexico Baptists and teams from Oklahoma and Missouri will be arriving soon. First Baptist Church Ruidoso is hosting the teams and serving as a base of operations.

Send Relief, the Southern Baptist compassion ministry arm, sent a shipment of fire relief materials including N-95 facemasks and Tyvek suits.

“These are devastating fires, but our Southern Baptist partners specialize in bringing hope to situations like this,” said Coy Webb, Send Relief’s crisis response director. “It’s looking like another long fire season, so these volunteers in the West will need all the prayers and support we can give.”

Greene said, like with most SBDR responses, the Ruidoso project has been filled with examples of God’s provision and Southern Baptist partnership.

The day before the project started, Greene’s team had no skid steers to aid in the effort. The small construction vehicles are essential for a variety of tasks. The team asked members of First Baptist Ruidoso to pray at their Wednesday night prayer service. Within 36 hours five skid steers were on site and ready to go.

Greene has also been encouraged to see Southern Baptist cooperation in action.

“One of the hallmarks of Southern Baptists is that we are a cooperative bunch,” Greene said. “This is a classic example.”

Donations can be made by visiting Send Relief’s [crisis response site](#).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mike Ebert writes for the North American Mission Board.

Church size irrelevant to partnering with schools; willing spirit required

by Scott Barkley

MONTICELLO, MS (BP) – Pastor Sam Taylor of Monticello Baptist Church heard about the challenges of being a teacher. It came from several in the profession – active and retired – in his congregation. He heard it from his wife, Alyssa, who works as a teacher’s aide at Monticello Elementary.

As tends to be the case across the nation, particularly in rural areas, the Monticello calendar revolves around the local school system. It's the largest employer, Taylor said, and directly impacts the type of citizen you'll end up having in Lawrence County. When it came to deciding how the church could be a part of strengthening area schools, Taylor took a bold step.

He asked.

That has led to efforts such as providing lunches for teachers and "snack buckets," where students can receive a reward in class. But partnering with Monticello Elementary's positive behavior program has left the biggest imprint. Through it, MBC has hosted game days and movies for students who have met positive behavior criteria.

Yes, the partnership has brought several students and their families to visit the church. But teachers benefit just as much.

"I've had multiple conversations with teachers about what the program means for the students," he said. "COVID took a lot of the fun things out of school, the times when people were together. For students and teachers to have something to look forward to is significant."

On movie days, buses carry students to the church for two separate viewings of the same school-approved film – one in the morning and another in the afternoon. It's treated as a field trip and reward for students meeting their behavior goals. Monticello Baptist provides the popcorn.

"It's great to have some fun, get out and celebrate what you've done to justify that reward," Taylor said.

One state over, David Hobson is in his seventh year of teaching. That practically makes him a veteran, though, [as half of Alabama's new teachers leave the classroom within three years](#).

Hobson wears multiple hats. At Dallas County High School in Plantersville, he teaches government and economics while serving as co-athletic director and coaching football and track. He's also the director of missions at Mud Creek Baptist Association in Bessemer.

"Absolutely, there are times I find myself as the veteran teacher," he said. Sometimes, encouraging a new teacher who's had a rough day is very much like the encouragement he'll give a pastor.

"Ultimately, both [teacher and DOM] are a call to service. The big thing in either one is finding joy in that service," he said.

Hobson spent 15 years in student ministry before going to Mud Creek Association. Students are a priority, he said, but the ones leading them daily can't be far behind.

“I feel like the church is called to that school campus to minister just as much to the administration and faculty,” he said. “It may be that a new teacher is wondering if he or she made a mistake and needs someone from the outside to say they are loved and appreciated, to get them through the week or even the rest of the school year.”

Both are aware of the stories that lead to the [high teacher turnover](#) being felt across the nation. As the school year begins to wind down, those teachers will get a much-deserved break. It can also be a time for churches to reassess how involved they can be before August arrives and classes are back in session.

When that time comes, Taylor said, don’t underestimate the impact of a Christlike witness. “If churches don’t help, schools will become increasingly harsh environments,” he said. “The learning environment and students’ proficiency will only decrease. Our public education system can benefit tremendously from churches willing to engage, to mobilize members to reach out.”

Hobson can relate with the temptation for a teacher to go in another direction.

“There was a time where I myself thought about [leaving] and giving it up because I felt talked down to, condescension and even unsafe at times when dealing with certain superiors and parents,” he said.

Both school systems lie in rural areas, where a lack of resources are a constant problem. If for any reason they have to switch to virtual learning, internet connectivity becomes an issue. Some churches have helped to fill such gaps [by offering wi-fi](#) and learning space for students.

Having a foot in both worlds, Hobson has ideas on how churches and schools can partner effectively.

“As far as churches go, be involved. It really means a lot to a teacher because it shows them that they are not alone,” he said. “Teaching and ministry are two of the loneliest professions there are. We have to lean on and support each other in what we do.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Scott Barkley is national correspondent for Baptist Press.

SBC Executive Committee approves 2023 Annual Meeting move, provides financial update

by Scott Barkley and Brandon Porter

NASHVILLE, TN (BP) – The SBC Executive Committee met in a special-called meeting Thursday to vote on moving the 2023 annual meeting from Charlotte to New Orleans and receive an update on the cost of the investigation into allegations of mishandling sexual abuse claims.

Erik Cummings, chair of the EC's Events and Strategic Planning Committee, introduced EC vice president for communications Jonathan Howe and Bill Townes, former EC chief financial officer now assisting on a contract basis, to explain how recent growth in annual meeting attendance necessitated the switch from Charlotte to New Orleans.

Howe explained that it was “simply a matter of math” leading to the decision and that when Charlotte was originally selected, it reflected the annual meeting attendance at that time. Annual meeting locations scheduled through 2028 are in line with current attendance projections, he noted.

Charlotte was confirmed as the 2023 host city by messengers to the 2016 SBC Annual Meeting in St. Louis. Since that meeting, attendance at the annual event has grown, which means the 280,000-square-foot Charlotte Convention Center is not large enough to host the event, which is expected to draw more than 15,000 attendees. Space requirements for hosting an SBC annual meeting now exceed 400,000 square feet.

Making the decision more than a year out saved costs that could have occurred had the decision come closer to the annual meeting, said Townes. As it stands, costs to fulfill contracts and obligations to Charlotte as well as secure new contracts in New Orleans “may range from \$150,000-\$230,000”, according to Townes. Howe noted that remaining in Charlotte could have cost the Convention more than \$900,000 in lost revenues and sponsorships due to space constraints.

After a brief discussion, EC members voted unanimously to approve the move.

In a [response to the decision of the EC](#), Todd Unzicker told Baptist Press in a written statement, “We have been in frequent conversations with our national leaders over the past several weeks to try to find a workable solution that would enable our state to host next year’s meeting. I can assure N.C. Baptists that we left no stone unturned in these efforts. However, our national convention has specific criteria in its constitution regarding the selection of host cities and changes to times and locations.”

The [SBC Constitution](#) says, “The Executive Committee may change the time and place of meeting if the entertaining city withdraws its invitation or is unable to fulfill its commitments.

Unzicker said North Carolina Baptists have been excited to host the 2023 Annual Meeting, “However, we understand the challenges presented by the ever-growing number of attendees that led to today’s vote by the SBC Executive Committee to change the location of the 2023 meeting.”

Financial update

The majority of the nearly two-hour meeting concerned the cost of the Guidepost investigation. Townes, in particular, wanted to offer clarification on the financial resources available in the EC’s reserve funds.

The most recent financial report available for the February 2022 EC meeting, he pointed out, came from September 2021. Townes said it is true there was \$12.2 million in unrestricted reserves, but just under \$5 million is connected to EC property, equipment and board-designated funds. The actual figure of resources available, including contingency and operation reserves, for the costs of the investigation was closer to \$7.3 million, according to Townes.

EC members were informed that since Oct. 1, a total of \$1,661,530 has been paid toward Guidepost Solutions and \$17,478 toward Task Force travel and meetings.

In September, the [EC voted to allocate up to \\$1.6 million](#) toward the work by Guidepost Solutions. In February, they [voted to increase the funds allocated](#) to \$2 million for the investigation or the “coverage of any other direct expenses without further approval.”

Legal fees directly related to supporting the work of the Sex Abuse Task Force since then have totaled less than one-third of the \$2 million originally approved by the EC in February. The legal firms of Bradley; Arant, Boult and Cumming; Guenther, Jordan and Price; Blank Rome; and Locke Lord have provided services to the EC as it has supported the investigation.

The most recent EC financial report, dated March 31, showed total contingency and operating reserves of nearly \$5.2 million.

Other business

The committee also received a legal update from Gene Besen of the Bradley Law Firm, a personnel update from interim President/CEO Willie McLaurin and Slade discussed items that will be addressed at the next regularly scheduled meeting on June 13 in Anaheim prior to the SBC Annual Meeting.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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To view the corresponding images and links that accompany these stories or to read past stories and issues of the Baptist Beacon, visit BaptistBeacon.net.

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