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# Seek God through just one word in 2022!

by Karen Blanchard

**MACOMB, MI** – Are you tired of setting New Year's Resolutions every year only to give up on them come the 3rd or 4th week of January? I know I am! In January of 2015, my husband introduced our church to the idea of choosing a One Word to define our year. He encouraged us to pray and ask God to lead us to a word that we can grow in spiritually and to choose a verse to go along with it. Almost every year since then, I have chosen a One Word to define my year. Through choosing a One Word over the last seven years, God has grown my walk with Him.

Mike Ashcraft, a pastor in North Carolina who wrote the "My One Word" book, says:

***"We value initiative and effort in others and assume that's what God values in us too. We qualify ourselves based on how hard we work. We evaluate our character based on how often we go to church, attend Bible studies, volunteer, or check other items off our religious resume. We carry the subtle belief that God helps those who help themselves. But, when you do all these things and yet little transformation takes place, what then:***

***Work harder?***

***Do better?***

***Promise not to do this, or swear not to do that?***

***No! We have to position ourselves to focus and depend on God's work in our heart and in our lives."***

So often in our lives we try to work hard in our own strength and make things happen. We think if we just try harder we can accomplish our goals. We should work hard to accomplish the things God is calling us to do, but we can't do it on our own. We need to invite the Holy Spirit in our life and ask him to give us what we need to accomplish his goals for our lives. As each year comes to an end and I look ahead to a new year, I begin to seek God for what he wants me to learn and focus on in the coming new year.

Jeremiah 29:13 says, *"You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all of your heart."* If we want to grow spiritually in 2022, then we have to be intentional with our growth. It will not just happen on its own. When we seek God to lead us to a word to define our year, then we can be intentional in seeking him through that One Word.

**Below are a few steps in seeking God through a One Word:**

1. **Pray** – Ask God to reveal to you what your One Word should be. When you pray for God to lead in this, it removes your striving to get it right. Ask God to open

your eyes to what he has for you. Then he will begin to illuminate the word he has chosen for you. It is incredible the ways God has confirmed my words over the years.

2. **Make a List** – Create a list of words that speak to you and that you would like to grow in. Is there an area in your character that the Holy Spirit has revealed to you that you need work in? If so, start there! Don't be afraid of the words that seem difficult. If your word scares you, it is probably exactly where God wants to take you. You can have confidence knowing he is working through that word because you sought his guidance, and he led you there.
3. **Pick a Word** – From the list you created and prayed over, choose a word. Don't worry about picking the "right" word. God will use whatever word you choose to grow you in 2022. Again, it isn't about what YOU do in the choosing, but it is about you seeking God through whatever word you choose. As you seek Him through this process, he will grow you!
4. **Stick With It!** - When you have picked your One Word, be sure to stick with it through the entire year. This is where being intentional comes into play. Choose a book or devotional that focuses on your One Word. I search for verses and quotes, and I also like to wear my word on a necklace, bracelet, or shirt. By doing these things, I make sure my One Word stays in front of me all year long.

I want to end this article with one final quote from Mike Ashcraft:

***"The goal this year is not for you to swear you'll do better at 'this' or promise you'll never do 'that' again. Sweeping promises inevitably breed feelings of failure. The aim is for you to use your One Word to get into a focused posture and remain there while you depend on Christ."***

Change is possible.

Focus is required.

Seek God in 2022 through just a One Word. You will be amazed in the growth that comes.

#### **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!

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# The coming year in Disaster Relief Ministry

by Bob Kiger

**PLYMOUTH, MI** – Happy New Year! As we begin 2022, I would like to highlight some activities that [Michigan Disaster Relief](#) volunteers participated in during 2021 and identify plans for 2022. Once again, Southeast Michigan suffered another devastating rain event during June. Your DR volunteers spent several weeks helping homeowners in Macomb and Wayne County recover from the flood. Because of our past efforts, we were contacted by the governor's office and the mayor of Warren asking for help.

We then were requested to help with recovery from Hurricane Ida. A team went to Pennsylvania for several days cleaning out flooded homes. Upon returning home, most of the same volunteers went to Bambi to help cut down dead trees and beautify the property.

As we embark on a new year, DR will continue to offer Basic Training and Unit Training. If your church or Association would like to conduct training at your location, please contact me and we will schedule a convenient time to offer the three-hour Basic Training or any of the Unit Training (Flood Recovery, Chainsaw or Feeding) sessions. We are currently planning to offer all training at Bambi in the spring.

Because recent disasters have been affecting larger groups of victims, a greater need for chaplains has become apparent. We conducted one training event in 2021, and will continue this year to equip more volunteers with the skills needed to help hurting victims in the future. During times of disaster, people are more willing to hear about the love of Jesus, and we want to have more of our volunteers prepared to share that love.

If all of this sounds exciting to you, please attend a training session so you can also be "the hands and feet of Jesus".

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Bob Kiger became a Christian at age 12. He and his wife Rose have been married for 46 years, have 3 adult children and 5 grandchildren. Bob retired from Ford Motor Company as a Senior Partner and then began using his talents in Disaster Relief efforts all around the nation. Bob is the Director of Michigan Disaster Relief.

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# For those called to GO, IMB wants to send

by Myriah Snyder

**RICHMOND, VA** – Jim works full time as an accountant in a global city. During his free time, he works with a missionary team to help them reach people with the gospel. He serves with the IMB as a part-time professional.

Olivia attends school at the London School of Economics. When she's not studying, she spends time sharing the gospel with the students around her. She serves with the IMB as a part-time student.

Nick spends his days evangelizing and discipling his neighbors and friends through his local church. He works with the IMB as a full-time church planter.

For those wondering if the International Mission Board has a place for them to serve into the [Revelation 7:9](#) vision, the answer is probably yes!

If an individual is Southern Baptist and aligned theologically with the [Baptist Faith and Message 2000](#), the IMB wants to help them discover how they can advance the kingdom.

“No matter what their station in life is, no matter what their educational background is, there is a way to go with us to the field,” Scott Ray, IMB’s director of assessment and deployment, said.

Ray said that every month the IMB conducts an interview conference. And at each one, he speaks with people from varied backgrounds – college graduates, seminary students, doctors, businesspeople, counselors, retirees. He said they once sent a rocket scientist overseas.

For those who feel called to serve overseas, there are seven pathways for adults 21 and over who want to go longer than a couple months, many short-term trip opportunities, and a host of student pathways.

Ray suggests asking two questions to find out which of IMB’s pathways might be best:

- How long do you want to go?
- Who is going to pay for it?

## **MID-TO-LONG-TERM OPPORTUNITIES**

### **Team associate**

A team associate is not funded through the IMB but works closely with an IMB church planting team. This individual generally uses their trained profession overseas while they support church planting efforts. Team associates serve two-year assignments.

### **Journeyman**

IMB offers a unique, fully funded, two-year missions opportunity for college graduates under age 30. Journeymen are sent by their church through IMB to join an international missionary team to share the gospel, make disciples, and help plant churches. For more information, visit <https://www.imb.org/students/go-2-years-journeyman/>.

### **Macedonia project**

The Macedonia project is for individuals who have a long-term call but no seminary training yet. Those who sign up for this program go to the field, and while they are working on a church planting team, they also take seminary classes. The IMB pays for half of the degree, while one of the six Southern Baptist seminaries covers the other half. While this is a more difficult pathway, one of the many rewards is a debt-free seminary degree. There is no age limit for this pathway. Macedonia project workers serve 3-4 years and are funded through the IMB.

### **Two + two**

The two + two program is another avenue through the seminaries. With this track, the first two years are spent physically at a seminary, and the last two years are spent working with a church planting team on the field. This opportunity, however, isn't funded through a scholarship like the Macedonia project. The last two years of overseas service are IMB funded.

### **International Service Corps**

International Service Corps is for anyone who wants to go but doesn't want to go long-term. Through this pathway, an individual can serve for two to three years on missionary church planting teams. No college degree or seminary credits are required. Retirees who want to spend a few years on the field are encouraged to go through this route. This is IMB funded.

### **Field support**

The field support role includes professionals who work in logistics, finance, or another role that directly supports church planters and other IMB personnel on the field. While they work overseas and still focus on sharing the gospel, the majority of their time is spent in their professional role. This is a fully funded IMB role.

## **Career missionary**

A career missionary serves as a church planter. They begin their first four-year term as an apprentice missionary, working alongside an established church planting team. The next term they return as a church planter. A church planter's full-time job is the [core missionary task](#). They are fully funded, and this is a long-term pathway.

## **Missionary associate**

A missionary associate does the same work as a church planter, but there is no seminary requirement. This role is ideal for someone who has pastored or worked in ministry for many years but has no seminary degree. The requirement here is a life experience requirement. This is an IMB funded, long-term pathway.

For more information on any of these pathways, visit [www.imb.org/go](http://www.imb.org/go) and chat live with an IMB employee about what pathway might be right for you, or email [sray@imb.org](mailto:sray@imb.org).

## **SHORT-TERM OPPORTUNITIES**

Adults wanting to take the gospel to the nations on a short-term trip, lasting anywhere from a couple weeks to a few months can find a plethora of opportunities at [www.imb.org/trips](http://www.imb.org/trips). Here, there are group opportunities as well as individual opportunities.

Medical professionals wondering how they can use their gifts for a short-term assignment can find more information on healthcare-specific short-term missions at [www.imb.org/healthcare](http://www.imb.org/healthcare).

## **STUDENTS**

For a student wanting to explore where they may fit in God's plans to reach the nations, there are many options.

## **GO IMPACT**

Groups of teenagers age 15 and up can join the long-term, strategic efforts of IMB missionaries already overseas. Trips will last between 8 and 14 days, and projects are available in Argentina, Belgium, Botswana, Chile, Germany, Kosovo, Latvia, Malta, Mexico, Norway, Poland, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, United Kingdom and Ukraine. For more information, visit [www.imb.org/goimpact](http://www.imb.org/goimpact).

## **1-3 week trips**

Whether it's spring, summer, or winter break there are many ways for high school teams and college students to serve for 1-3 weeks around the world with IMB missionary teams. While

some of the trips are pre-packaged, IMB student teams are ready to work with churches, campuses or ministries to create a trip that fits specific mission strategies. Whether it's relief efforts, coffee shop ministries, sports camps or church planting, there are many ways for students to make an impact. To learn more, visit <https://www.imb.org/students/one-to-three-week-mission-trips/>.

### **Summer mission trips**

Join with thousands of college students using their summer break to reach the lost with missionary teams. IMB has numerous, inexpensive ways to serve for 6-8 weeks each summer in Europe, Africa, Asia, the Americas, and many other places all over the world. Individual and team projects are available. To find out more information on Nehemiah Teams in Southeast Asia, Summer Sojourners in Central and South America, and Face2Face in South Asia and more options, visit <https://www.imb.org/students/summer-mission-trips/>.

### **Hands On**

Hands On is an international semester missions opportunity for students and young adults interested in working alongside a missionary mentor to share the gospel of Jesus with unreached peoples. Members of Southern Baptist Churches can receive funding to cover half the cost to go. For more information, visit <https://www.imb.org/students/semester-hands-on/>.

IMB President Paul Chitwood shared with Southern Baptist pastors, "The IMB is not in a season of calling missionaries home and downsizing. We're in a season of growth. Because there are more lost people today than ever before, the needs are greater today than ever before in history."

Chitwood added, "More lost people will die today than in any day that has ever gone before us. The needs are there. The opportunity is also there to get to them as we work together."

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Myriah Snyder is senior writer/editor for the IMB.

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## **After Covid's impact, how do we get worshipers back?**

by Fran Trascritti

**SPRINGFIELD, IL** – Covid has come. People have left. Attendance is down. So how do we get them back?



This is one of the most common questions asked by church leaders as we look forward to 2022 and beyond. And the question behind the question: Is the current attendance a new normal for the church?

For a while, probably. But here are a few general observations, both from the latest research and from hearing from leaders while consulting throughout the state:

- Worship attendance is down. LifeWay Research reports that the average church is at 63% of their pre-Covid attendance.
- Giving is close to or above budget.
- Bible study group attendance is much lower than pre-covid.
- Ministry to the local community is well received by those accepting help.

Let me argue that all of this is encouraging.

**First, we can appreciate the fact that we're not alone.**

It's great news that we still have a core group of members actively attending, serving, and giving to the mission of the church. Praise God for those loving, serving saints!

**Second, we have a way to grow our leaders.**

One way to start is to launch our Bible study groups ministry and help them again become a strong part of the church. After all, whether the groups meet on campus or off campus, a robust groups ministry provides structure, trains leaders, promotes intimacy, and deepens spiritual growth.

Even more, Bible study groups that operate with a team structure is the wisest approach. Several people within the group can become involved in important tasks, both in growing each other and growing the number in the group. This helps to develop people as they grow, serve, and share their faith.

**Third, we can reintroduce our church to our community.**

Since ministry efforts (such as food distribution) have often been well received by the community, we have an opportunity to reshape and reintroduce our churches to communities who need Jesus!

It also means that we can rethink what membership in a church means: that every member is not just a minister, but even more, every member is a missionary. In other words, our core people, the faithful ones who are with us, can be on mission to reach people in the local community with the gospel as we come out of Covid.

#### **Fourth, we can invite our neighbors.**

Research indicates that people still do trust their neighbors, and Lifeway reports 51% of them said they would come to church if their neighbor invited them. Our core group of church members can and should invite friends, relatives, associates, and neighbors to church. When we not only train our people to share their faith, but also inspire them to do the simple things like inviting those they know and love to church, we can see a gospel movement happen as lives are changed forever.

All is not lost. People need hope. And the church still stands.

Remember that in many cases we still have a core group of faithful members. They stand ready to be mobilized to do high quality, purposeful, and gospel-focused ministry, and that ministry is welcomed by the community.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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## **Old trucks and old people**

by Tim Patterson

**PLYMOUTH, MI** – As you may know, I tend to be drawn to nostalgia. A hundred new automobiles can pass me on the freeway, but let one old 50-model vehicle slip by and it will turn my head. I have been known to run off the road and come close to causing accidents while craning my neck to get a better look at an old Chevy. It matters not its condition or color, as long as it is in one of those categories I call classic.

A classic automobile is one that was produced before the Beatles were a hit and these rolling works of art were for the most part comprised of steel and rubber. These beauties were made to last. If there were any plastics in these vehicles it was relegated to a few knobs or an ornament here or there. The steel sheeting that was used to form the body parts for these rolling works of art was of more than the beer-can-thin moldings that are used today. These old beauties could take a lickin' and keep on tickin'.

I have always been partial to 50 Model Chevrolet trucks. It is probably because that is the vehicle in which I learned to drive. It is also the vehicle that transported me to a great deal of trouble. It wasn't the trucks' fault, she just happened to be in the wrong driveway at the wrong time. I distinctly remember doing the steering.

When Sabrina and I travel, we try to do so at a more leisurely pace, in order to take in the sights, and so that we can stop at every antique store we come along. Since I am willing to go to the antique stores with her, she is more than willing to stop and look at every old car or truck that catches my fancy.

Some of these old vehicles are in open fields or junk lots. It is apparent that they have been abandoned by their owners and left to return to the earth from which they came. Some are in various stages of decay. but that does not deter me from taking a peek into their pasts and rubbing my hand across their faded skins.

Each time I see one, I think of all the places it has been and the people it has transported. Just imagine the fun and laughter that the cab of one of these old trucks once held. I can see a farmer in his overalls and straw hat with his little boy perched in his lap as the little fellow steers this marvelous machine down some dusty country road. All the while his dad is telling him he is doing a great job all by himself. The boy is oblivious to his dad giving the wheel a little help with his left knee as he helps his son keep it between the ruts.

There in my imagination I catch the vision of a young teenage boy and his girlfriend on their first date as they bounce down the farm to market road and into town to watch a movie at the drive-in theater. He is in his best blue-jeans, and she is wearing her favorite dress. The cab is filled with the scent of roses and Old Spice that have mingled together to create an intoxicating brew. She has been praying that she would not get catsup on her face, and he has been praying to exchange a kiss before the evening is done.

I'm sure these old antique vehicles have seen their fair share of sorrows as well. How many of them made mad dashes to a hospital as fast as they could go on some dark foreboding night to get someone to the medical care they so urgently needed. And I wonder if any one of these were used to hurt, maim, or kill an innocent soul because its operator was careless and foolish.

Sadly, there are not many of the old ones around anymore. Back in my hometown of Kermit, Texas there is the remains of an old truck that has been sitting in the same place since I was a little boy, and from all accounts, what is left of it is still there. When I was just a lad, I remember it had been abandoned because the motor and transmission had been taken out and the body was no longer of any use to its owner. At that time, all of the windows were still intact, and the paint was good, despite the horrendous West Texas sun.

But as the years went by, little by little it began to fall apart. A window here and a tire there fell prey to the years. The paint began to fade and eventually peel away under the ravages of time.

A few years ago, I was back in my hometown, and I saw what was left of the old truck. Only part of the cab remained, and most of it was buried under waves of sand that had washed over it as they were blown about by those hot winds. It was partially submerged and had almost completely returned to the earth.

There is a time for all things. There is a time for laughter and joy. There is a time for pain and sorrow. There is a time for young life and young loves. There is a time to build up and a time to tear down. There is a time to give birth and a time to die. As in the life of a great old truck so it is in the life of man.

But sadly, in today's society when a fellow gets "too old and out of date" we no longer give them the attention they once garnered and still deserve. We are too enthralled with the new models and the fastest ones on the street.

It is hard for me to watch the great men and women of our world begin to fade. I have great difficulty seeing their parts and purpose fall away like discarded finders from an outdated model of transportation. Instead of our present society looking away when one of those great old models comes rolling by, we should be admiring them for their true worth. They may have to use a three-wheeled scooter to move about but just think about the stuff of which they were made. Think about the places they have been. Just imagine the roads they have traveled.

These are truly God's rolling works of art.

*To everything there is a season,  
A time for every purpose under heaven:  
A time to be born,  
And a time to die;  
A time to plant,  
And a time to pluck what is planted;  
A time to kill,  
And a time to heal;  
A time to break down,  
And a time to build up;  
A time to weep,  
And a time to laugh;  
A time to mourn,  
And a time to dance;  
A time to cast away stones,  
And a time to gather stones;  
A time to embrace,  
And a time to refrain from embracing;  
A time to gain,  
And a time to lose;  
A time to keep,*

*And a time to throw away;  
A time to tear,  
And a time to sew;  
A time to keep silence,  
And a time to speak;  
A time to love,  
And a time to hate;  
A time of war,  
And a time of peace.*  
Ecclesiastes 3:1-9

### **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.

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## **Baby steps, big achievements**

by Dr. Tony L Lynn

**PLYMOUTH, MI** – Set some giant goals only to fail? I have too! Make you mad? Make you sad? Make you stop reaching for bigger and better? Would you spend 3-minutes with me to see if we can become more for the Lord? To see if we can do more in service and in worship for the Lord? Big achievements begin with baby steps.

During December a professor tweeted these words to encourage his PhD students: “If you read 20 pages of research material and write 200 quality footnoted words each day, you will complete your dissertation in about one year.” Did you capture the baby steps that could lead to a big achievement like a PhD? I did. Reading 20 pages and writing 200 words per day could lead to a PhD! I can hear you saying, “Sign me up,” right now. By the way, if you read the title of this column and read to the end of this paragraph you read the 175 words I typed. See, baby steps are easy.

As we begin a new year, let me encourage you to change the pattern of 2022 with baby steps so that you will not be saddened, disappointed, frustrated, or beaten when 2023 arrives. Each one of us hopes for more from our personal and community life and all it takes are baby steps.

**Read the Best Book**

In Europe where we lived for 7 years, many Christian communities would read, non-stop, the entire Bible aloud in the city square during a period of 3 days and nights in local languages to highlight the importance of the Bible. We saw conversions and inquiries as an army of volunteers read for 20-minute portions. Looking at that from a personal, baby step perspective you could read the entire Bible in 1 year if you read 3 chapters per day or if you read the Bible, from cover to cover, for just 12-minutes per day.

### **Have Conversations with God**

Ask yourself what topic of conversations lasts the longest in your typical day? All of us want to respond with, "My daily prayers with God, of course!" But if we are honest, we cannot say that. We would reply with sports, hobbies, gossip, irritating people, TV shows, celebrities, past events, upcoming plans, or talking about ourselves. Am I correct? How can we make a daily conversation with God more important? You will have to create your plan. Here is my plan.

I am going to recite Galatians 5:22 (NLT) as my diagnostic tool for my life before my daily quiet time, "But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." Then I am going to remind myself that God, like a mother holding the hands of a toddler above his head while he takes his first baby steps, wants me to succeed as it says in 2 Peter 1:3, "By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life." Then here is how I have designated the topics of prayer for me during 2022.

- Monday – ministry partners who need God's protection just as I need him
- Tuesday – troubles/trials that I want to face with the Holy Spirit's control
- Wednesday – weaknesses in my life to be replaced with God's grace and strength
- Thursday – thoughts that turn into messages and writings that elevate Jesus Christ
- Friday – fun time rejoicing over God's goodness and blessings in my life
- Saturday – salvation of the specific lost people with whom I share life
- Sunday – surrender all of myself to the Lord through worship

### **Share Life with People**

Barring any radical life change, during 2022, all of us will receive 52 weeks or 365 days or 8,760 hours to spend. Are we going to spend that time in mindless, useless ways or are we going to share life with others so that Jesus Christ is elevated through our relationships? Would you take a moment to answer this questionnaire?

- Each week, how many people or families would you entertain in your home for a meal?
- How many phone calls would you be willing to make per day to encourage someone?
- Would you list 6 people in your life who need to hear how to follow Christ?

How many for a meal? Sharing a meal with others is the global way of sharing life. Could you imagine receiving 52 families into your home? All it takes is a baby step of setting aside one time per week as an entertainment night. Invite 2-3 people or 1-2 families to join you. Help others connect to others.

How many phone calls per day? One per day? Without repeating a person that would be 365 people called by you and hearing your voice ask about their wellbeing and offer them an update on your life. Do you have 365 contacts in your directory? If not, call some back or make more friends. A 15–20-minute phone call where you listen to someone talk about their life means more than you know.

Did 6 people come to your mind? What are you going to do to have that ongoing conversation, during the next 12 months, elevating the Good News of Christ in the lives of 6 people? Pick them up in your car to take them to church then to a restaurant for lunch? Or mingle those who need to know Christ with respected believers at a dinner party at your home? Or set aside a private conversation where you say to each of those 6 friends, “Because I value you so much, can I take a few minutes to explain how I started following Jesus Christ in my life? And afterwards, I would love to hear if anything like my experience has been a part of your life.” Authentic conversations filled with respect and compassion change lives.

### **Baby Steps Lead to Big Achievements**

Do you recall at the beginning of this column I asked you to spend three-minutes reading this article? You did it! You took a baby step. I am certain your head is swirling with personal responses for your life and your community. Before moving onto the next thing in your day, would you brainstorm some baby steps for 2022 and insert those baby steps into your daily life? You just may see those big achievements taking shape before 2023 arrives.

### **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.

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# Words create worlds

by Mike Durbin

**PLYMOUTH, MI** – “Words create worlds!” Though the author of this powerful statement is unknown to me, I couldn’t agree more, especially as it relates to Jesus. Two millennia have passed since Jesus walked this earth, yet His words continue to shape the worlds of countless people. Princes, paupers, peasants, and potentates have had their worlds radically altered by the words of Jesus. Words so simple they are understood by children, yet so profound that the most brilliant scholars continue to mine their depths.

I was struck recently by an encounter in Mark 7:31-37 that takes place between Jesus and a man who cannot hear and whose speech is difficult to understand. As I read the text, I started reflecting about this man who could not hear anything Jesus said - not a single word. Jesus’ words, with all of their hope and power fell silently on his ears.

Jesus comes face to face with this man because of some people in his life who take the man who cannot hear to Him. We know they care deeply about him because they plead with Jesus to lay His hands on him. Jesus takes the man away from the distraction of the crowd so He can give him His undivided attention. The Scripture records what happens:

***“So he took him away from the crowd in private. After putting his fingers in the man’s ears and spitting, he touched his tongue. Looking up to heaven, he sighed deeply and said to him, ‘Ephphatha!’ (that is, “Be opened!”).***

What unfolds in these verses is Jesus “speaking” to this man, not with words he could not hear, but with actions he could understand. Jesus vividly connects with this man as He puts His fingers in his ears. Instantly, this simple act lets him know that Jesus cares - that He is identifying with him in his need.

What happens next seems unusual to us, but speaks powerfully to the man. Jesus spits and touches his tongue - a tongue that speaks with such difficulty that people struggle to understand what he says. By touching his ears and his tongue with His fingers, Jesus communicates to the man that not only does He know his need, but that He is going to help him. This is no sterile, long distance offer of help, but a face to face encounter of Jesus reaching out to him.

After identifying with his inability to hear and his difficulty to speak, the man watches as Jesus looks to heaven. Jesus hasn’t said a word, but in this upward look Jesus declares to him and us that we desperately need God.

Then Jesus sighs deeply.



No words have been spoken by Jesus up to this point. Long before the sign language that exists today, Jesus communicates with this man using gestures he could understand. The deep sigh of Jesus is clearly visible to the man standing before Him as Jesus' chest fills and empties with the sigh. Then Jesus speaks one word - the first word of Jesus in the text - "Ephphatha!" Mark helps us to understand when he explains that Ephphatha means, "Be opened."

For the first time in who knows how long, perhaps ever, the man is able to hear and speak clearly. All because of Jesus.

"Words create worlds" but actions build those worlds. Jesus modeled both. He was a man of word and deed - something to remember as God gives us another year. Those who witnessed the interaction between Jesus and this man declared: "He has done everything well!"

#### **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.

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## **A resolution really worth doing**

by Coye Bouyer

**LANSING, MI** – Calibration is defined as an association between measurements – one of a scale or accuracy made or set with one piece of equipment, and another measurement made in as similar a way as possible with a second piece of equipment.

The piece of equipment or device with the known or assigned accuracy is called the *standard*. While standards may vary, depending upon industry requirements, in general, calibration is often regarded as the process of adjusting the measurement of an instrument to agree with the previously determined *standard*.

For example, if one were going to calibrate a thermometer used to measure the temperature of food, the process would be one of filling a cup with ice and then topping it off with water. After letting the ice water sit for three minutes, you would then place the thermometer in the center of the cup making sure not to touch the sides. The temperature should read 32 degrees Fahrenheit. If not, there is one of two ways the thermostat can be calibrated.

The first is to record the difference and then offset your thermometer by the amount over or under the 32 degrees. Secondly, if you have the proper tools one can adjust the thermostat itself to 32 degrees once removed.

Due to the fact that over time there is a tendency for accuracy to 'drift;' this drifting is the result of both standard use and at times misuse. The point is that over time the accuracy of an instrument shifts from the predetermined *standard*. Thus, in order to be confident in the results being measured there is an ongoing need to service and maintain equipment through continuous process known as re-calibration.

In fact, it is due to this continual process (re-calibration) measurements maintain accuracy, remain reliable, and repeatable. Likewise, within the Christian life it is essential for every Christian to examine our behaviors, taking a real look at the conditions of our lives in order to see if what we believe lines up with the *standards* that have been set forth by God and His word.

As we move from 2021 into 2022, many will make New Year's resolutions to lose weight, eat healthier, love themselves more, and just be a better you. I want to challenge us all to make a resolution really worth doing; To take a moment and examine your spiritual man.

For if we are honest with ourselves we can admit that much of the cares, concerns and conflicts of 2020 spilled over into 2021. Whether it was COVID and its cousins (Delta and Omicron), the fight over vaccines and its boosters, or the ongoing argument '*to wear*' or '*not to wear masks*,' 2021 has found itself with difficult dilemmas still yet to be worked out.

In 2021 our world remained wobbly and spiritual lives were still shaken. So, as we move into the New Year, take a moment to re-calibrate your mind to remember real righteousness (found only by a faith in Jesus). Take time to pause for the cause of re-calibrating your heart to a heart that knows the capacity of His resurrection, the fellowship of His suffering, and one who is being conformed to His death.

As you and I do this we will find ourselves re-aligning (or as I like to say, falling back in-line) with the Savior who came to save us from a world that is still on its way to Hell. Therefore let us do what Christians have been commissioned and called to do since those first disciples were sent out 2000 years ago. So GO, and Make Disciples, Teaching them and Baptizing them as we continue to 'Punch Holes in the Darkness for the Kingdom of God.' 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.

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## Grace has overcome

by MIck Schatz

**ROSCOMMON, MI** – Happy New Year from Bambi Lake! We anticipate 2022 being exciting as we witness God using Bambi Lake in amazing ways.

A new year for many of us often marks a “New Beginning”. An opportunity to rethink or re-tool our everyday life, and our plans for the future. Maybe a new year sparks new dreams or prompts us to refresh old ones in a new way. However we approach this “New Beginning” it will most likely require a reboot to our thinking.

How we view our finances, our health, our relationships, our family - we have to look at these through different lenses. I recently had to start wearing glasses, and they have literally changed how I see the world. They are progressive lenses so they help me see things far away, not so far away and up close. I now have the choice to live in my former blurred reality or a new clear reality. It has been a “New Beginning” that is now allowing me to see clearly - I can read my phone now!

However, making the decision to go to the eye doctor, and have my sight examined required a new mindset. I had to acknowledge my eyes were not functioning properly, and decide this was no longer acceptable. As silly as it may seem, this required admitting I was getting older, going to the doctor, probably wearing glasses (one more thing to keep up with), paying for something I don't want, etc, etc....

Nevertheless, I decided my need was greater than my pride. This was my “New Beginning” moment that ushered in a new reality. Which brings me to this question - Is pride keeping you from a “New Beginning”? Is pride keeping you from a “New Reality”?

I have no way of knowing the area of life you desire a “New Beginning”, but allow me to encourage you with this thought, this reality - “Grace Has Overcome!”. Grace wins! What a liberating and life altering reality to live in! However, it requires a new mindset. It requires surrender.

Humility is the key that unlocks this “New Beginning” in our lives. We have to acknowledge our insufficient strength and resources to handle life on our own. Only by completely surrendering

to and relying on the work of God's grace can we truly have a "New Beginning" in any area of our life.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God" Ephesians 2:8 (ESV).

Grace saved you, let it change you! Let it permeate every breathing moment of your existence. Choose a "New Beginning" with grace. Live in the reality that your striving is insufficient BUT His grace is sufficient!

My only hope is in the cross, my Savior died, He paid my cost  
A slave to sin my soul in chains, until His grace, flowed down like rain  
Amazing grace how sweet the sound, when Your grace like rain comes flowing down,  
It's a beautiful sound!  
Your Grace, Your Grace has overcome, overcome!  
Your Grace, Your Grace the battle won, the battle won!  
Forgiven I stand in victory, for the glory, of my Savior King,  
Your Grace has overcome!  
(Grace Has Overcome-Michael Schatz)

#### **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.

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## **NAMB sees record giving, church planting success in 2021**

by Brandon Elrod

**ALPHARETTA, GA** – Despite another year of uncertainty and challenges connected to the pandemic, Southern Baptists rallied to lift the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering® (AAEO) for North American missions to [a record \\$66.5 million](#) after a pandemic-impacted down year in 2020. The news was one of several headline highlights for the North American Mission Board (NAMB) in 2021.

Southern Baptists eclipsed the [\\$2 billion mark given cumulatively to the AAEO](#) during the 2021 offering season as well, underscoring the heart that Southern Baptists have for reaching North America with the gospel.

NAMB announced that Southern Baptists facilitated [an increase in new church plants in 2020](#), up to 588 for a total of 857 new congregations during a challenging pandemic year. *Outreach Magazine* released its 2021 list of top 100 reproducing churches, and at least [a quarter of them were Send Network](#), Southern Baptist churches.

Along with these highlights, NAMB hosted a Send Conference, announced the addition of two new vice presidents and resourced Southern Baptists for evangelism.

### **Send Conference**

In cooperation with the International Mission Board (IMB), NAMB had the opportunity to serve Southern Baptists by hosting a [Send Conference in Nashville, Tenn.](#), ahead of the 2021 Annual Meeting. The thousands of people who attended the conference were called to be united [“Together on Mission,”](#) the conference theme.

During the Send Luncheon, [Bobby Bowden surprised Mark Richt](#) in what would be Bowden’s final public appearance before he passed away in August of 2021. The two former college football coaches discussed the importance of faith in their day-to-day lives and the need to regularly share the gospel.

### **Send Network**

Near the end of the year, NAMB announced that [Vance Pitman would be coming on board as a NAMB vice president](#) to lead church planting efforts as president of Send Network. That news followed [Dhati Lewis’s decision to shift](#) his focus to relaunching a project called BLVD, which focuses on developing and deploying church planters for urban settings.

NAMB intentionally sought to strengthen its relationships with Southern Baptist state conventions by [hosting Send Network Summits](#) to celebrate successes and collaborate on strategy moving forward. Milton Hollifield, the longtime executive director of North Carolina Baptists, also [joined NAMB in a part-time role](#) to assist in state convention relationships.

Throughout the year, NAMB also cultivated Send Network church planting agreements with several state conventions, including the [SBCV](#), [Missouri](#), [Ohio](#), the [SBTC](#) and [Utah-Idaho](#), to name a few that launched in 2021.

Early in the year, Send Network innovated its [Send Network Gatherings, hosting localized, in-person events](#) so that smaller groups of church planting missionaries could meet together for face-to-face encouragement and equipping. Send Network was also able to [host its orientation in-person](#) for the first time in two years in the fall.

## Evangelism and Leadership

The Evangelism and Leadership team began the year by announcing that NAMB would dedicate an additional [\\$5 million to help Southern Baptists reach the next generation](#) with the gospel. Grants related to the new funding were sent to state convention partners in the fall. NAMB served youth leaders who are reaching the next generation through [NAMB's Youth Leader Coaching Network](#).

NAMB's evangelism team also continued its [Who's Your One Tour](#) across the United States to encourage churches to make evangelism a top priority and continued offering [free evangelism resources to pastors](#). The team also worked with Southern Baptist [state conventions to expand its Timothy + Barnabas ministry](#) efforts to pastors.

In the face of [challenges wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic](#), the Evangelism team was still able to cooperate with the Tennessee Baptists to host a [Crossover outreach event in Nashville](#).

## Send Relief

Southern Baptists served disaster survivors all across North America in 2021, with two of the largest responses occurring [following Hurricane Ida](#) and the [December tornadoes](#) that impacted the South.

Send Relief also launched its [national Serve Tour in Tulsa, Oklahoma](#). The event was the fruit of Send Relief and Oklahoma Baptists working together to serve the city, and more [Serve Tour stops are scheduled for 2022](#).

*See more about Send Relief's 2021 activity in North America and around the world in [their 2021 year-end highlight story](#).*

## Research and Resources

Trevin Wax joined the NAMB family in order to [lead the new resources and research team](#) to better equip pastors and church planters reach North America. One of their first efforts was to help [Send Network relaunch NewChurches.com](#), a resource designed to fuel church planting.

## Replant

One of NAMB's key ministries is to assist pastors and other church leaders to stem the tide of dying churches through replanting, and NAMB's Replant Team was able to see dozens of churches [become rejuvenated and thrive](#). The team [served pastors through its Replant Cohort](#) and trained associational leaders and pastors through various trainings and its annual Replant Summit.

## Chaplaincy

In chaplaincy, a Southern Baptist Armed Services chaplain was [promoted to Chief of Chaplains for the U.S. Air Force](#). The promotion recognizes that Southern Baptist chaplains are some of the best in the world at what they do, and NAMB's chaplaincy team supports them to [conduct the ministry they are called to do](#).

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brandon Elrod writes for the North American Mission Board.

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## Vance Pitman to lead NAMB's Send Network

by NAMB Communications Staff

**ALPHARETTA, GA** – Vance Pitman, who planted Hope Church Las Vegas in 2000 and pastored there 21 years, will lead the North American Mission Board's (NAMB) church planting efforts as the new president of Send Network. Pitman and NAMB president Kevin Ezell shared the announcement in a [video](#) released today.

"I've been part of Send Network since its inception, but I've been part of it on the field — as a church planter, a pastor and a Sending Church. Now I get to be part of it from a different vantage point," Pitman said.

Pitman has led Hope to be a reproducing church. Under his leadership, Hope has played a part in planting more than 70 new churches. Throughout its history, more than 300 members of Pitman's congregation have been sent out to help start new churches.

"I want to take what the Lord has allowed us to be able to do at Hope Church and help be part of raising up the next generation church planters and pastors across North America," Pitman said.

Pitman will resign from Hope Church and begin his new role at NAMB on March 1, 2022. "I am excited about the days ahead for NAMB and Send Network," Ezell said. "Vance is a church planter at heart, and he has already had a great influence on Send Network. We look forward to seeing what God has in store for us as we continue to meet needs, share the hope of the gospel and plant churches throughout North America."

Pitman has been closely involved in Send Network for several years. He contributed significantly to the development of the network's church planter assessment process, which helps ensure

that church planters are well qualified for their role. He is also regularly featured as a speaker at NAMB church planter training events.

Pitman follows Dhati Lewis, who led Send Network for three years. In mid-November, Lewis shared his plans to leave NAMB at the end of the year to concentrate more fully on developing and mentoring young leaders who will plant churches in the urban context.

“Vance is a close friend, fellow pastor and church planter,” Lewis said. “I’ve learned a lot from him, and I look forward to the ways he will help Send Network continue to plant churches everywhere for everyone.”

Pitman and his wife, Kristie, relocated to Las Vegas in 2000 to plant Hope Church. Their sending church was First Baptist Church in Woodstock, Ga. What started as a small group meeting in their living room eventually grew to a church of more than 4,000 members with 54 languages spoken among them.

“For me, it’s always been about the Kingdom being expanded,” Pitman said. “I want us to trust God for an even greater future than we’ve already seen in Send Network.”

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

The communications staff of the North American Mission Board produced this article.

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## **What are you doing in Nana’s chair?**

by Sue Hodnett

**CLINTON TOWNSHIP, MI** – I peeked around the corner to make sure Logan was still playing safely as I prepared his lunch. He had moved off his play mat and was sheepishly sitting in my comfy gliding chair. I refrain from calling it a “rocking chair”, you know the stereotyping tends to age you. “What are you doing in my chair!”, I shouted in my playful nana voice. Logan’s giggles were priceless and the “nana tickle monster” craved to hear more of those giggles.

This little game got me thinking about my own grandparents and their “chairs”! Each of my four grandparents had their own chair that I can describe to you in full detail, I can still picture its placement in the room. For me it would have been a “serious offense” to sit in their “chair”. You only made that mistake once and believe me there were no giggles.

Oh, my how times have changed. Even in ministry there was a time when it felt very awkward or frightening to approach a senior director without being invited to do so. There was a time



when women serving in church ministry positions was discouraged. The effects of this over the years has left us with a lost generation of women in ministry. Fewer young women are practicing their faith, and have no interest in ministry leadership roles.

I believe we are at a time in ministry leadership where we can climb into any “chair” that God directs us to with confidence and celebration. I see women who are encouraged and respected as they come alongside to serve with their pastors and the church. Women are offered opportunities to develop their ministry leadership and valued for the contributions to the church growth movement.

[Women's Ministry](#) is dedicated to strengthening the women of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM) by encouraging, equipping, and engaging them to live intentional lives to the glory of God. Our ministry opportunities are of culturally relevant content, guided by a missional mindset, compassionate care, and places value on the development of women in leadership.

Women's Ministries, as well as our events, provide encouragement and support the professional development of women leaders in our churches. We come alongside our pastors and ministry leaders to provide resources and support in ***Leadership Development, Compassion Ministries, Missions Discipleship*** and ***Administration***.

Friends, your women's ministry team is here to help you be all that you can be for the Lord.

- Maybe you are still trying to figure out what that is! We are here for you!
- Maybe you know and need help to take the next step! We are here for you!
- Maybe you don't feel you have anything to offer or are not good enough! Yes, you are! We are here for you!
- Maybe you are ready to mentor and need resources! We are here for you!
- Maybe you just want to join us for a great time of fellowship! We are here for you!

Contact us, we have a “chair” open for you! We promise not to tickle you, but we would love to hear you giggle!

Visit: [www.facebook.com/bscmwmu](http://www.facebook.com/bscmwmu) for the most current women's ministry information.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Sue Hodnett serves as women's ministry leader for the BSCM as well as WMU Michigan Executive Director. She has dedicated her life to ministering to women in Michigan.

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# God has been gracious

by Michael L. Ritchie

**ROSCOMMON, MI** – It has been more than a year since I have shared an article, [Life at Bambi Lake: God has been Gracious](#) in the Baptist Beacon. Bambi Lake Camp has blessed us over the years, but really it is a story of the graciousness of God!

***This pandemic has seen us change the way we do church, and it is not hard to be discouraged.***

We lost some friends and loved ones, and have not seen our families as often as we would like. Our businesses have been stretched to the max by regulations and labor issues. After almost two years the virus has caught up to several of our church members, and likely others will contract the virus.

***Through of it all God has been gracious, and he has made a way through all this darkness.***

In my article I told how my wife and I were baptized in Bambi Lake in 1983, and since then we have served God at Roscommon Baptist Church. I shared a story of a young boy named John who was shooting archery with us. He wanted to be baptized with the other kids, but really didn't understand it's significance. Gratefully, John came forward 2 weeks ago to say he now has received Jesus, and wants to publicly profess Jesus before the church. He wants the world to know by being baptized.

***This year has been a challenge, but God continues to reach out to others though His body the church.***

Personally, 2021 has been good in that my son Jacob and his wife Kaleigh have had another son! He was born healthy, and hungry. Miles joins his brother Lucas, and they are best buddies. My father Paul Ritchie is still with us and has celebrated his 89th birthday. My wife Laurie and I have been blessed with 39 years of marriage. Roscommon Baptist Church has seen children, young adults and senior adults submit to Christ in the waters of baptism.

***It seems when the world gets darkest even the smallest light shines bright!***

Yes, God has been gracious! I hope this Christmas God has been especially good to all of you.

Thanks to our Pastor Erikson Aldridge and his wife Glenda for leading our church and faithfully sharing the Word of God and to our staff at the Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM) and Bambi Lake for facilitating a place like Bambi Lake to do ministry.

*There is light now to follow  
An anchor in the storm  
A harbor now for refuge*

*A Way that keeps from harm  
A commission to be fulfilled  
A race yet to be won  
Since that day in Bethlehem  
When God sent His only Son  
Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year to everyone!*

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Dr. Michael Ritchie grew up in Harrison Township, MI. He is married to Laurie Allan Ritchie and they live in Higgins Lake, MI, where they have practiced Chiropractic for 37 years. They have 2 grown children, Sarah and Jacob (Kaleigh) and are grandparents to Lucas. The Ritchie's were saved right out of college and were baptized in Bambi Lake. They have been serving God at Roscommon Baptist Church ever since. His motto is "As a church we need to think out of the box, while we are still above ground." Michael has led the church in many innovative ministries over the years all in the effort that They might win some. "Jesus Christ is my life, without Him am nothing."

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## **Looking past fire and ash, a reminder of what's important**

by Scott Barkley

**LOUISVILLE, CO (BP)** – Linda Hinkle didn't get her "one more time" into the house.

On Dec. 30, winds in excess of 100 mph drove the fire that would soon devour Hinkle's home alongside others in several communities west of Denver. At the absolute most, she recollects, her family had 30 minutes to get what they could as the smoke thickened and ash began to fall.

Bags with clothes jammed in them. Shoes. Medications. Computers, phones and chargers. Her 95-year-old father. Two parakeets in the travel birdcage used on trips to the vet and two dogs – a rescued Yorkshire terrier who had been in their home for a week and a Czechoslovakian Wolfdog – joined them in two cars.

Earlier, Hinkle's son, Jordan, had gotten off his shift from the bakery of a nearby Safeway and looked west toward the city of Superior. The dry conditions made the smoke he saw more concerning than usual, as fires typically don't happen at this time of year. Meanwhile, two miles toward the direction he stared, [parents were snatching up their kids at a Chuck E. Cheese](#), pushing through doors pinned by the wind, and running to their cars to escape the flames.

Fifteen minutes after Jordan arrived at his parents' house nearby, he told her they should leave. A moment later, Hinkle received an evacuation alert on her phone. She went to her backyard and looked. At that point, she says, it felt like you were inside a dark cloud that was choking views at 50 feet.

"I was in panic mode and thought we were going to come back," she says. "We just grabbed some necessities for a couple of nights."

Even so, the worsening conditions made her want to go back in the house one more time. Jordan had none of it, telling his mom they needed to leave *now*. His warnings were echoed by escaping cars honking their horns to alert neighbors and firemen announcing an immediate evacuation over loudspeakers.

Hinkle was in the process of cleaning when Jordan arrived. The wedding ring she had removed to do so remained on the counter when they left. Other lost personal items include the jewelry given to her after her mother's death and pre-digital era pictures and videos she had always meant to put online.

"It felt like you were in the middle of an erupting volcano," she says. "You couldn't see. Ash was blowing around and getting in your mouth and eyes."

Eventually, they and others crawled their way onto the road and away from the smoke. After about 15 minutes, the darkness began to give way to the light.

Things like your house burning down only happen to other people, she said, until it happens to you. There's no doubt that losing possessions hurts, especially those with sentimental value. But that loss also has a way of clearing your eyes, letting you see what is of more, even eternal, value.

In the past she and her husband, Dale, had served with Colorado Baptist Disaster Relief. As [CBDR has responded](#) to needs from the fire, so now the Hinkles are being cared for by friends and their church family at Reclamation Church in Boulder.

"All of these possessions that we cling to ... you can't take them with you anyway. You realize how many people care about you [from the] love of our church, our friends and our family," she says.

Currently, the family is staying with her best friend, who is also a member of Reclamation Church (a daughter lives further north in Loveland, Colo.). With word getting out, clothes have been provided and even a more suitable birdcage for the parakeets. A woman at Walmart overheard Hinkle's story and gave a \$100 bill to help her get restarted.

"People have helped me," she told her. "And now I'm going to help you."

Sleep has often been tough to come by since last Thursday. All kind acts big and small have helped.

“I pray, ‘God, it’s a new day. Give me the strength I need to continue,’” she says. “And He does; He gives me the strength to make it through.”

Gratefulness doesn’t accompany only what you can hold and see, she says. It’s bigger than that. It helps you step through the darkness and into the light, one more time.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Scott Barkley is national correspondent for Baptist Press.

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## **How to make New Year’s resolutions**

by David Roach

**NASHVILLE, TN (BP)** – Resolutions have yielded a mixed bag of successes and flops over the course of Christian history.

A fourth-century Egyptian robber named Moses roamed the Nile Valley with a violent criminal gang, slaughtering people’s livestock for the pure joy of killing. Then he heard of monastic communities in the desert, resolving to join one and participate in their life of spiritual disciplines. It made a huge difference. He placed his faith in Christ, became known for gentleness and hospitality and took the title Abba Moses to signify his deep spirituality.

A resolution didn’t work out so well for John Chrysostom, a fourth-century preacher known for his eloquence. Young and gung-ho for spiritual progress, he resolved to live in a cave, sleep one hour per night while leaning against a wall and memorize the New Testament. It worked at first. He memorized lots of Scripture. But he also permanently damaged his health, and a bishop ordered him to stop.

Some Christians in church history “bit off too much,” said Chris Hall, president of Renovaré, a Colorado-based ministry focused on spiritual formation and spiritual disciplines. “They tried to do too much. They tried to do it in too short a period of time.”

So how can believers make their New Year’s resolutions productive? Resolutions can foster spiritual growth, say Hall and other spiritual formation experts, if utilized within a broader program of spiritual disciplines and crafted with input from mature Christian friends.

Americans' practice of spiritual disciplines leaves plenty of room for resolutions to improve, according to the American Bible Society's [State of the Bible 2021](#) report. Just 1 in 6 U.S. adults (16%) reads the Bible most days during the week. Fifty percent read the Bible less than twice a year. The lack of personal engagement with God's Word affects corporate disciplines as well, like loving neighbors and building the church, the report found.

### **Resolution tips**

Those realities make spiritual resolutions in order for many as 2022 approaches. One key to making resolutions a success is how they are written, said Andy Davis, pastor of First Baptist Church in Durham, N.C. Don't be "too prideful or too confident with what [your] resolution's going to do," he said. Rather, format resolutions as statements of "what I would like to see God do in my life over the next year." Hasty resolutions can become "a legalistic burden" by February or March.

Davis knows something about successful resolution making. He has memorized 43 books of the Bible—though he can't recite them all today—and written a [book](#) about extended Scripture memory. Among Davis's do's and don'ts for resolutions:

- Do make reasonable and measurable resolutions. "I resolve to be a better person" is "not a good resolution because it's not measurable," he said. A better resolution would be, "Every night in the month of January I will ask my wife, 'Did you find me to be kind and loving to you today?'"
- Don't make resolutions you won't keep, like memorizing 10 Bible verses a day.
- Do make a relatively small number of resolutions.

Another key to successful resolutions is when they are written, Hall said. It doesn't have to be Jan. 1.

"Don't start [making resolutions] if you haven't already been engaged in spiritual discipline of some kind," Hall said, "because you're almost guaranteed to fail. Why? Because the same habit patterns that were troubling you before you ever made that resolution Jan. 1 will raise their head."

Good intentions to grow spiritually become successful resolutions when they are preceded by what Hall calls "preparatory disciplines," like watching less TV and enjoying more silence to make room for more traditional spiritual disciplines.

Make resolutions whenever you're ready, Hall said, whether that's January, March or November. Then "if you fail, just start over again." A general principle of spiritual growth "is that we stumble and we get back up."

Still, milestone days can be valuable for making resolutions. Puritans of the 1500s through 1700s commonly made New Year's resolutions, along with resolutions on their birthdays, spiritual birthdays and ordination days, said Michael Haykin, professor of church history at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

### **Famous resolutions**

Some of those resolutions continue to inspire Christ-followers. Around 1700, Presbyterian Bible commentator Matthew Henry wrote, "This new-year's day I have solemnly renewed the resignation and surrender of my whole self to God, as my God, deliberately, and upon good considerations."

American pastor and theologian Jonathan Edwards made 70 resolutions as a young man in the 1720s. Among them: "Resolved, that I will live so as I shall wish I had done when I come to die" and "Resolved, to study the Scriptures so steadily, constantly and frequently, as that I may find, and plainly perceive myself to grow in the knowledge of the same."

Christians should "recognize the danger of legalism" in making resolutions, Haykin said. "But having said that, they can be helpful" for individuals and churches. "When one joins a body of believers, I think it's helpful to commit yourself to various things in that body" like worship attendance, praying for the pastor and financial giving.

Despite their utility, resolutions fell into disfavor among evangelicals by the late 1700s. Samuel Pearce, an 18th-century Baptist minister and hymnwriter, ripped up his resolution when he felt it became a "legalistic fetter," Haykin said, and many evangelicals ever since have taken a similar stance on resolutions.

Nonetheless, resolutions maintain their place in healthy spiritual development if part of a balanced spiritual training regimen and not mere statements of good intentions. Resolutions, Hall said, should focus on "training rather than trying."

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

David Roach is a writer in Mobile, Ala.

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# Michigan Campers on Mission - January 2022 update

by Rick and Cindy Truesdail

Happy New Year, MI COMers!

We survived 2021! It has been a tough year for many of us, but Praise God, He has seen us through. For some, January 1st is just another day, which is true; but it is a day to pause and remember the past year – good times, bad times, learning from our mistakes and improving in the year ahead. Our hearts go out to everyone who lost a loved one in the past year, knowing that they face 2022 without them. Our prayer is that everyone has peace in their minds, joy in their hearts, and a new zeal to serve the Lord in the year ahead. He is our healer of physical and emotional pain, He is our source of strength, and He is ALWAYS with us!

We are so thankful that God has brought us through so much since August. Rick had knee replacement surgery, Cindy had a blockage and a stent was put in the artery to the heart; Rick soon after had Heart Cath and received his 11th stent to keep the arteries open; and a couple of weeks later, once again Cindy was back in the hospital for a Heart Cath learning the blockage was too close to the heart for a stent. We have had to slow down for a bit, but look forward to continuing the mission God has called us to as we gain strength and each manage our heart disease. Thanks to everyone who has been praying for us through these times. We have felt your love and God's power working in us. MI COM is a family of believers who lift one another up in their times of needs. We support and encourage each other at all times. We are so thankful for every member of this ministry. We hope you will be involved and work on mission as much as possible in 2022! We hope to see you soon!

Sharing Christ as We Go,  
Rick and Cindy

## MI COM Ladies Sewing Event

Saturday, January 29, 2022

11:00am - 4:00pm

Heritage Baptist Church

5199 E. Hill Rd.

Grand Blanc, MI

(In the Fellowship Hall)

Bring your sewing machine if you have one. Also cotton and flannel materials. We will have other things you can do if you don't sew. Bring a friend to share this fun day of work and fellowship. We will provide soup. Bring finger foods and desserts.



## **2022 COM National Rally**

June 7-9, 2022

North Florida Fairgrounds

Tallahassee, FL

This will be the Golden 50th Anniversary of Campers on Mission. "Renew in 2022" will be the theme. Mark your calendars, start saving your money for travel, and be ready to register when it's available. More information will follow as we get it over the next few months.

## **MI COM Christmas Banquet**

MI COM Christmas Banquet was great! We enjoyed warm fellowship and a delicious meal. TJ and Helena Witherell sang a few songs for us to enjoy and later led us in Christmas carols. Pastor Tim Shrader, MI Church Planting Catalyst (NAMB), brought an encouraging message that God used lowly shepherds to welcome Christ as a baby and to share that good news wherever they went. MI COMers too are chosen to share Christ as we go. There was laughter – and some confusion – passing an ornament back and forth according to the “Right-Left” story read by Cindy. We are very thankful to Pastor Larry Rednower, New Haven Baptist Church in Burton, for opening their fellowship hall to us. It was unanimously agreed we should have a MI COM Christmas Banquet in 2022.

## **MI COM Ladies in Action**

MI COM Ladies are always excited to sew projects for the foster/refugee children at Bethany Christian Services. And a special thanks to Roy Davis, a friend at Heritage Baptist Church, for donating wooden cars and truck for the children. Thanks again to Maria Hannuksela for delivering an SUV full of these items before Christmas.

Youth pillows - 24

Youth bags - 54

Christmas stockings/bags - 25

Children's throws - 10

School supplies - 2 boxes

Wooden cars and trucks - 2 boxes

## Article from our MI COM Member

### A New Beginning by Brandi Dyke

*“Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth”*

1 Corinthians 5:2, KJV

Entering a new year can be refreshing and rejuvenating. Our “new year” resolutions set forth ambitious goals to strive for, as well as give us an opportunity to reset our failed attempts and previous unmet expectations. However, as we reflect on our previous year, let us take a moment to celebrate a year of life as a gift from the Lord, and rejoice for the hurdles that we overcame through Christ. While new beginnings give us a chance to reflect and build up excitement for the open possibilities of the future, it is of the greatest importance to understand that we do not need a new year, or even a new day, to spend time with the Lord and examine ourselves before The Father. In our quiet time with Him, we are investing into an everlasting relationship with the Lord, as well as allowing Him to enhance our perspective with His wisdom.

When we are enlightened with the Lord’s righteousness, we are able to judge ourselves and come to a pure state of repentance; thus, allowing us to be set free from our infirmities through Christ and move forward without the “old leaven” in our bread; thus, giving us a new beginning. New beginnings are readily available anywhere and at any time. This is the beautiful gift that Jesus sacrificed His life to give us. Not for selfish freedom, but so that we may come to The Father in purity and build a relationship with Him. Let us take a moment to thank the Lord for His precious gift to us. Let us thank Him for new beginnings that are readily available through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. May the Lord bless you all in this new year and season.

*“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.”*

1 Corinthians 11:28-32, KJV

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

“In July of 2020, the Lord called our family to sell our home and travel the country in a fifth wheel camper. Not for vacation, but to spread the Gospel and be a vessel for His work. After much prayer and discernment, the Lord gave us several affirmations in this calling and, consequently, we chose to step out in obedience to Him and commit to His will for our lives.

This transition was not an instantaneous process and it was exceedingly difficult in our flesh, as we have invested the last seven years into building our home to accommodate our vision and our plans for the future. However, as He calls us to abandon our plans and to adopt His, we chose, and continue to choose, to exchange our plans for His will for our lives.” Check out their blog: [movingbyfaith.home.blog](http://movingbyfaith.home.blog)

## Chaplain's Corner

**Time.** We are reminded of it all the time (pardon the pun)—but especially around New Years. This morning in my Intercessory Bible Reading I was reminded of this again from **Romans 11:36**  
...

*For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever.*

*For of/from him* (past), *and through him* (present), *and to him* (future), *are all things*. Even from eternity past God has planned things; and even now all things are working out through Him to carry out those plans; and in the end all the glory from those plans will go to Him.

Beloved, it's OK for us to make plans for the coming year, but let's just make sure even as *our hearts plan our way, that it is still the Lord who directs our steps (Proverbs 16:9)*.

To the Praise of His Glory,  
Chaplain Chip

## Prayer Requests & Praise Reports

### Prayer Requests

- As we go forward in 2022, remember to hold your MI COM leaders and members in your prayers. May we do the will of God as we plan and move forward for His glory.
- Pray for our government, first responders, and people around the world as Covid continues to affect many people's lives.

### Praise Report

- Praise God for all the work MI COM was able to accomplish in 2021! We could not have done it without His leading and protection. We have learned so much and are ready to move forward in 2022!

- Rick and Cindy continue to praise God for His presence during a few difficult months of health problems.

*"Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed."*

Luke 5:15-16 NIV

If you have a prayer request or a praise report, please share it with us and we will post it on the website and include it in our monthly newsletters.

## **MI COM Officers & Executive Board**

**Presidents/Project Coordinator:** Rick & Cindy Truesdail

**Vice-President/Project:** Tony Morningstar

**Hospitality/Food Coordinator:** Kim Norrington & Maria Hannuksela

**Sewing Project Coordinator:** Cindy Truesdail & Terry Simmons

**Cleaning & Beautification Coordinator:** Sharon Hessling & Ruth Farwell

**Secretary:** Brandi Dyke

**Treasurer:** Gary Hannuksela

**Chaplain:** Pastor Chip Collins

**Historian:** Cindy Truesdail

**Disaster Relief Liaison:** Warren Hessling

Keep checking at our online Website and Facebook for announcements!

Website: [www.michigancampersonmission.org](http://www.michigancampersonmission.org)

Facebook: Michigan Campers on Mission

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