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The Annie Armstrong Easter Offering; fueling new churches

PLYMOUTH – It is hard to imagine where I would be personally and more importantly where the life of Mile City Church would be without experiencing the benefits from the fuel of the Annie Armstrong Easter offering.

Early on, having the financial support as a brand new church planter was monumental and helped give my wife Jen and I the courage to take the leap to start Mile City seven years ago. However, beyond the actual support dollars, was the spiritual support that was fueling and investing in us greatly.

The church planter support system that is fueled by the Annie Armstrong offering is in a league of its own. It is the greatest church planting engine on the planet. Not only have I gotten to experience it myself, but now I have had the continuous privilege of walking with many other new church planters on their journey and watching them experience those benefits.

At Mile City church it is a joy and honor to give back annually to the Annie Armstrong Easter offering that has helped give us the fuel that we needed to take off. To all the pastors out there reading this - if you have ever wondered if your investment into the Annie Armstrong offering is worth it; I humbly say with all glory to our great God that after seven years of existence, Mile City is now in two locations with three different languages, has multiplied six other times and is helping to plant many other churches.

I'm living proof, and just one of many examples, that this offering is truly working. But as you know, there is much more work to do, and God in his amazing plan wants to use all of us to keep on fueling His great mission. What a privilege it is for each one of us to get a front row seat of watching him show off!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Travis Whittaker is Lead Pastor of Mile City Church. In 2015, Travis and a launch team of 75 people set out together to plant Mile City. Travis and Jen are raising their four children, Tristan, Lena, London and Tavin, and are honored to lead the Mile City family.

Mandoos, lies and Satan

PLYMOUTH – It is now almost three years since we came to the US. One thing that our family is still getting used to is the potluck culture, which is not as common in Japan or Korea (where my wife Sunhee is from).

So this happened last year when our family was invited to a dinner by one of our good American friends. We figured it will be a potluck, so we got some frozen mandoos (i.e. Korean dumplings) from a very fancy supermarket called Kroger. Three minutes in the microwave, bam! Easy peasy. Then, just to make it look more presentable, we placed the mandoos on a nice plate and brought them to our friend's house.

As soon as people saw the mandoos, they all exclaimed "how marvelous!" as if they have never seen a microwaved meal before. Sure enough, they all assumed that Sunhee cooked that thing from scratch. Even though I felt very guilty, it became too late to tell the truth and we went with the flow that evening.

It really became awkward after that day, as people started talking about my wife's homemade mandoos. Eventually, it became so awkward, and we found a good time to tell the truth, and it all ended with a big laugh. Oh, what a relief!

If we are not careful, we can be living in a life full of lies. Scripture says that Satan is the father of lies and he is capable of cooking those lies as easily as those mandoos. I share this with you because Satan has been speaking lots of lies in my life. Since our church began three months ago, I wish I could say everything is going well. But things are tough. Some Sundays are great, others are not. Our church attendance is not growing as fast as I hoped.

In those moments, the enemy finds a small crack, and speaks a lot of lies in my ears to discourage me. "Hey, do you really think you're in the right profession?" "Do you think people are really changing through your sermons?" "Do you think you're a good leader?" I'll be honest. Sometimes I fall for those lies and get discouraged. There are mornings when I don't want to get up from my bed.

In those moments, what can I do but cling on to God's truth. The Apostle Paul rightly said that we must wear the armor of God and fend those lies off with the truth of the Gospel. I am a child of God. I am forgiven through the blood of Jesus Christ. I am not perfect, but Jesus is perfect, and He will build this church. It may not be according to my timing, but He will build this church in His timing and praise the Lord for that.

As I write this, my heart goes out to those pastors who are discouraged. My heart goes out to those pastors who are feeling insignificant. If that is you, I want to gently remind you that Jesus has won this battle. The Author and the Creator of life has got this thing rigged, and he will

open the way. Let's cut the lies of the enemy and keep sowing, keep plowing, and God will show His grace upon us.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pastor Maki Umakoshi is a pastor of Hikari City Church which was launched in October 2022 in Plymouth, Michigan. His family came to the US in February 2020 to bring the Gospel to Japanese people living in greater Detroit. His wife Sunhee is from South Korea and they have an 8-year old daughter.

Missionary's ministry in the Big Easy highlights hard work

NEW ORLEANS, LA – Faithfulness in difficult places sums up missionary Kay Bennett's ministry to the marginalized in one of America's most challenging cities. "Baptist Friendship House is a ministry center to folks who are impoverished, to folks who are unhoused and to human trafficking survivors," Bennett said. "The people we minister to come from all walks of life. Some grew up here in New Orleans, in Louisiana. Others come from different states, and some even come from different countries."

Bennett, a missionary with the North American Mission Board, has served through the Baptist Friendship House for more than 30 years. She works among those society routinely overlooks, believing the gospel message can transform any person's life. Through their ministry, the Baptist Friendship House gives out food, clothing and hygiene kits in backpacks that help meet the needs for those in the community.

"As we minister to those basic needs that we all have, it opens the door to minister to the spiritual need, which is the greatest need of all, so that a life-changing relationship can begin with Jesus Christ," Bennett said. Life on the street means — whether rain, shine, in oppressive New Orleans humidity or through the occasional cold spell — constantly enduring the elements outdoors.

There are consistent threats of violence, addiction, sickness and infection. The National Library of Medicine stated in 2017 that the average lifespan for a homeless person is 17.5 years shorter than the general population. "You're at risk every day of your life when you walk around on the streets," Bennett said. "On Tuesdays when we have folks come in our yard at the Friendship House, one of the things that we often do is we have lots of first aid supplies, antibacterial ointments, creams and band-aids to give away for those who've been hurt." No one wants to

live this way, but the hurdles they have to overcome to get a job and find a place to live can seem insurmountable. They lack identification, and they have either lost or never had the documentation to get an ID.

Many have endured trauma and abuse. They have run away or been cast out, grown up on the streets and become adults. “We encourage them to come to Friendship House where we can offer them counseling and case management and try to resolve some of those past issues too,” Bennett said. “I’ve even had folks that can’t read and write. So we’ll teach them to read and write, and then build on that skill and help them get their GED,” she noted. “Then, we build on that with life skills and with job readiness skills.”

Bennett first met a young woman named Yvonne Schaad in 2006. Schaad visited the Baptist Friendship House when they were handing out food. For 10 years, Schaad would attend a Bible study while continuing to struggle with alcoholism and living on the streets of New Orleans before things began to change. The overwhelming love Schaad experienced from Bennett and others at the Baptist Friendship House played a huge role in her transformation. “You know, they loved me no matter what. And it took some time, but they showed me that there is a God, and He loves you,” Schaad recalled. “And that’s just amazing right there, everything that I’ve done and did, God forgives me,” she said. “It took me a long time to forgive myself, but I think that I have now.”

Schaad has been sober for several years and regularly comes to the Friendship House to serve. With the help of Bennett and her staff, Schaad completed her GED and is successfully working. “I’m grateful I can come here ...and help them,” said Schaad. “Most of the people I used to run with have passed, but there’s some that I still see now and maybe they’ll see that there is another side.”

Schaad’s transformation is just one of many that Bennett and her fellow staff members have seen. “No matter what circumstance or situation we find ourselves in, Jesus Christ is truly the only person that can turn somebody’s life around,” Bennett said. “I get to watch God show up and show out. It’s amazing to watch. He still works miracles.” The Annie Armstrong Easter Offering provides half of NAMB’s annual budget, and 100 percent of the proceeds go to the field. The offering is used for training, support and care for missionaries, like Bennett, and for evangelism resources.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brandon Elrod writes for the North American Mission Board.

A first-hand report of the Turkish earthquake through the eyes of Christian relief workers

WARREN – I got a report from Turkey from a friend, a Romanian pastor with Turkish ethnicity. He went there with aid to the Christians and is leaving again in March with a few pastors. He brings tents and small propane tanks. Our church supported some of the expenses. My friend grew up as a Muslim, graduated Muslim High School in Romania, came to know Christ, became a Baptist pastor and founded 3 Turkish churches in Romania. I think seeing the disaster through the lenses of Christian relief teams is important.

Here is his report as given through Google translate.

“Today, I stayed in Antakya, Antioch. The place where the Lord's disciples received the name Christians for the first time. In Antakya, the first Gentile church was established. This is where the first Christian missionaries who brought the gospel to Europe left from.

The city of Antakya now looks like it was hit by nuclear bombs. Nature took revenge on Antakya and overcame her. Antakya no longer exists as a city. It's almost completely destroyed!

I went to the Turkish evangelical church. There are a few rooms left of the church building, but the brothers there told us that they were asked by the authorities to leave that building because it is going to be demolished. It is shaky, and not safe.

In front of the Turkish church building in Antakya is installed a tent. In the tent live several dozen people who have lost their homes. An elderly woman asked us to pray for her. With tears in her eyes, she told us that five grandchildren and a daughter-in-law had died!

The Turkish pastor looked at me and told me that he did not know how or what to pray. I felt the same. We finally prayed, through the spirit that gave us the right words and shed some more tears in our already empty bellows.

Another 70-year-old man told us how he, his wife and their girl escaped from under the rubble after 21 hours. I asked his permission to take a picture of him because for me he is the symbol of God's miracles in Antioch of another time! My new friend says that behind us 17 people still lie under the rubble.

I could write a lot more about today and it is not even over. But I have no more words. My vocabulary is so poor in the face of this tragedy that I don't even know what else to say.

Tomorrow is Sunday. Pray for the brothers in Turkey, for those in Antakya in particular. Pray that God will bless this place and, “why not?”, make this place a source of blessing for Asia. HE can.

In addition, you can also give through your churches for the afflicted in Turkey. And tomorrow, thank God for Grace and for peace, and for water and bread, and for your loved ones, and for the roof of the house where you live. It's good for you. For the moment”.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Doru Radu is one of the elders at Golgotha Romanian Baptist Church in Warren, Michigan. Radu immigrated from the communist Romania and likes to write stories about the good hand of our Lord who protected us during the 45 years of communist persecution.

Lasagna life

PLYMOUTH – The longer I live the more I realize that the persons we have become are a composite of all the experiences of our lives. Some of those experiences or events are more impacting and pivotal than others while some are mere blips on the historical radar screens of our past.

It is usually in late evenings when I retire to my study that my mind puts on its hiking shoes and treks back over the landscape of my memories. Sometimes those shoes take me forward to the things that might be, but as more of my years are found behind me than ahead, I seem to walk around in those hills of previous days. The mental exercise does me good, and sometimes I stumble upon things that had been long forgotten or for some strange reason I am seeing for the first time.

Last night I had one of those mental hiking epiphanies. I came to realize that life is a lot like really good lasagna. It consists of layer after layer of spices, pasta, sauces, cheeses, meats, and who knows what else, baked together to form one unique dish. Each item, though unique in and of itself, has melded with all the others to form something special.

As I was inspecting a slice of my “lasagna life” I discovered a cheesy piece that I had not recalled since the event. At the time I was living in Marathon, Texas near the Big Bend National Park. I was serving there as the Associate Pastor (official title for flunky) of First Baptist Church under the watchful eye and tutelage of Pastor Walt Gallaway. He was a great preacher and a wonderful friend who taught me much about life and ministry.

There was not a great deal to do in that little village, so we learned to entertain ourselves with various hobbies. Walt found pleasure and relaxation in tilling and cultivating a small patch of land as his own personal garden. Now that was no small task seeing that the ground there was

composed of 90% rock, and water was at a premium. We may have gotten six inches of rain a year, and as the old ranchers out there would say, “you should have seen the day that it came.”

He had worked for several weeks to get the ground prepared, and finally had a good crop of vegetables forcing their way through the hard surface. He had a really good stand of tomatoes and okra, and of course his favorite, Chiltepin Peppers. Most of the parishioners were quite amazed at his agrarian abilities.

He was faithful to care for them and to keep up a regimen of spraying and fertilization. He was very knowledgeable about his little farming operation because he had worked with his father at his cottonseed processing plant in South Texas which had been relatively successful. He was aware of what insecticides were best, how to use them, and had several bottles of them in his storage area.

One day his wife Gail, decided she would help him with his maintenance and she sprayed his entire garden with what she thought was a premixed concoction of his best bug killer. Her intentions were pure and her motives were sincere, but what she did not know was that the liquid mixture in the pump up sprayer was the very powerful defoliant 2-5-4-T, better known as Agent Orange. Within a matter of hours every green limb and leaf lay limp on the ground. It was not a pretty sight nor was the discussion that ensued.

Gail, like so many in this life, was very sincere and well meaning, but she was sincerely wrong. Many have and still proclaim loudly and fervently if a person is really sincere in the matters of religion and life then that is all that is required. “Sincerity” and “Tolerance” have become the politically correct and socially acceptable standards by which we are to judge a person's veracity.

My friends, ax murderers and rapists are sincere, but that does not make them right. There is only one standard by which we may judge something to be right or wrong, and His standard does not change with the winds of social and political variables. God’s Word is the standard by which we must live, not by present cultural norms or today’s acceptable practices.

In fact, there was another woman named Eve who was very sincere in her dealings with a certain Garden and look where that got us. She was sincerely wrong.

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.

Sending out new generations

PLYMOUTH – Save the date Saturday, 09/09/2023, 9 am - 2 pm, in Michigan.

Imagine repeated waves of Michiganders making noise and reshaping communities worldwide with the Good News of Jesus Christ because of one important day on 09/23/23! Can you feel it? Can you dream it? Do you want to experience it in-person? You can!

- Highschooler?
- University student?
- Between the ages of 18-35 years of age?
- Leading a ministry with one of these age groups?

On the shores of every Great Lake, the waves have been splashing the sand and the stones for thousands of years without stopping. Day and night. The Lord wants Michiganders to do the same with the Good News of Christ by diving into the lives of others throughout the world.

On 09/23/23 we will focus on sending new generations from Michigan to the nations, to those who speak Urdu, to those who drink water from open wells, to those who are hungry, to those who live in crowded cities, to those who live alone on mountain sides surrounded by jungles.

Highschooler?

Could you imagine Germany, Norway, the Netherlands, Spain, South Africa, or Mexico? Yes, a one-week summer mission trip is possible! How? Learn more at this one-day event filled with food, swag, and unique experiences through English and other languages. On 09/23/23, you will learn how convenient it is to register and prepare for a youth group mission trip.

University Student?

Want to experience an entire summer living in England having conversations with university students in pubs, or living in a remote, tropical village explaining lessons from the Bible using another language? That could be your experience. We will show you a menu of mission sites that will make it nearly impossible for you to decide on just one mission trip.

18 or older?

Over the age of 18? What about a 2-year assignment in Japan, India, Belgium, or Mali creating friendships and explaining Christ's to those around you. With a 2-year assignment, everything is paid for by the generosity of church members: flights, housing, local transportation, and language classes. You will be empowered to live an adventure for the Lord that you will never

forget. More importantly, the people who come to know Christ from your witness will live in eternity with you because you cared enough to risk a trip overseas.

Language Groups

We beg those of you who speak additional languages to come and join us. Pig-Latin does not really count as a language for overseas service. Ha. However, other languages are priceless. There will be a special breakout for those of you who speak Arabic, Spanish, Asian languages, European languages, and other dialects. Your superpower will be walking into a community speaking the heart language of the people. You will do more in minutes than most can do in months. Do not be shy, join us on 09/23/23.

Black Church Missions

Some of us have a unique role or experience in serving others. Some will more easily blend into an international culture that is visited because of the physical resemblance. Urban residents understand the challenges of urban dwellers in other nations. The George Liele Scholarship, through the International Mission Board, can assist local black churches with international mission efforts and education. There is a valuable place for you, and we want to hear your voice.

Day's Activities

We are going to rock the day on 09/23/23 for Jesus Christ with sounds, aromas, flavors, experiences, swag, testimonies, music, prayer, and preaching that is going to tattoo into your heart and brain a permanent spot for those who have yet to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Did you know our word tattoo comes from the Tahitian word, "tatau" which means to mark or strike? The word tattoo refers to ancient methods where ink was "tapped" into the skin by using sharp sticks or bones. Be warned about 09/23/23, the Holy Spirit is going to tap, tap, tap into your heart and mind an unforgettable burden for other people around the world. There is no telling what the Lord will do in you and through you starting on 09/23/23.

Save the date Saturday, 09/09/2023, 9 am - 2 pm, in Michigan. Watch for more breaking news each month.

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.

Vacation Bible School grants and training

PLYMOUTH – People all over Michigan have heard the Good News through VBS. It's a great opportunity to share Jesus and we encourage every church to host VBS for their church and community. This year's theme from LifeWay is **Twists and Turns: Following Jesus Changes the Game**. It celebrates that Jesus is our guide through all life's twists and turns.

VBS Grants

We are making \$250 grants available to cooperating churches that use LifeWay VBS materials to share the Gospel. Apply for a grant at: [BSCM.org/grants](https://bscm.org/grants). You can also contact mike@bscm.org if you have questions or need additional help. Please send us photos of your VBS so we can celebrate with you!

VBS Leader Training

Leader training makes VBS more impactful. According to a 20 year study by LifeWay, for every person who attends VBS leadership training, 1.1 people accept Jesus as Savior during VBS! Leader training this year will be provided by our partners in The State Convention of Baptists in Ohio.

State VBS Clinic – April 29th

Lakeside Community Church
33701 Jefferson Ave
Saint Clair Shores MI 48082

The doors will open at 9:00am.
Training starts at 10:00 and ends at noon.
Refreshments will be served (no lunch).

Register at [BSCM.org/events](https://bscm.org/events) or visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/state-vbs-clinic-tickets-558195466667>. The cost is \$10 per person. Everyone in attendance will receive a Leader Guide for their core session.

Bring your A-game and come with us as we show you how to engage students in "Twists & Turns" - VBS 2023! The VBS Clinic is a super-engaging experience with classes designed to teach VBS directors, teachers, volunteers, and pastors - everything you need to host an amazing VBS at your church. Come and see that trusting Jesus changes the game entirely!

Core Session Training Options

Preschool (Birth - Kindergarten) includes preschool rotations

Children (Grades 1-4)
Students (Grades 5-12)
Children & Student Rotations - Crafts, Music, Recreation, Snacks, & Missions
Pastors & Directors

About Twist and Turns

“Spin the spinner, beat the clock, skip ahead, level up, and play to win! You’ll need to bring your A-game for this VBS. Twists & Turns is a fantastical celebration of games of all kinds. From classic tabletop games to video games and more, kids will play their way through VBS while learning that Jesus guides them through all the twists and turns of their lives. They’ll find that even when they mess up it’s never “game over” (LifeWay.com/VBS).

Sounds fun - but it’s the kind that teaches deep spiritual truths that last a lifetime. VBS makes a difference in the lives of all who participate. It’s good for the students, teachers, and volunteers. We want to jumpstart VBS in churches all over the state. Why? “If you total it up, VBS results in 15 hours of intense discipleship, the gospel being shared daily, and 7 months of ministry in 1 week.”

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.

Fatal entry plans

There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.

– Proverbs 14:12

WINDSOR, ONTARIO – In January 1985, a large suitcase, unmarked and unclaimed, was discovered at the customs office at Los Angeles International Airport. When U.S. Customs agents opened the suitcase, they found the curled-up body of an unidentified young woman.

She had been dead for a few days, according to the coroner. As the investigation continued, it was learned that the woman was the wife of a young Iranian living in the U.S. Unable to obtain a visa to enter legally and join her husband, she took matters into her own hands and attempted to smuggle herself into the United States in the airplane’s cargo bay. While her plan

seemed to her simple though risky, officials were hard pressed to understand how such an attempt could ever succeed. Even if she survived the journey in the cargo bay, she would remain an illegal alien, having entered through improper channels.

This scene is eerily similar to the one in August 2021 at Kabul airport. Afghan citizens, desperate to escape the rule of the Taliban, clung to the sides and wings of a U.S. Air Force airplane as it taxied down the runway.

Some people believe they'll enter the kingdom of God on their own; by their own devices and decisions. They reason that they have been good, law-abiding citizens who never cheated the government (too much) and never hurt anyone intentionally. They feed the hungry, support Little League Baseball, and oppose abortion. They care for failing grandparents in their own home rather than send them to hospice. They are good people with good intentions. Baptized, catechized, and confirmed, they have attended church at times and given money to support it. Striving and working hard to get to heaven, entry plans of their own design prove not only foolish but fatal.

The Bible says, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death" (Proverbs 16:25).

Through the ages people have tried to become citizens of heaven through various means that seem right: good works, philosophy, morality, and even religion. But there is only one way to God, the rest lead to spiritual death and separation from God.

"For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God" (1 Pet. 3:18). Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

You and I have wonderful friends in our churches who no longer believe this. "Nearly 70% of born-again Christians disagree with the biblical position that Jesus is the only way to God, according to a [new survey](#) from Probe Ministries, a non-profit that seeks to help the Church in renewing the minds of believers with a Christian worldview" (christianpost.com/news, "Nearly 70% of born-again Christians say other religions can lead to Heaven: study," Thursday, October 21, 2021). What will we do? Pastors are evangelizing their own church members!

Entry plans for the kingdom of God are understandable and direct, no matter how long you've "been in church" or sung in the choir. Admit you need a Savior. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Be willing to turn from your sins in repentance. Trust in Jesus, who lived the perfect life you and I could not live, and died the perfect death we could never die, and rose again from the grave to rescue us from a life of sin and disobedience to God.

The Bible says, "If you confess with your mouth the LORD Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9). Enter through the proper channels and you will receive eternal life!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Garth Leno is the Pastor/Planter Care Specialist with the BSCM. He serves in a similar role with the Canadian National Baptist Convention, and he is the founding pastor of The Gathering Church in Windsor, Ontario, a church he planted with his wife, Patty, and a few of their friends.

The perfect shoe

ROSCOMMON – I like shoes. I like all different kinds of shoes. I own shoes for all different kinds of reasons. I have shoes made for working outside, working in the snow and mud, walking on the treadmill (still like new), walking on the beach. I have dress shoes and casual shoes along with shoes that are very colorful to match different clothes I like to wear. I have shoes representing all types and brands for any fashionable occasion.

I figure you have to have them so why not be prepared and enjoy what you're wearing at the time. I like shoes. However, there is one pair of shoes I own that seem to be the perfect shoe for all occasions (except the beach). They are a pair of Timberland dark and light brown boots. They can be worn with jeans, dress slacks, shorts, casual environments or dress-up occasions. They are comfortable and always seem to fit just right when I slide my foot into them.

Everyone probably has a pair of shoes like this or at least an article of clothing that is always comfortable and appropriate for just about anywhere you go. It makes you feel good just putting it on because it fits just right. It may even spark a memory from when you got it, or where you were the first time you wore it. It's just perfect!

Did you know that Jesus has His own brand of shoes for us to wear and they are just perfect! They actually come with a whole outfit designed to be the perfect fit for every Christian. You can discover the purpose for each piece of the outfit by reading Ephesians 6:10-17 - for the sake of this article I'm highlighting the footwear.

The shoes that Jesus has for us to wear are called the "Gospel of Peace". They are designed by the Great Designer to give us a firm/no-slip footing as we engage evil in our daily lives. They are designed to navigate all types of terrain, and stand firm against any attacks we encounter from the enemy.

They are literally empowered by the power of the Gospel to equip us with peace in any circumstance knowing that Jesus is our protection. The Gospel brings us peace in the chaos, calm in the storm and stable footing in the battle. The perfect shoe!

Of course, no matter how perfect the shoe, we still have to make a choice to wear them. The world offers us a lot of fashionable shoes to wear with the promise of stability and peace, but they all wear out pretty quickly - they don't come with an eternal guarantee. They quickly become uncomfortable, worn out and you find yourself shopping for another pair just to have them become useless and undesirable as well.

They don't give you traction in difficult terrain and they certainly don't give you stability to stand against the enemy. They may look good, but they won't last. So, don't buy them! Stop putting them on! Stop faltering and feeling defeated in the battle! Choose to wear only Jesus brand shoes made specifically for you - His child! Be assured of your salvation and rest in His power and stand firm in the "Gospel of Peace" - the perfect shoe!

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.

New steps to connect pastor's wives in Michigan

Editor's Note: Tricia Werry sat down with Tim Patterson in a recent episode of "Punching Holes in the Darkness". To hear her conversation about ministering to Pastor's wives visit bscm.org/podcast.

CLINTON TOWNSHIP – Recently the question I often get asked is "why are you so passionate about helping pastors' wives?" Well, the obvious answer would be because I AM a pastor's wife myself! However, there is a bigger reason. Being a pastor's wife has allowed me to see how important support and fellowship are.

For example, there are times when pastors' wives feel very alone and overwhelmed. When these times come, it is not easy to be open about these feelings with your church family. I became very aware of this myself last year when my husband started having heart issues. His primary care doctor had been listening to a murmur in his heart caused by a bad valve for years and was monitoring it.

In March of last year his valve decided it had worked hard enough; that started our journey to my husband's open-heart surgery in May of 2022. Praise God for the support of my good friend Laura who is also a pastor's wife who traveled the journey with me.

After that journey last May, I really began to feel God laying upon my heart to help find a way to build a better network of pastors' wives here in Michigan. Who better to get support from than other pastors' wives?

The first step in building that network has been on social media. In August of 2022 a group of Michigan pastors' wives attended an event made possible by our state office. At this event we unanimously decided we needed a way to communicate, share burdens, and post helpful information. A private group page for senior pastor's wives on Facebook was born! You can find it here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/unitedinhope>

While the social media page is a great start, we still need in-person fellowship. The next step in this process of building a network of pastors' wives is to get some face-to-face meetings in place.

As I have prayed and wrestled with how to make this happen, God has opened my eyes to the same words I often find myself repeating to my daughter when she struggles with a project. Start. Where. You. Are. I am inviting pastors' wives to Black Cat Coffee Shop at 55 Macomb Place, Mount Clemens, MI 48043 on Saturday, March 11, 2023, at 1pm to join me in a time of coffee, prayer, and fellowship.

My prayer as we start gathering here in southeast Michigan, is that the network will begin to grow. From that growth other pastors' wives across the state will start to have their own meetings. As we begin to grow and network, we can then start seeing other things grow from that; like churches partnering together for women's Bible studies, or to have worship nights and events. There is already an event on March 17th at Lakeside church at 7pm. Hosted by New Life and Lakeside. You can find more information here: go.bscm.org/womensevent

As I look at this vision for pastors' wives Titus 2:3-5 comes to mind.

"In the same way, older women are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not addicted to much wine. They are to teach what is good so they may encourage the young women to love their husbands and to love their children, to be self-controlled, pure, homemakers, kind, and submissive to their husbands, so that God's message will not be slandered."

Let's start with building up our pastors' wives so we can then better mentor together to women in our churches.

If you would like to talk to me more about this, please contact the state office. Come and be part of the network.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tricia Werry is the women's ministry leader at New Life, Fraser. She is also the Administrative Assistant at Audio Sentry, a security firm in Fraser. Tricia and her husband Art live in Clinton Township with their daughter, Hannah, and their dog, Luna.

New growth, new development, and Revitalization

ROSEVILLE – When I was tasked to write an article for the Baptist Beacon and saw that the theme for this year was Revitalization in our Churches, I questioned what I should write about.

My first thought was to look up the definition of revitalization. Cambridge dictionary defines it as “to make something grow, develop, or become successful.” Synonyms are: renew, restore, refresh, recreate.

After pondering it for a while, 2022 came to mind. It was then that I realized that 2022 was a year of revitalization from within. I experienced new growth, new development and in many ways I was refreshed, renewed and recreated.

In 2022 I did just about every new thing a person could do; I got married, moved across the country, became a pastors’ wife, and started a new career...all within 4 months. But in all of those changes, I discovered 3 things about revitalization.

1. Revitalization is constant.

2 Corinthians 4:16 says “though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.” Throughout this Christian journey we are continuously being revitalized. It’s not something that happens one time, it is a constant decision, a constant act, a constant goal that we strive to attain on a deeper level every single day.

2. Revitalization comes from within.

You cannot change what is on the outside until an internal change happens. The growth and development I experienced in 2022 has manifested itself on the outside in the way that I serve my family, my church and my community.

The revitalization from within was necessary to be able to live out our church’s aims: to help people follow Jesus, steward well, give generously and live their Faith. As believers, our minds are being renewed daily. Throughout the ups and downs of life and ministry, we are able to drink from the One who satisfies our souls in drought (Isaiah 58:11) and experience true revitalization.

3. Inward revitalization produces outward change.

Ephesians 4:23-24 says that once we are renewed in the spirit of our minds, we “put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” When we are connected to Jesus, the True Vine, we experience internal revitalization that helps us grow better, serve better, live better and LOVE better.

My prayer for everyone is that you continuously strive to experience inner revitalization not only for ourselves, but so that the seeds of that revitalization are planted in our families, our churches, our communities and our world.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elany Clark is married to David Clark, lead pastor of S.E.E.D. Church. She moved from Alabama to Michigan to plant S.E.E.D. Church in Roseville, MI. She enjoys connecting with women and children in the community through her CARE Ministry and leads a women's small group through her church. She is looking forward to all this year has to bring and continuing to connect with families in the metro Detroit area!

Not an option: church revitalization

RIVER ROUGE – No one would disagree that our Lord Jesus is the Builder of the Church (Mt 16:18). He has to be, because it is utterly impossible for any of us to be, due to our deadness apart from the spiritual life we have only in Christ.

The Church consists of people with a new humanity unlike anything this world has ever seen. Every citizen born into this world is of the earth and comes through the spiritually dead ancestral line of Adam (Rom 5:12-14; I Cor 15:22). We are Christians via the spiritual operation of salvation and it's meticulous surgical steps of justification, transformation, sanctification, preservation, glorification performed by a merciful, gracious, and intelligent Holy God who raised Jesus the second Adam from the dead (Rom 1:4; 5:12-21; 6:5; I Cor 15:21; Col 3:1-3) are now no longer a product of the old man.

Believers are immigrants in so far as this world is concerned. We're foreigners on the earth—unknown to them just like Jesus (Jn 15:18-21), because our citizenship is in Heaven (Phil 3:20). The old human species lost the gift of Paradise, but the new human species regained the gift of Paradise. Amazing, fascinating, serendipitous is the story of redemption and how God regenerates dead men.

Since this is the case, church revitalization is not an option. Let me explain first from what is my Christian experience then secondly based upon the Scriptures.

I grew up in downriver metro Detroit, and came to Christ at age seventeen. My walk as a young Christ follower was exciting, and I marveled at the life and excitement of the Church that I knew intimately and other local expressions of the Church that I gazed at from a distance. Great preaching with heartfelt conviction that would bring one to tears as you felt almost compelled

to remove one's shoes because of the holy ground that God's presence brought to the sanctuary. The witness and outreach endeavors of local churches that regularly scheduled the doing of street, park, door to door and sports evangelism. The body life of the church experienced in celebratory occasions such as: baptisms, Communion Service, Love Feast Dinners, picnics, VBS, choir rehearsals and open air concerts, Bible clubs & camps, Sunday School, church clean up days [I cleaned a church top to bottom every Sunday almost always by myself from age 17 -21], prison ministry, children's outings, Bible college & seminary, trips & travel, revivals, seminars & conferences, men's & women's breakfast, discipleship—mentoring, even prayer meetings.

In my early Christian years in the context of all this life and vibrancy that the Holy Spirit created, I ascertained and responded in the affirmative to the Lord's call to the gospel preaching ministry. I was 21, I was feeling what I believed to be what Paul felt in Romans 1:15-16, and said yes because no was not an option. A voluntary slave does not say no to his Master Lord Jesus whom he both loves and respects.

After the completion of my Mdiv studies, God in His grace & mercy used me to plant the first church that I ever pastored, and I did so for five years, in Southfield MI. In my fifth year of pastoring full time I responded to the call to pastor in Chicago IL. I stayed and did ministry in Chicago for twenty-five years. During the duration of those twenty-five years I experienced heartbreak over the Lord's church in Detroit. Over the course of those years in my frequent travels back to Detroit I saw the vitality of the spiritual milieu that birthed and fostered me into the new humanity called the Church, erode. I knew it had declined because of seeing geographical territories where churches and outflow of Christian ministries existed, were no longer in a lot of places.

The light of the church was extinguished and in its place was a fake light, a fictitious light, an entity that perpetrated to be light, but the messages disseminating from it was no gospel at all (Gal 1:6-9). Symbols, writing, religious garb, observances of pagan sacred days not reflective of the Christian faith and our God of the Holy Bible had been taken and now stood, where the Lord's Church had at one time stood. The lights were out.

For the last fifteen years of my time in Chicago I made this observance and the more deterioration of the church that I saw, the more my jaw dropped in shock and my heart grieved to tears. I did not understand how the people of God could allow the Christian light of the Gospel to go out in a community. How could the corporate Church allow such to happen especially if that Church was struggling? How could a local Church, even if that congregation is growing and needs another facility, surrender that territory to the enemy?

Theologically, practically, progressively in kingdom advancement it made no sense. Jesus said, "I will build my Church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it" (Mt 16:18). Should not the Church be pushing back spiritually, geographically, territorially, physically, against the growth and spread, of the enemies of the Gospel and not vice versa?

I was all the more excited to begin the transition and return to Detroit after learning the door had been closed for me to do missionary work in the Philippines. Ready to go somewhere, I asked the Lord, "where should I go instead?" and after twenty five years, it was back to Detroit. Detroit was the very place that my heart had ached for after watching the Church's demise.

That being said, church revitalization is not an option, but a must. Every track of land, every beachhead of a Christian witness should and must be maintained. We have to keep the lights of Christian witness on because individual lives and communities are dependent upon it.

When the Holy Spirit used Paul to turn on the lights of Gospel witness in Corinth and Ephesus, he through the Holy Spirit maximized the assurance of such lights getting brighter by leaving resources, one of which was in the person of Timothy (I Cor 4:17; 16:10-11; I Tim 1:3).

The same thing in Corinth and Crete when the Holy Spirit used Paul to turn the lights of the Gospel witness on there, he, through the Holy Spirit again, guarded its brilliance by sending and leaving resources, one of which was Titus (II Cor 7:13-16; 8:16-24; Titus 1:5).

Even Barnabas, who no doubt, played a role in discipling Paul in this Kingdom of God-advancing strategy, he went all the way over to Tarsus (Acts 11:22-26) and brought Paul from there to what grew and became the new headquarters of the first century Church, Antioch (Acts 13:1-3).

Why did he do this? He did this because the Scripture says, "he saw evidence of the grace of God" (Acts 11:23). Whenever and wherever we see evidence of the grace of God, and especially if there is a threat to the loss of Christian witness in a community, it behooves us as Christian leaders in the Lord's Church to give support & aid to local churches.

Many times they simply need the encouragement, prayer, fellowship, safety and relationship of the community that we bring to them. Interestingly enough what is frequently needed more than anything is a resource like Paul, Timothy and Titus for a season. Not to ignore larger mission tasks abroad that cost thousands of dollars per person. But what if in addition we reached out to churches here in metro Detroit, no strings attached, and just asked how we can help with a team of just three or six youngster mission groups to lend physical aid to struggling churches for a summer, during Christmas and Spring break for a year?

Young people, not too far from home, would likely require no money to do this work. They could even get inexpensive visits from family & friends that are just a car drive away. What if instead of uprooting a church and totally relocating, our churches left behind a pastor and portion of the congregation to keep the lights of Gospel witness burning instead of giving up ground and selling a building that will likely be scooped up by faith systems that are not Christian.

Did the Lord tell you to sell the building because the money is needed where He's taking you or did your secularist business acumen that came from corporate America? We should be willing to do as Barnabas, as Paul, and bring resources of revitalization to the Lord's local expressions

of Churches. We're already empowered to do so.

This formerly Christian-majority society is losing. And it's not solely because of the advancement of ideologies that fly in the face of biblical theology. I believe it is also because of the selfishness and lack of aggressiveness of Christian Churches that lack faith, love, and frankly at times just hoard Kingdom resources.

May God help us and show us where the lights of Gospel witness are flickering and threatening to go out. May we respond and ask God to show us how to assist sister Protestant churches especially in urban areas, whether our brand or not, to keep the lights on!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Fix your eyes on Jesus

MACOMB TOWNSHIP – Last summer, our family stopped in the Smoky Mountains on our way back to Michigan after visiting my family in Florida. I do not particularly care for mountain driving. The roads are narrow and there are drop offs everywhere. Anytime my eyes would gaze out the window and see the cliffs, my anxiety would rise. Of course, I trusted my husband's driving skills, but as soon as I saw the potential danger, all the "what-ifs" would begin to flood my mind. I quickly realized I needed to keep my eyes up and off the side of the road.

In life, one of our biggest struggles is to not allow our eyes to fall off Jesus and onto the circumstances that we are going through. This is a hard task, one that I am not sure we will ever perfect.

*And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus,
the pioneer and perfecter of faith.*

– Hebrews 12: 1b-2 NIV

There are many examples in the Bible when people would take their eyes off Jesus due to a circumstance they were going through. Probably one of the most well-known passages in the Bible when it comes to "taking your eyes off Jesus" is when Peter walks on water. In Matthew 14 the Bible tells us that the disciples are on a boat, and they see Jesus walking to them on the lake and they are terrified.

“Lord, if it is you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.” “Come,” he said. Peter got out of the boat, walked on the water, and came toward Jesus.

– Matthew 14: 28-29 NIV

Wow! In this moment of incredible faith, Peter had his eyes on Jesus and was walking on water! Do you remember a time in your life where you trusted God completely and you saw God come through in an amazing way? Sometimes I wonder how we can experience the power and provision of God one day and question him on another? This is the story of our life and all of humanity. It is a battle of the flesh. Peter experienced this as well.

But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord save me!”

– Matthew 14: 30 NIV

Peter momentarily had taken his eyes off Jesus and onto the wind and the waves around him. In his moment of weakness, he began to sink. It is easy for us to be hard on Peter for taking his eyes off Jesus in this moment. Likewise, we tend to do the same. It may look like one of the following in our lives:

- We say we “trust” God to provide for our needs, but then we lose our job and we lose hope.
- We say we “trust” God to take care of our kids, but then they face a hardship in which we want to swoop in and make everything better.
- We say we “trust” God has a good plan for our future, but when everything around us looks anything but good, we begin to doubt that he truly has a good plan for us.

Have you ever been there? I know I have! Looking back to the verse in Hebrews 12:2b–

...fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

The phrase “fix our eyes on Jesus” means we trust him. The minute our eyes begin to fall off Him and on to our circumstances, that is the minute we begin to lose our faith and trust in Him. As soon as Peter began to sink, he cried out to Jesus. He was reminded to shift his focus back to Jesus.

*But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord save me!”
Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him.*

– Matthew 14:30-31a

No matter what we face, we can have faith that Jesus is going to carry us through. We can't fix our eyes on the outcome. We have to trust that God knows the outcome. When we choose to fix our eyes on Jesus, he builds our faith.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

– Hebrews 11:1

The storms of life are going to come and we will be challenged to keep our eyes on Jesus. I pray the sooner we remember to shift our gaze back to Him, the sooner we will remember we can trust Him no matter what is going on in our lives. When we choose to do this, our faith and trust in Jesus grows.

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!

What good is a bruised reed?

MONROE – If you've spent time around church planters or revitalizers, you've probably heard the phrase, "It's easier to give birth than raise the dead." It's brief. It's funny. And for the humans among us, it's true.

But thankfully, we serve a God that can do both. In John 3, Jesus famously tells Nicodemus that he "must be born again." A few chapters later in John 11, Jesus walked up to a tomb in Bethany and cried, "Lazarus, come out." So, this begs the question, which is more difficult for God, a birth, or a resurrection?

Matthew, known among the gospels for his use of the Old Testament prophets, includes his largest Old Testament quotation in Matthew 12:18-21 drawing from the book of Isaiah and painting a beautiful picture of the Messiah's work. When describing the ministry of who we now know to be Jesus Christ, the prophet wrote "a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench."

What good is a bruised reed? In both Isaiah's Hebrew and Matthew's Greek, the word "bruised" is perhaps a little more severe than our English translations as these words can also mean "crushed" or even "shattered." Isaiah is describing a fragile plant that has been damaged in such a way that, although the outside may be minimally affected, the inside is irreparably destroyed.

Through our human lens, this reed is worthless. It can no longer produce grain or seeds and is only going to be taking nutrients from the soil that could be used by another plant. But Isaiah describes the Messiah as one who refuses to break the bruised reed. Why? Because Jesus is not only capable of bringing about a new birth, but He can take seemingly worthless items well past their prime and make them fruitful again.

In the throes of ministering to an established congregation, it can be easy to look at certain baggage and wonder if it's not worth stepping away and starting something new. And if God has called you to a new work, go!

But when God calls you to a place with an established culture, He calls you to a work of perseverance. Eugene Peterson coined the phrase "a long obedience in the same direction" to describe how disciples are made.

But how will members of that church learn long obedience if pastors are unwilling to model it? It can be easy to assume that the lack of health is based on one monolithic cause or another, but once you get into the situation, you'll find complexities that show that there is likely much more work than you anticipated on the surface.

Too often, it can be easy to look at churches and individuals who have walked through significant struggles and only see the bruises. And the bruises are there. But we must remember that Jesus, as surely as He is the catalyst of the new birth, can breathe new life into these established churches and help them to thrive again.

If He can mend bruised reeds, He can bring dying churches back to fruitfulness. And if Jesus hasn't given up on broken reeds, neither should we.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nate Click has served as the Senior Pastor at Heritage Baptist Church in Monroe, MI, since 2021. He also serves as a member of the Southeastern Baptist Association Leadership Team.

Missionary returns to field a third time to finish task

As a 22-year-old Journeyman, Jeri Whitfield saw long-term missionaries commit their lives to God and the people they served. That was her model for missions — a missionary presence that creates gospel access and transforms lives. It's still her desire today, 40 years later.

It's also why she's returned to serve in Thailand through the International Mission Board three times.

"My heart was still here. I didn't feel like the job was done."

The first time she left, she'd finished a two-year Journeyman term. She was in her 20s.

She returned to Thailand as a career missionary in her 40s. At age 55, she faced health concerns from cancer at the same time the IMB was reducing the number of missionaries on the field. She made the difficult decision to take an early retirement and return to the U.S.

Once again, now in her 60s, she's returned to the field. This time she brings with her a passion to connect students to what God is doing around the world, especially in Thailand – where she's beginning her 17th year of service with the IMB.

Whitfield recalls visiting a Thai "spirit doctor" during some of her in-between years. After her retirement with the IMB, she became a college professor. She took a group of students from California Baptist University on a short-term mission trip to her beloved Thailand.

Her students were learning local customs and a spirit doctor hosted them in his home to talk about practices within his field. Whitfield was struck by the fact that usually, spirit doctors in this culture recognize the "Jesus Spirit" as more powerful than the spirits they call upon. But this man was different, and he stuck out.

Whitfield carried a burden for him in her heart, knowing that even though he'd heard a gospel presentation, he was still lost.

Recently, Whitfield returned to visit him, this time back as a full-time missionary. He was bedridden and could no longer speak after suffering a stroke.

"But with his eyes, he spoke, he knew me, and I certainly remembered him," Whitfield recalled. "It saddened me that he knows and has heard the gospel. He's still not interested in changing, and we don't know how long he's got."

It's a burden for this spirit doctor and the people like him that Whitfield has encountered over her time of service in Thailand that has driven her back. She's convinced God's call on her life is until He calls her home.

Whitfield has experienced many other aspects of life in between her terms of service. "But my whole life since I was a Journeyman, I felt called to missions," Whitfield shared. "My heart has been to give as many years as I can with this."

Those years with the IMB have included times of collaborative ministry with national partners, times of serving alongside her mom who would come aid her as a volunteer — even into her

golden years — sweet moments showing Jesus' love to villagers by washing their feet before gifting them flip-flops and adventurous times pulling up to do ministry in a remote area on a motorcycle.

She's also seen how God has used unique experiences in the U.S. to better equip her for serving in Thailand.

Why does she keep returning to reach the nations through the IMB? The answer for Whitfield is simple. She's committed her life to being a steadfast missionary presence, even though the commitment hasn't been easy. God isn't finished using her to reach the nations.

"My experience with missions was that when you're called, it's for life," she said. "When you look at the stats, you know the IMB has always tried to put people first. They take care of their personnel and solve problems."

Are you feeling called to the nations through the IMB like Whitfield? Visit [IMB.org/go](https://www.imb.org/go) or reach out to info@imb.org.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Myriah Snyder writes and edits for the IMB.

How to get your "WHY" back

NASHVILLE, TN – Do you know where you will be when you get where you're going? Well, someone does!

You are headed somewhere whether you like it or not. The journey will come to an end at some appointed time. If that is not good news to your ears, then check this out. Right now, it can be the beginning of a new journey, a better road, and maybe even the best days of your life!

Here are some faith steps you can take to maximize your most excellent life. One of the smartest guys who ever lived once said, "Life is like riding a bicycle. If you want to keep your balance, you must keep moving." Einstein was correct. Step 1 is to never completely stop. God gives you only so many days; use each with purpose.

John D. Rockefeller noted, "If you want to succeed, you must strike out on new paths rather than travel the worn paths of accepted success." So don't let the fear of the unknown or

something new and different hinder you from taking necessary leaps of faith. Your new journey is never supposed to be all spelled out from beginning to end.

Proverbs says, “The path of the righteous is like the morning sun, shining ever brighter till the full light of day.” In other words, it shines more and more as you go ...as you do... as you live by faith!

By the way, any other new adventure (not by faith) is not worth the effort. So, Step 2 is to go boldly, fearlessly, and consistently where none have traveled before—as God leads.

Steps 3 and 4 have some similarities: “To reach a port, we **MUST SAIL. SAIL**, not tie an anchor. **SAIL**, not drift.” (Franklin D Roosevelt) On all human levels—there is a natural tendency to hit the pause button and just **DRIFT!** And to fulfill God’s pilgrimage here—we must keep sailing! Avoid the drift that will ultimately cause you to throw down the anchor!!

“You can’t change the wind. But you can adjust your sails to reach your destination.” (Paulo Coelho) Yes, brothers and sisters, we all are afraid of change, and we don’t like it. Well get over it dearly beloved. There will be many times in your future that an attitude adjustment is just what the great physician ordered.

So, to reiterate—steps 3 and 4 are to avoid drifting (sail intentionally), never put down permanent anchors—and always let God adjust your thinking.

So maybe at this point you are saying to yourself, “Self, you don’t even have a mission statement “let me help you. The mission statement of Chik-Fil-A is (wait for it...) “To Glorify God”. It doesn’t get much simpler than that.

Maybe your excuse is that you can’t do a lot. Can you sit? In 1986, nurse Sandra Clarke could not stay with a patient who asked her to stay and when she returned, the patient had died alone. It took 15 years, but in 2001 she was key in starting **No One Dies Alone** – a program where volunteers sit with terminally ill patients who have no one else! Today it is worldwide!

So please don’t say there is nothing for me to do. I love what my favorite inventor said, “To invent, all you need is good imagination and a pile of junk.” (T. Edison). Never, ever, ever, stop dreaming!!!

If you are simply stuck in a rut; get out!! A rut is just a **GRAVE** with both ends knocked out!

Peyton Manning said, “It’s not wanting to win that makes you a winner, it’s refusing to **FAIL.**”

Adrian Rogers taught, “Sin can’t win, and faith can’t fail.”

And John wrote, “this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.”

Lastly, it's my prayer that these thoughts may serve as your personal challenge to go for it this year. Hold nothing back. Sail like there is no tomorrow.

As some unknown person quipped, "He who has a **WHY** to live can bear almost any **HOW**!! Go get your **WHY** back!

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.

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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