

## COLUMNS

### **Matatu**

By Tim Patterson

As many of you know, Sabrina and I have had the joy and privilege of engaging in missions around the world. These ministry opportunities have led us to countries and cultures that are quite different from those to which we are accustomed. Many of these afforded us lifetime experiences that will forever be embedded in our memories and souls.

On several occasions we have ministered in the African country of Kenya and had the privilege to work in various cities, towns and in the open bush country. The sights, sound and smells of the island city of Mombasa are still as fresh and present in my mind today as when we visited there some years ago. There are so many experiences that I would like to share with you, but space and time will not allow it. However, one such experience that I must share concerns our means of transportation while in Mombasa.

On this particular mission trip, 27 members comprised the group that we led in Kenya. They were from Virginia, Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma, and of course, Florida. Our work schedule was such that we had to leave our accommodations at 6 am every morning in order to be at various witnessing points to encounter people as they walked to work. These points were spread over a large area of the city, so in order to get there, we hired several Matatus for our two-week stay in Mombasa.

A Matatu is a small passenger van that is made to accommodate 12 people. Most of these were built by Japanese companies for export, and are small in comparison to passenger vans in the United States. The name Matatu means "three more." They get that designation because the driver's attitude is that there is always room for three more passengers. On several occasions, I saw at least 25 people packed into one of these vehicles. To say the least, personal space has no meaning in Kenya. I also have a new understanding of the term "stink bug." It was not unusual to see the side door open and someone hanging out.

Another matter that I might mention about the Matatu is that the drivers have no concept of speed, that is except one--as fast as it will go! My prayer life is on a new level after having ridden in one of these. On many occasions there was the distinct possibility that I was going to meet Jesus face to face much sooner than I had planned. But with all their faults and limitations, they did serve their intended purpose to get one to the desired destination.

It is my opinion that the family of God, as a whole, and the Baptist State Convention, in particular, have many similarities to the Matatu. Sometimes this family we call the BSCM is not as comfortable as we might like it to be and, in some instances, it sends forth a fragrance that is not so pleasing. (Our gatherings have been known to "stir up a stink") We have also been known for venturing over into one another's personal space. Of

course, that brings about reactions as times that are less than appropriate. It has been my observation that in some situations I have felt like we were going too fast or too slow and careening down the road, totally out of control. This too has heightened my prayer life. Yet, I would not trade these experiences for anything.

As messy and as uncomfortable our "Ministry Matatu" may be, there is one fact that will always be true, and that is "there is always room for three more." With all our faults and problems God's Word tells us that, "Whosoever will may come." The old hymn says, "There is always room at the cross for you". The family of God may not be all that it should be but there is one thing for sure, it will arrive at its appointed destination. In just a few short weeks, we will gather together as a convention body to share our hopes, dreams, visions and to hear about the great things God has done in and through us over the past twelve months.

Won't you join us? There's still room for you and two more.

### **The feeling of being part of something bigger**

By Nancy Speers (for Mick Schatz)

ROSCOMMON, MI - As a member of a smaller Southern Baptist Church, one of my favorite times of the year is annual meeting time. I look forward to the days of great preaching, inspiring teaching, and awesome worship times. Back "in the day," the associations would meet for three sessions over two days, and then the state convention would meet for at least as long with nationally known speakers and Bible teachers. Missionaries, home on furlough, shared about their work in different areas of the world, too.

One of the best parts of the experience is the feeling of being part of something bigger, a group of Christian people/churches uniting together to impact the world. My church is committed to this partnership, participating in the support of missionaries, seminaries, and the work in our state through the Cooperative Program. It inspiring and affirming, and we take that renewed passion back to our church to those who were not able to attend.

Today is a different day. People are not impressed with long, leisurely meetings with meals and coffee breaks. Our society is face paced, and we want the crib notes. The associations meet for a half day or maybe a few hours. The convention's annual meeting this year is following suit with a one day event, but the content of this meeting has not changed significantly. There will be great preaching and wonderful times of worship. Reports from the North American Mission Board (NAMB) and the International Mission Board (IMB) will be a part of the event as well. Displays will include our mission boards, some seminaries, Guidestone Retirement Plan as well as local information from SEND Detroit, Disaster Relief and Bambi Lake. And of course, there will be a brief time of business as is necessary for any organization to stay organized!

Seeing the impact that we are making in the world as we partner together is a big deal for me. Sometimes, it is easy to look at one church or one part of the body of Christ, and

feel a little overwhelmed. It is not about you or me. It is about all of us, together, in one voice, raising our praises to the only ONE who is worthy.

The worship experience alone is a great reason to attend the BSCM's Annual Meeting at Grace Church in Jackson. It is always interesting to check out another church - get ideas from them for worship center décor, what information is in their welcome center, or how the bathrooms are decorated. And there is always some information to be gained through the meeting, if only the schedule for the upcoming events and retreats at Bambi Lake and other places around the state that can help train and refresh your church members and leaders.

The most important reason to attend the BSCM Annual Meeting remains networking, meeting like-minded people of faith, face to face. The people you will meet are reaching out in their communities, reaching a culture that is unique to their area, and yet similar in the struggles of being relevant in a technological and impersonal, fallen world. Personal contact is rare and precious. Our churches are spread over a large geographic area. It is a time for putting names and faces together. Meeting people from big churches, small churches, city churches and rural ones. Hearing from church planters who are starting churches in our state. Committing to pray for one another. Getting a renewed vision of what we can do together that we cannot do alone.

As part of the BSCM family, we want everyone to be present when we meet. We are many churches, but one body of believers. There is a family bond-undeniable and indescribable, as the Holy Spirit indwells Christians fellowshiping together. Be a part! Each person, each church, is important as we work together to reach the lost people of Michigan.

About the author: Nancy Speers is administrative assistant for Mick Schatz and overall logistics genius for all things Bambi.

### **Pastor Appreciation Month: Thank You Pastor!**

By Mike Durbin

FENTON, MI - Tears welled in my eyes as worship began this recent Sunday. I'm not generally overcome with emotion, but about half of the people in the crowd Sunday morning at one time called me "Pastor." It was so good to see them, reminisce about the special moments we shared together, and to see their continued faithfulness to the Lord. Many of the faces I looked at as I preached were of people who embraced my family, and loved us as we served God together.

There is a special bond that exists between a pastor and the people he serves. We celebrate some of life's most joyous moments together - births, baptisms, marriages, and special occasions. We walk together through grief, loss, and many other difficult situations we face in life.

We left that church because God called our family to serve as missionaries in Brazil. That meant a lot of things. We sold almost all of our belongings in an auction because

we could not take them with us. We left what had been our home for the final time after the auction, and drove to the church building. It was time to leave my keys in what had been my study. Shar, the boys and I formed a circle in the foyer. As we held hands, I said, "Let's thank God for our time here and all the special friends we've made." I started the prayer, but I couldn't finish it. I was overcome with emotion. My dear wife finished the prayer for our family, and thanked God for the special bond we had with these precious people.

The kindness they expressed to us that Sunday was like the kindness we felt years ago as their pastor. It's like we picked up where we left off. They were so gracious and said so many kind things. We laughed, hugged, took pictures together, and remembered. It was a welcome time of encouragement for Shar and me. Everyone likes being loved.

It is also an incredible privilege to be called "Pastor," as well as an incredible responsibility - one that your pastor takes very seriously. He carefully studies the Bible so that he correctly teaches the "Word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:14-15). He prays for you and watches over your spiritual life as one who "...will give an account..." (Hebrews 13:17). He does the "...work of an evangelist" (2 Timothy 4:5) and equips God's people to "...do the work of the ministry" (Ephesians 4:12).

As we enter Pastor Appreciation Month, let me encourage you to love on your pastor and his family. Express your appreciation to them. It will mean more to them than you will ever know. There are lots of ways to express love to your pastor. Have fun and get the whole church involved. Make a video of children in the church answering the question: What do you like about our Pastor?

Rather than T.P. the pastor's house, have the students do a toilet paper drive. Adults could shower them with cards, give the family (or couple) a night out, or send them on a short getaway. One of the most enjoyable times I had was when I was "Roasted."

Enter "Pastor Appreciation Month" in your internet search engine and you will find lots of ideas. Never miss the opportunity to celebrate your pastor's dedication to the Lord and commitment to the church.

### **Why go to Jackson November 9<sup>th</sup>?**

Tony Lynn

There are many important reasons why everyone of us should dedicate one day in November for a family reunion. Lord willing, I know where I will be on November 9<sup>th</sup>. Do you?

Some might go to Jackson for their stomachs. There is the 21-scoop Dare-to-be-Great-Sundae-Challenge at The Parlour found at 1401 Daniel Road in Jackson. Finish the mountain of ice cream by yourself in less than an hour, and your \$49.99 is returned to you. You can share the 21-scoops, but don't expect a refund. The parlour has been serving premium Michigan ice cream for over 100 years. Look at

[www.thejacksonparlour.com](http://www.thejacksonparlour.com) for more details. But let's be honest, there are better reasons to make Jackson on the 9<sup>th</sup> of November.

### **Why go to Jackson on November 9<sup>th</sup>? Lostness**

I can give you more than 10 million reasons. Research reports there are 9.9 million people living in Michigan and many more when we include our neighbors in Ontario. I count them as family, too. When we realize that 2/3's of those surrounding us are without Christ, I know I need to go to Jackson. I want the monumental challenge to invade my thoughts. I want to feel my heart break again within my chest. I want tears to fall down over my cheeks while I worship with you, and weigh the task that is before us.

### **Why go to Jackson on November 9<sup>th</sup>? Gratitude**

I want to express my gratitude to those of you who reach out to the lost, who disciple believers, who strengthen churches, who raise up leaders, who start new churches, and those who help others from across the globe to understand more about Christ. I want to shake your hand. I want to listen to your latest spiritual adventure. I want to hug you and pat you on the back. I want to listen as you sing in your loudest voice praising our Lord. Seeing you and being with you brings hope to my heart. Like the volley of an enduring fireworks display on a breezy Independence Day, your testimony shatters the crushing darkness.

### **Why go to Jackson on November 9<sup>th</sup>? Unique Vision**

I want to see and hear how each one of us is making a unique spiritual difference in the region. Jim can be different than Larry. Sue can be different than Elaine. I cannot be anyone but me, but I want to be the best-me-possible in Jesus Christ. I want you to be the best-you-possible in Jesus Christ. I will not have a list of expectations nor a hidden grade sheet filled with "needs improvement" or "sufficient." I want to hear about journeys, rough ones as well as the sweet rides. I want to pray with you, and you to pray with me. Each one of us fulfilling God's calling in each of our special lives

### **Why go to Jackson on November 9<sup>th</sup>? Call-to-Action**

That night while I am driving east on I-94, after everything is over, I want my mind reeling with inspirational ideas that come from spending time with you. I want to recall the notes I will be taking as I listen to you share your stories. I want to hear Jamie's voice filled with excitement as I hear her personal ideas and her calls-to-action from the day's events. I want to believe that night will fill my soul with a stronger hope because we were together for that one day on November 9<sup>th</sup>.

### **Why go to Jackson on November 9<sup>th</sup>?**

Because we are family and spending that one day with our Father can change eternity. I'll be looking for you!

## STARTING

### **COOPERATIVE PROGRAM: Friends sharing life-giving faith**

By BP Staff

EDITOR'S NOTE: October is Cooperative Program Emphasis month in the Southern Baptist Convention.

NASHVILLE (BP) -- "Let me introduce you to a friend," folks say. Every Southern Baptist has innumerable friends who are sharing the Gospel in unique ways and in unique settings. You may not know any of these friends personally, but they share a bond with all Southern Baptists who support their outreach through the Cooperative Program.

CP is the channel by which Southern Baptists, through their churches, provide the financial means necessary for state, national and international missions and ministry to lead people to the wholesomeness of faith in Christ. BP has asked the four CP catalysts of the SBC Executive Committee -- Chad Keck, Matt Crawford, Curtis Cook and Nate Millican -- to introduce some of their CP friends. From U.S. urban contexts to Asia, here are their stories:

#### **Chad Keck, CP catalyst for the Midwest region and pastor of First Baptist Church in Kettering, Ohio**

Let me introduce you to my CP friends Tony and Beth Loseto, church planters in Cleveland with the North American Mission Board's SEND network. Cleveland is a city where only 8.5 percent of the people claim an evangelical faith and almost half the population claims no religious affiliation at all. Tony grew up in the Old Brooklyn neighborhood of Cleveland and in 2013 he and his wife returned there to plant Gateway Church.

The primary focus of Gateway church is to serve the community in Jesus' name and to evangelize the lost with the Gospel of Jesus. They desire to take the Gospel outside the church and into the hurting lives of those in their city. Tony shares one example of how God has been working in the life of his neighbor Jerry. "Jerry had been saved many years ago but had never become involved in any church. After several attempts Jerry finally agreed to come to one of our home Bible studies. Through that small group, Jerry grew in his faith. That deepening walk with Jesus created a desire for him to share the Gospel with his own family. His adult daughter began attending our church with her own family and heard the Gospel with clarity in a way she had not heard it before. Jerry's daughter recently put her faith in Christ and has been baptized as a follower of Him. We are praising God for His work through the Gospel in a multi-generational way through the ministry of Gateway."

Tony first learned about the Cooperative Program as a member of Parma Baptist Church (now Pleasant Valley Church) in the Cleveland area. His understanding and appreciation was deepened as a student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary - Boyce College. Tony talks about CP as being like "scaffolding" for their church plant. For Gateway

Church it provided the early support needed for the work to build up to capacity. It has allowed him to be fully devoted to the work of ministry, sharing the Gospel, and developing relationships with the community and believers in the church. CP has made a vital impact on the work of reaching Old Brooklyn with the Gospel.

When Tony thinks about the people and churches who give faithfully through the Cooperative Program, he thinks of the words of the apostle Paul in Philippians: "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now" (Philippians 1:3-5). Church planting with the SBC has reflected the truths of Scripture through partnership from the very beginning that demonstrates a belief that resourcing efforts to see the Gospel reach the lost is always worth it.

### **Matt Crawford, CP catalyst for the South region and East Campus pastor for City Church Tallahassee**

Byron Cutrer II is pastor of Faith Baptist Church in New Orleans. I've known Byron for nearly 20 years. It's been incredible to witness God use him and his family in ministry. While Byron was a student at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, he was called to lead Faith Baptist Church, with about 25 attendees in uptown New Orleans. This elderly congregation -- who joked that their youth group was in their 60s -- had a strong spiritual heritage but their numbers had been devastated by Hurricane Katrina.

About a year ago, Faith Baptist called Byron as a transitional pastor to help them make critical decisions about their future. Under his leadership, the church has engaged in NAMB's Replant program. Faith Baptist has stepped out in faith, hiring a children's ministry coordinator in order to actively pursue the next generation for the sake of the Gospel. According to Byron, "Specifically, we pray for baptisms.... God has already answered that prayer. We had one baptism a few weeks ago and we will probably have a couple more in a month or so." And after beginning Henry Blackaby's "Experiencing God" curriculum, Sunday School attendance has doubled.

Through NAMB's Replant program, Faith Baptist has benefited from Cooperative Program funding. "We're really grateful," Byron said. "Where we're at in our context is so unique; we're on the front lines of charging the gates of hell.... For our people [in the SBC] to know that there are some hard-to-reach places, that they're being represented there -- it's making a difference."

### **Curtis Cook, CP catalyst for the Northeast region and pastor of Hope Fellowship Church in Cambridge, Mass**

Dane Helsing is a church planter in Belmont, Mass., who, along with a team, started Beacon Community Church nearly three years ago. From the beginning, the plant has been supported by Cooperative Program funding through the Send Network of the North American Mission Board. In the fall of 2017, a visiting professor from China named Michelle saw a flier about the church. When she walked through the doors that Sunday, the first thing she shared was, "My English teacher in China from the U.S. once told me

about Jesus. Is this a place where I can learn more about Jesus?" Dane replied that she had come to the right place!

Over the next nine months, several members of the church invested time sharing the Gospel and answering questions, and eventually Michelle placed her faith in Jesus Christ. On Father's Day, she stood before her church family and spoke of her faith in Jesus Christ before she was baptized. As she shared, "The more degrees and money I earned, the emptier I became." But now, Michelle's deepest longings have been filled and she has found lasting satisfaction in Jesus Christ.

As Beacon Community Church prepares to celebrate its third birthday, Dane spoke of how they have been blessed by the Cooperative Program. "Our church exists because of the thousands of dollars that the Send Network and numerous Southern Baptist churches who have so generously partnered with us. We couldn't do what we are doing in reaching out to people like Michelle without this partnership. We are so thankful."

### **Nate Millican, CP catalyst for the West and pastor of Foothills Baptist Church in Phoenix**

I've asked my friend David York\* to share about his work with a Muslim people group in Asia.

David York: In our part of the world, I get to oversee a mentoring program for new personnel Southern Baptists are sending to the lost world. This program lasts for the duration of their first term, and through it we traverse a vast array of challenging territory: language and culture acquisition, adjusting to life overseas, strategies for engaging the lost in a cross-cultural ministry setting, abiding in Christ as we're going and growing into Christ-likeness.

When I have the privilege of getting face time with these new families, it doesn't take long to realize Southern Baptists are sending us some of their best! These are faithful brothers and sisters who long to put down deep roots spreading out to the farthest corners of global lostness so that Christ may be known and cherished among the nations, especially among those who've never heard the Gospel before.

Recently our team received one of these precious new families you've entrusted to us. They were affirmed and sent out by their home church. After a season of stateside preparation and orientation, and then a year of language study in what we call a landing city, they arrived in the province of our focus people group just under two months ago. Tom Callahan\*, the husband/father of this family, has been eagerly connecting with established churches to cast vision and mobilize new partners as he continues studying the language diligently. His wife Cara\* just started homeschooling their three adorable children again after a one-year hiatus in an international school.

Their arrival has been tremendously encouraging to the rest of our team, and we're getting caught up in their zeal as they stand on the front end of a new career centered on engaging the lost with the Gospel, making disciples of Jesus, and planting churches who will catch the same vision. There are few things in this life that brighten their eyes more than getting to put their hands to what Jesus called the "Greater Works" (John 14:12), the nuts and bolts of the Great Commission.

A few weeks ago, Tom and I went out sharing the Gospel in the streets together. After having modeled an approach for him a few times, I let him take the lead as we settled in next to a group of four students at a roadside food stall. It was getting dark outside, the street lights were buzzing, the traffic wasn't slowing down, the street musicians were making their rounds and the grilled chicken was tender and spicy. The students were enthusiastically anticipating the beginning of their freshman year at the university. They were all from different parts of this country, but each hailed from the same majority faith.

It took Tom a few minutes to get his bearings, but he soon began to navigate skillfully and intentionally through an interactive "get-to-know-you" stage of the conversation that he ultimately steered toward more important, eternal and epic truths. Within about 40 minutes he'd landed on the Gospel and shared our life-changing, soul-saving message with a young man who'd never heard it before.

Tom met with him again, and the young man professed faith in Jesus, saying, "What should I do now?" What Tom did was simply put into practice some very basic evangelism patterns and principles we observe Jesus using in His conversation with the Samaritan woman at the Well of Jacob in John 4. Like Jesus, Tom was being **intentional** in an **informal** setting through an **interactive** conversation in which he was taking the **initiative** to **introduce** Jesus, the Messiah. (Those are the five "I's of our basic method of evangelism.)

It is difficult to put into words the joy and gratitude I felt in that moment. But I'll try. I prayed and worshipped the Lord Jesus while Tom leaned in with everlasting truth. Consider just how profound and majestic the Father's ways are! God is orchestrating what we couldn't even imagine through His Spirit working in and through us to glorify His Son, Jesus the Messiah! Through the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists are affirming and entrusting; we're receiving and equipping; the lost are hearing and believing; and Jesus' name is becoming increasingly famous on the other side of the world. That's the fruit of our partnership in the Gospel.

Thank you for sending people like the Callahans to the lost world. Thank you for supporting them and us by acknowledging God's call and the priorities of Great Commission obedience.

\*Names changed.

Compiled by Baptist Press senior editor Art Toalston.

## **Where have all the church planters gone?**

By Jeff Christopherson

What's the greatest hindrance to effective church planting? You might expect to get varied answers to this question from church planting theorists, strategists, and practitioners, but among those consistently participating in this conversation one comment bubbles to the top almost every time: A scarcity of prepared leaders.

This wasn't true in the not-too-distant past. As networks and denominations fanned the fires of church planting fervor, the early adopters were quick to launch out and start new churches. There was once a substantial pond of would-be church planters from which to fish, and numerous groups threw their lines in the water and caught strings of quality leaders.

For example, Chris Railey, Senior Director of Leadership and Church Development for the Assemblies of God, reports that they planted 406 churches three years ago and the North American Mission Board's Send Network saw a similar rise in church planting in 2014, with 985 new church planted.

So, what's the problem?

To many, all looked good. But there was a problem that most didn't foresee over the horizon. It soon became obvious that ready-made, pre-prepared church planters were becoming a difficult fish to catch. The pool of church planters was becoming fished out and no one was stocking the pond.

The pool of church planters was becoming fished out and no one was stocking the pond. The years that followed were met with diminishing or plateaued results among even the most aggressive denominations or networks.

No amount of altered strategy or focused resourcing can make up for a lack of pre-prepared leaders to plant the churches that North America so desperately needs. Which prompts the question: How many churches do we need? Currently, there are approximately 4,000 churches being planted across North America by all evangelical groups. At the same time, somewhere around 3,700 churches close their doors for good each year, leaving a net addition of approximately 300 churches annually across North America.

Most missiologists estimate that we need at least twice as many new churches started each year simply to keep up with the increases in population between now and 2050. One thing is certain: We'll never hit those numbers while our strategy remains fishing from a fishless pond. We'll never hit those numbers while our strategy remains fishing from a fishless pond.

How do we get there?

The future will hinge on the vitality and multiplication prowess of the average local church. For us to evangelize the lost and plant healthy churches we must return to the centrality of the local church in our church planting endeavors. No network or denomination is capable of training and sending leaders at the rate we need, nor do they

have the God-ordained role and responsibility for such a task. The local church must be the epicenter from which multiplication spreads, and denominations and networks should come alongside of, not usurp, the work of these local churches. Local church centrality in church multiplication initiatives also depends on the average church to get in the game. The unspoken assumption by some is that the megachurch, led by the nationally-known pastor, is the only type of church that can set loose a movement.

Our day is certainly testimony to the fact that many such churches are stewarding their capacity to send their best to share the gospel, make disciples, and establish churches. But, there simply aren't enough of these churches to keep up with the church planting need. In addition, many church planting residencies across North America do a tremendous job in "finishing" a called and pre-prepared church planter, but have no discipleship processes for developing church planting teams from within their own congregations

The future is for the multiplying church

What we need are more churches with passion and process for taking Jesus' command of disciple-making from pre-believers all the way to church planters. At the North American Mission Board, we say that multiplying churches discover, develop, and deploy church planting teams from within.

This necessitates churches shifting their strategies from raising up volunteers to serve in their internal machinery, to developing missional leaders with a heart for evangelism/disciple-making who in turn will form the foundation of a new church.

To this end, we have developed some tools to assist a local church in the process of organic multiplication – we call it the [Church Planting Pipeline](#). Our goal is that by 2030, we will be able to identify 1,800 churches giving themselves away in this manner.

A shortage of missional leaders is the greatest hindrance to the church planting momentum that North America requires. The answer to Jesus' prayer request in Luke 10:2 will only be found when churches recalibrate their scorecards of success in alignment with their eternal kingdom assignment – that is, making disciples that are thrust into a waiting harvest.

It's not new. It's not innovative. It's not complicated.  
But like our King, it is sacrificial.

About the author: Jeff Christopherson is about fostering Kingdom movements of reproducing churches that transform neighborhoods and the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jeff leads NAMB's Send Network, the SBC's church planting arm. He is the author of *Kingdom Matrix: Designing a Church for the Kingdom of God*, and *Kingdom First: Starting Churches that Shape Movements*. He and his wife, Laura, live in Milton, Georgia. They have two married children, Kelley and James.

## STRENGTHENING

### **“Let me pray about it!”**

by Roy Henry

BATTLE CREEK, MI - We Southern Baptists are known for many things, some good (commitment to the Word, missions, and evangelism) and some, well, not so good (prohibitions against dancing and card-playing). And then, there are those business meetings.

Most of us can probably share a personal experience regarding a church business meeting that would raise goosebumps on even the most seasoned and stalwart Baptist pastor (ask me sometime about the six hour, single issue business meeting I once sat through that went unresolved and continued the next day!). It's no surprise, encouraging attendance at a state convention meeting can quickly elicit that classic Christian way of saying no - "Let me pray about it!"

Participating as a messenger to the annual meeting of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM) is nowhere near as bad as you might think. In fact, in the seven years I've been attending and actively involved, I have found it to be a joy – even during those meetings where some difficult and contentious decisions had to be made. As I think about how to encourage others to attend this year's convention, eight reasons come to mind.

- The business portions are a small part of the meeting, but they are important. We don't spend the entire convention in business session (thankfully!), but the items that are discussed and prayerfully handled are important for the advancement of the Kingdom in our state. Whether it's adopting the budget, voting for officers, or debating motions, your voice as a messenger helps set both the tone and the direction of our convention of churches.
- Hearing about works throughout our state. When you hear how God is moving in every corner of Michigan, from Iron Mountain to Detroit, you can't help but be excited. Churches are being planted, revitalized, and mobilized so that the Gospel is proclaimed and holes are punched in this present darkness.
- Visiting with, and making new, friends from around the state. Every year at the convention, I get to visit with brothers and sisters whom I have known for several years, as well as making new friends and connections. This is a sweet fellowship.
- Worshiping and praising the Lord together. It's wonderful seeing the people of God, from many different ethnic backgrounds and styles of worship, standing side by side, singing their praises to God. This is just a small foretaste of what we can expect before the Throne of God.
- Receiving reports from state and national entities. The annual meeting of the BSCM allows you the opportunity to hear and see first hand how your Cooperative Program (CP) giving is being used for the cause of Christ, as well as an opportunity to ask any questions you might have. Chances are, if you have a question, you're not the only one.
- Being encouraged and challenged. Each year we have the chance to hear some good preaching from solid pastors from both in and out of our state. The

- messages they bring from the Lord not only encourage us to continue running the race, but also challenge us to rely more on God's grace for that endurance.
- Becoming connected. By being involved in the annual meeting, you will get to know other believers and churches who are in similar contexts as you, and who can be helpful partners in Kingdom work.
  - God is glorified in the unity of His Church. When the world sees us standing together despite our differences, the power of the Gospel is on display and God is glorified.

This year, I encourage you to join with your brothers and sisters from around Michigan as we meet at Grace Church in Jackson on November 9 for the BSCM Annual Meeting. You'll be glad you did.

About the author: Roy Henry is blessed to be the husband to Aryn and father of Isaac, Reagan and Elijah. He serves as Senior Pastor of Faith Baptist Church in Battle Creek, Michigan, as well as the Recording Secretary for the BSCM and the NAMB Trustee from Michigan. In his spare time, he enjoys making the Grand Rapids bookstore circuit, discussing theology, and cheering on his beloved UGA Dawgs!

### **Multiplying Ministry Momentum Shift...**

By Jerome Taylor

BURTON, MI - I can still remember the moment when the ministry horizon of my life shifted and broadened. In November of 2008, I was brought by my pastor to the state Annual Meeting. Now, you may think that coming to one state-level annual meeting is not that big of a deal, and I must confess that at many times I had felt the same way. But because my Pastor had taken the time to make sure that I would be invested in these moments, I knew that it mattered to him, so I would at least put on a good face and go along with it. When I got to the meeting, there were the normal expectations; agendas, formalities, reports, resolutions, motions, and elections, but there was also something new that I discovered... newfound interests and newfound invitations.

When you are in the room, you become a part of the process as you see how our unique cooperative partnership has come together to continually fan the flame of kingdom work.

Being in the room matters because of...

- Interests – In these gathering we get to share about our common interests and trajectory as kingdom laborers. And not only do we get to partake in those common shared, but new interests are also sparked as we begin to understand what is being accomplished and why.
- Intentionality – These gatherings have a way of putting all our philosophies about cooperation into intentional actions. The faith that we have is a practicing faith. It doesn't merely exist in some theoretical abstract bubble...It is theological principles meeting the ground-level practices and actions.

- Investment – There are moments in our lives as believers where mutual fruit is produced in the work of mutual sowing and mutual reaping. During the annual gatherings, there are investments that are made for the good of the local church and also so that good might be made known to a lost world that needs the Gospel of Christ Jesus.
- Invitation – The annual meeting is not merely an invitation for attendance, but to see how God uses disciples from various churches and various walks of life to bring glory to Jesus with their unique talents, skills, gifts, and personalities. Initiatives are introduced at the Annual Meeting, and the goal is not just to pass on information but to invite others on the journey to multiply the endeavors and increase the harvest.
- Integration – The unique aspect of such invitations is the incredible partnerships/fellowships you will have with other brothers and sisters in Christ. Sometimes we can feel lonely and isolated as ministers, disciples, and/or local churches. Take the time to get to know new partners and be a part of this opportunity to connect with others. New faces become familiar friends and co-laborers at the Annual Meeting.
- Impact – The Annual Meeting has meaning because it leaves a lasting impact on our lives, our churches, our mission, our culture, and our time. May the impact this year be multiplied.

Perhaps you've looked at these gatherings and wondered if they are worth attending. I assure you if you are looking to broaden your ministry horizon, to see the opportunity for a momentum shift, and to take part in being a multiplier of kingdom-work, the gathering in November is the place to be.

About the author: Pastor Jerome and his wife, Melinda, began serving the people of Eastgate Baptist Church in the summer of 2013. They have been married since 2004 and have 4 children. Bro. Jerome has been serving in ministries & churches throughout the U.S. and across the globe since 1999.

### **Fighting to remain unoffended**

Kathy Ferguson Litton

MOBILE, AL - In our sphere of the Send Network, several faithful families have endured great, unexpected suffering and losses. People who pursued God radically as they "left house or parents or brothers or wife or children for the sake of the kingdom of God..." (Luke 18:29). They faithfully and passionately obeyed the call of God on their lives.

Luke goes on to say of these people, "Who shall receive many times more in this present time and in the age to come, eternal life" (Luke 18:30). On the surface, that could be interpreted as a protection clause for those who demonstrate sacrificial obedience. But in truth, there is no promise of protection from suffering or difficulty due

to us as obedient followers. That clause does not exist in Scripture — nor is it borne out in biblical narrative. Jesus' and Paul's lives alone bear that out.

As I have watched young families enduring particularly painful suffering in recent months, I remember the dark work of Satan in the midst of the pain of God's people. He will do all he can to urge us to be consumed with bitterness, disappointment, and faithlessness in the face of our grief and despair. He wants to sow deception that might cause us to doubt and mistrust God. He sees our vulnerabilities and wants to take advantage of our limping faith and wounded hearts. Sixteen years ago, unexpected, unwanted circumstances invaded my life. I became a widow at age 45 and my children lost their father. We joined the masses of innumerable families where death visited far too soon.

God was behaving unpredictably. Why would a faithful, selfless leader, who was making tremendous impact on the kingdom of God, be taken in the prime of his life? We wanted to know why this happened. It was senseless. Surely an explanation would be forthcoming to make divine sense of our pain. As believers, we could proclaim with the sincerest of heart that we would not question God. And in our good moments, we pulled that off. Yet in the darkness, loneliness, and at empty holiday tables, the "why" came tumbling out, which would often be followed by an unspoken — "It's not fair!"

We are disoriented by the interruptions in our lives. A sense of injustice is hard to quell. There is no fairness in a kind, humble man dying at age 46, or in a 4-year-old with leukemia, or when a job termination has been forced upon us. Seeds of bitterness, anger, and disillusionment can easily sneak into our hearts. At the point of these painful wounds, we may become offended with God.

The term "offended" comes straight from the lips of Jesus to one of his followers, and not just any follower but one of his most faithful, bold followers — who also was family. His life had taken a dramatically bad turn; he sent his followers to inquire of Christ: "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?" "Blessed is he who is not offended because of me" was the message relayed back to an imprisoned John the Baptist by his disciples. John was disillusioned and isolated — and no doubt his followers were as well. Jesus was performing profound public miracles, yet John remained shackled. In these words, to John's disciples, Jesus seemed to be sending the message "John, I won't be making all your wrongs right." These are hard words for the man who stuck his neck out for the Messiah. He would remain in jail and soon even lose his life. Not exactly what he saw coming.

Maybe John the Baptist or his disciples were saying to Jesus, "It's not fair!" Jesus knew the leanings of the human heart. "Remain unoffended," He said. I could easily create a scenario where my husband, Rick, stuck his neck out for God and this was the thanks he got. While my head knew his faithfulness hadn't earned him protection, my heart was having a hard time believing it. Yes, being offended was a real possibility. In the years that have passed, I have wrestled to remain unoffended. My heart is tenderized toward others who fight this familiar human struggle. It is a true fight, because our enemy is a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour and takes no thought of attacking us at the point of our tenderest wounds.

These three ideas — wrestled down often — have been my constant companions to remain unoffended:

- Accept that which has been withheld from you.
- Surrender your need for an explanation; live with the mystery.
- Focus on what He is doing and not what He did not do.
- 

This verse has also held strong keys for me in freedom from offense: “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.” (Deut. 29:29) In basic terms, this verse says: There is info only God will have. There is info I will never have. I have to live out of what is revealed to me, not focus on the unrevealed.

Four simple revelations that saved my life and continue to save my life:

- His steadfast love never fails.
- His mercies are new every morning.
- We can see the goodness of God again in the land of the living.
- Blessed is the man/woman who trusts in the Lord.

Friends, I don't know the source of offense in your life. While mine is a mile marker on an interstate, yours may be an act of violence, the face of a child who slipped away or, like John the Baptist, your ministry life gone badly awry. The blessing of remaining unoffended is an unexplainable, irrational peace. It is childlike trust in the face of epic, unanswerable questions. Fight for it. It may be the platform for the clearest testimony of your life.

About the author: Kathy Ferguson lives in Mobile, Alabama, with her husband Ed, pastor of Redemption Church. Both lost former spouses in car accidents, and God uniquely gave them new love and life together in 2009. Kathy enjoyed 26 years of life and ministry alongside Rick Ferguson. She has three children and ten grandchildren. Presently, Kathy serves at NAMB as Planter Spouse Care Manager.

### **Is your church legally prepared?**

Staff

FENTON, MI - Across the country churches are experiencing religious liberty challenges. These legal challenges range from the use of church facilities, gender identity laws, getting equal access to government grants and property, employment regulations, and more. Legal issues like these can cause financial burdens for churches and potentially limit a church's ability to spread the Gospel.

Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM) has partnered with [ADF Church Alliance](#) so that your church can get the proactive legal help it needs.

### **What is ADF Church Alliance?**

ADF Church Alliance is a legal membership program launched by Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF). ADF has been involved in over 50 wins at the Supreme Court, including Colorado cake artist Jack Phillips' case – Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil

Rights Commission. After more than two decades of advocating for religious liberty, they established the ADF Church Alliance in 2017 to help meet the specific legal needs of churches.

Benefits of ADF Church Alliance membership include:

- Religious liberty audit: ADF attorneys review your church's policies and bylaws to expose and correct areas where your church may be at risk for religious liberty legal issues.
- Direct access to attorneys: Their legal team is available to answer your questions so you are not left wondering or worrying.
- Pro bono legal representation: If needed, ADF Church Alliance will represent your church in litigation pertaining to religious freedom at no additional cost.
- Resources: Through a members-only site and exclusive email updates, you can access resources to help you navigate religious liberty issues, learn about your rights, and more.

### **Why become a member?**

BSCM is dedicated to doing whatever it takes to see lives transformed for Christ through Starting, Strengthening, and Sending churches. We joined ADF Church Alliance because religious freedom is crucial to executing our mission.

Your church can get affordable legal help and experience peace of mind knowing that you have a strong ally who is ready to help when legal issues arise. Because BSCM is a member of ADF Church Alliance, your church will get a 20% discount when you join.

1. Join by completing the application [here](#).
2. Enter promo code BSCM20 in step two of the application for your 20% discount.
3. Leave your legal burden behind today.

Thousands of churches have already joined. Don't miss this opportunity to help prepare and protect your church – [join today](#).

### **Pastoring in light of technology: Shepherding souls shaped by screens**

By Trevor Atwood

MURFREESBORO, TN - "The glory of God is a human being fully alive. Moreover, the life of man consists in beholding God." -St. Irenaeus Our social media use, smartphone addictions, and television-binging sessions are changing us—and not for the better. In fact, we can find plenty of blog posts, articles, statistics, and news reports through those same devices that testify to the reality that we are losing basic relational skills, like empathy and communication.

Human relationship in the context of community is central to what it means to "love one another" and display the image of God. When we lose this, we lose a primary way of beholding God himself. Using Irenaeus' logic, therefore, we lose "the life of man"—we are no longer "fully alive." If we take our calling as pastors seriously, we ought to think deeply about leading people to engage faithfully with technology without losing the necessary and loving engagement with other human beings we were made for.

So, here are three things that pastors can teach and practice that will help our churches use technology, rather than be used by technology, and ultimately, behold God more than our devices.

### **Teach and practice hospitality**

Our God is serious about hospitality. The Old Testament displays God's heart to provide a home for the sojourner. In Psalm 23, God as the Good Shepherd "prepares a table for us in the presence of our enemies." And the New Testament is replete with commands to "practice hospitality." Of the eight people that live in my house, three of them don't share my last name. They are young adults who come from non-believing or divorced homes, and they all spent too much time in front of screens. Most nights, my wife, my three kids, and the three of them sit around the dinner table and talk. We break up fights between our kids, tell funny stories, ask hard questions, and say things we have to apologize for. But, there is never a TV on or a phone at the table.

Breaking bread together without the manufactured distraction of a screen is one of the most human things we can do. It's a daily break in the ever-present call from technology. It slows the day down and makes everyone practice listening, talking, and responding to each other. Hospitality humanizes us by pushing us into community, not for entertaining guests, but to turn our homes from being fortresses of isolation, to hostels of discipleship.

### **Teach and practice the Sabbath**

With technology, we barely have to stop working. We can send a message at any time to anyone we know. And we can seemingly be anywhere and know anything we want with just a few taps. Technology makes an insidious promise of being "god," much like the serpent in Genesis 3. When he tempted the woman, he awoke the craving for the incommunicable, or unshared, attributes of God while conveniently ignoring the image of God already displayed in humans. The same story plays out in our lives today. We reject those good, hard things that display the image of God in us—love, compassion, and empathy—which are the ways he intends for us to imitate him. Instead, we chase after omniscience, omnipresence, and unimpeded power—all of which distort his image in us and cause us to distort his image in others.

This is why the Sabbath is such a beautiful gift from God. It forces us to stop and admit we aren't God while we practice all the ways we are supposed to be like him. The Sabbath reminds us that the world won't stop if we don't respond to an email or a text in the next 15 minutes. It reminds us that we need God more than we need anyone or anything. Practicing the Sabbath is an act of humility and trust.

### **Keep the deep stuff face to face**

A few years ago, I noticed that I was revealing more to my wife about my thoughts and feelings through text than I was face to face. It was almost like the people we were in our phones were different than the people we were in person. Neil Postman, in his book *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, warned that the medium we use to communicate changes the message. When I was communicating deeply with my wife through text, the "me" in the phone started to become more connected to her than the "me" in the flesh.

Social media allows us to develop connections that aren't real. We can say things into echo chambers without looking another person in the eye. It produces a false sense of security; safe behind a screen, we get to choose whether we want to face the consequences of our political rants, dogmatic parenting "advice," or condemning theological positions. We don't have to see the hurt or humanity in another person's eyes. We lose empathy, understanding, and a sense of risk.

So, the deepest truths, as much as possible, should be communicated in the flesh. For example, our pastoral leadership does not counsel through text or email. Like our Savior, who is the Word made flesh, we want to be an embodiment of his glory to the families, church, and communities he has entrusted to us. Technology isn't evil. Yet, as with all that we create, there is an evil twist that beckons us to "be like a god" and reject the Imago Dei. As humans, and even more so as Christians, our diagnostic question regarding all technology should echo Ireneaus: "Am I beholding God with this device? And will it help me to be fully alive?"

About the author: Trevor graduated from Middle Tennessee State University and then proceeded to get his Master of Divinity at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. He completed the Summit Network Church Planting Residency at the Summit Church in Durham, North Carolina, which led him to plant City Church in Murfreesboro. Trevor has been married to his wife Keva for 17 years and they have three boys together: Micah, Isaac, and Simon.

### **FIRST-PERSON: The guy I failed to witness to**

by Keith Shorter

Date: September 18, 2018 - Tuesday

EASLEY, S.C. (BP) -- Have you ever felt like God wanted you to witness to someone, but you just couldn't open your mouth? My most obvious failure came as a seminary student in Fort Worth, Texas. I was working in a warehouse in the afternoons to help support my family. I remember being on the loading dock and seeing this man across the parking lot walking toward the dock. I sensed God saying to me, "I want you to tell that man about Me." I will never forget what happened next.

When he finally made his way to the loading dock, he looked at me and said, "So, do you have any good news for me today?" For a second, it felt like time stood still as I wrestled with what I should say. Eventually, I mumbled something about the weather. I don't know that I have ever felt more like a failure than I did that day. From time to time, I still pray for that man. If he is not yet a believer, I ask God to send someone to him who will actually share the Good News that wouldn't come out of my mouth.

I've analyzed that encounter a hundred times. The problem wasn't that I didn't know the answer to his question. I took every class that evangelism professor Roy Fish taught at Southwestern Seminary. I would leave his classes motivated and equipped to share my faith with anyone. I have concluded that the problem was that I was focused on what he

would think of me, rather than the need that may be in his life. Rarely have I had such an obvious open door to share the Good News of Jesus.

There is a chapter in the book of Acts that reminds me of my fateful day in Fort Worth. In Acts 8, God sent a man named Philip to speak to an Ethiopian eunuch who was returning from Jerusalem. The Spirit of God told Philip, "Go and join that chariot" (Acts 8:29). Translation: "I want you to talk to him about Me." The Ethiopian was reading from the book of Isaiah. Philip asked if he understood what he was reading. The Ethiopian acknowledged that he needed someone to explain it to him. Verse 35 says, "Philip proceeded to tell him the good news about Jesus, beginning with that Scripture." I am so glad Philip didn't tell him about the weather!

I still struggle with opening my mouth when God opens a door. However, by His grace, I have had many opportunities over the years to share the best news we could ever tell anyone. It's an amazing experience to watch when someone is "born again"! Like Philip and the Ethiopian, there are clearly times when God orchestrates the events to bring someone who doesn't know Jesus in contact with someone who does. God may bring someone across your path this week who needs to hear the Gospel. I can promise you this: You will never regret telling someone about Jesus, but you will always regret the times you didn't.

If you have ever been silent when you shouldn't have been, can I give you some advice? Pray and don't give up. Keep living your life for Jesus and eventually someone will want to know why you are so different. With God's help, you will find yourself turning a regular conversation into a Gospel conversation.

About the author: Keith Shorter is pastor of Mt. Airy Baptist Church in Easley, S.C., and immediate past president of the South Carolina Baptist Convention.

### **What to do when your wife is burned out**

By Amy Corbin

I vividly remember sitting with her as she wept, during a retreat I was leading. She was broken, she was exhausted, and she was utterly burned out. This precious wife had been on the church planting journey for seven years and she had no idea how to continue on. Their church was doing really well, despite the typical church planting highs and lows, and she was a woman rooted deeply in the Word and in her faith. But she had reached her limit and she was just so weary.

The retreat had been a space for her to simply meet with Jesus and to rest (literally rest) at His feet. But this time set apart for renewal would soon be over and she would be re-entering a life where her circumstances had not changed at all. So how do we become changed women without expecting changed circumstances? How do we deal with burn out and soul depletion without expecting a journey that is easier or more comfortable? And, if this is your wife, how can you walk alongside her and encourage her to embrace the adversity you will most certainly continue to face?

As a church planter, this might be one of the most important tasks you will ever face. If your wife is drowning, your whole journey will be affected. Ongoing care for your spouse is not an option; it is a requirement. This is an issue much more complicated and intricate than one blog post could ever tackle, but here are three places we can start:

1. Help her become more aware of God's story in her life. In the past few months, as I've lead various trainings with planter wives, I have been shocked by how many are not aware of God's story in their own lives. They see it in your life. They see it in your church. They often see it in their children. But they rarely take time to sit and process through God's story in their own heart. We all need to be deeply aware of where God has brought us from, where He is currently working, and where He is leading. It encourages us, it inspires us, and it feeds our souls.
2. Help her discover more about herself. More than likely, as a pastor or church planter you have had multiple opportunities to explore or discover your personality, your strengths, your weaknesses, and your leadership style. And more than likely, your self-awareness has made you a better leader, a better pastor, and a better husband and father. Your wife would benefit greatly from some of these same opportunities.
3. Help her discover the value of investing in herself. I can pretty confidently say that your wife struggles with the lie that investing in herself is, at the very least, selfish and lazy and, at the very most, sinful.

If your wife is burned out, there is a very good chance she has lost sight of this to some degree. When your wife is encouraged to intentionally process His story in her life, she is reminded of His goodness, His presence, and His sovereignty. She becomes energized by her relationship with the Father and not depleted by the task set before her.

When we become women who have a full understanding of our own strengths, weaknesses, and personal tendencies, our service becomes more life-giving and soul-feeding. We are fully aware of how we respond in difficult circumstances and can counter that response with what we know is more Christ-honoring. We know well the areas where God may use us most, as well as the areas where we need the most refining and transformation, and we are completely open to God's work in those areas.

Your wife desperately needs permission and encouragement from you to care for herself along the journey. And let's be realistic: This is going to require some sacrifice on your behalf. It may require you to "hold down the fort" for a few hours, or a few days, while she can get away. The small sacrifice it will require of you will be multiplied immensely in the blessing it is for her soul.

When your wife is given the time and space to invest in herself, she rediscovers the freedom in Christ that allows her to rest in, and not wrestle through, her ministry role.

The reality is that you have received some incredible training, coaching, and mentoring along your journey that has helped you process through some of these very things. At the end of the day though, if your wife is not also receiving ongoing care, everything you have received is for naught. She is an essential part of this journey, and it is critical that she is equipped for the same battle you are being sent out for.

About the author: Amy Corbin lives in Vancouver, B.C., Canada with her husband, Tim, who serves as a church planting catalyst. They have three daughters. Tim and Amy are both originally from Dallas, Texas, but moved to Seattle, Washington, in 2007 where they were church planters for eight years in urban and suburban settings. Amy currently serves as the coordinator for church planter wives support with Vancouver church planting, as well as the North American Mission Board's consultant for church planter wives development

## SENDING

### **IMB Sets the 2018 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering national goal**

IMB Staff

RICHMOND, VA - Generous giving to the 2018 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering® makes a massive difference in the world. Men, women, children, and entire communities are transformed as a result of this offering. Your gifts enable thousands of missionaries to live among, serve, and share the gospel with people who have never heard it until now. This year the goal has been set at \$160 million.

Every December since 1888, the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering has empowered Southern Baptist's international missions work. At the beginning of this giving season, we start with a week of prayer dedicated to international missions, taking place December 2-9.

Through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, you and your church:

- Support over 3,600 missionaries
- Enable disciples to be made and churches to be multiplied around the world
- Continue the SBC's 173-year commitment to missions

Look for these stories and specific ways you can pray in this year's Week of Prayer guide, as well as the accompanying videos.

- Larry Pepper traded a space mission for a *medical mission* among the sick and hurting in Africa
- God is using a *small church in Tennessee* to make a big difference in the work of IMB missionaries in Asia
- *Hispanic churches* are crossing cultures and engaging the world with the gospel
- A partnership between a *Kentucky church and a Brazil-based team* is reaching Sao Paulo with the gospel
- *Ukrainian believers* are planting churches, trained by IMB missionaries and supported by a North Carolina congregation
- The impact is mutual when *American students travel to East Asia* to serve college students alongside IMB workers
- It takes the *support of many churches* to keep a small hospital running in Tanzania

- *Refugee ministry* is both local and global for a church in Atlanta

God continues His work in the hearts and lives of persons around the world. Why don't we get on board and financially support those on the front lines with the resources necessary. You and your church family can make the difference.

### **Baptists feed Florence survivors, prepare for recovery**

by Brandon Elrod

Date: September 18, 2018 - Tuesday

NEW BERN, N.C. (BP) -- The sun began peeking through the clouds over New Bern, N.C., Tuesday morning (Sept. 18) after Hurricane Florence devastated the community. Despite the brief reprieve from rain, there are concerns flooding may worsen as water flows back to the Atlantic from farther inland. Memories are still fresh from the last big storm to hit the state. After Hurricane Matthew blew through North Carolina in 2016, the storm surge and rain afflicted coastal towns, and the resulting runoff created a resurgence of flooding over the next few days in cities like New Bern.

"We're at the bottom of the mountain, right here at the bottom of the hill," said Jim Pennington, pastor of Temple Baptist Church in New Bern. "All that rain water now will get here Thursday and we will be cut off again ... Hurricane Matthew did that" in 2016. Standing water from the initial flooding remains along stretches of Highway 70 from Kinston, N.C., to New Bern, and flood waters continue to fester around businesses and churches along that stretch.

At Temple, Southern Baptist Disaster Relief (SBDR) volunteer teams from North Carolina Baptist Men continue preparing meals out of a mobile feeding kitchen known as Manna 1, one of the largest food trucks ever built. "Standing here in New Bern and watching the steady flow of people who are coming for help is a reminder of just how desperate the need is," said David Melber, president of Send Relief, the compassion ministry arm of the North American Mission Board. "People are not only worried from the initial flooding from Florence but also the runoff that will be coming in the next several days."

Across North Carolina, white tents have popped up in eight sites across North Carolina to begin feeding residents who are recovering from Florence. SBDR teams from North Carolina, Virginia, Alabama, Kentucky, Tennessee and Missouri are already active with the expectation that teams from Florida and Mississippi should be set up and ready to start feeding in the next few days. "North Carolina Baptists have one of the largest and best equipped disaster relief teams," said Sam Porter, NAMB's national director of SBDR. "All of our Southern Baptist state conventions have been working overtime to ensure that needs are met, whether through actively bringing teams or through their heartfelt prayer."

Along with their feeding equipment and volunteers, SBDR teams have also been asked to bring flood recovery and chainsaw teams. Assessment teams have been evaluating the need so recovery can begin. Southern Baptist chaplains are also active in

communities across the affected areas in North and South Carolina. "I talked with a husband and wife this morning, trying to connect them with Temple Baptist Church because they lost everything," said Doc Marshall, chaplaincy coordinator for the New Bern site and a member of Spring Hill Baptist Church in Wagram, N.C. "We're like the spiritual first aid," Marshall said, "and we try to connect people with local churches so that they can get help over the long term."

Jim George, pastor of Fairview Baptist Church in Fredericksburg, Va., relieved Dean Miller as the leader of the feeding and recovery site in Washington, N.C. Their team from the Baptist General Association of Virginia is serving about 6,500 meals a day through the county's emergency operations center, The Salvation Army and the American Red Cross. "Dean loves missions and I love missions," said George, "and we love helping people in Christ's name." Other active feeding sites include the cities of Wilmington, Kinston, Hope Mills, Jacksonville, Lumberton and Wallace in North Carolina. Feeding continues in Conway and Florence, S.C., as well.

A Send Relief semi-trailer of flood recovery supplies made deliveries to the Washington and New Bern sites on Monday and Tuesday. A second Send Relief semi-trailer will be arriving later in the week to serve sites in and around Wilmington. Florence projects to be more catastrophic than Hurricane Floyd, which struck the eastern coast of North Carolina in 1999. Floyd produced 500-year floods in every county on the coastal side of the state and wrought an estimated \$6.5 billion in damage. Porter called Florence the "the East Coast Harvey" after the system hovered over North and South Carolina, dropping feet of rain on entire regions as Hurricane Harvey did over the Houston in 2017.

Southern Baptist Disaster Relief is among the three largest providers of disaster relief assistance in the United States. Southern Baptist churches, associations and state conventions all partner to mobilize volunteers, resources and equipment to provide services. NAMB provides national coordination and assistance in larger, multi-state responses.

About the author: Brandon Elrod writes for the North American Mission Board.

### **Hurricane Florence relief mobilization underway**

by Brandon Elrod

Date: September 20, 2018 - Thursday

LUMBERTON, N.C. (BP) -- Cars stretched from Hyde Park Baptist Church in Lumberton, N.C., down Highway 211 waiting to receive hot meals in a makeshift drive-thru set up by Southern Baptist Disaster Relief (SBDR) in the church's parking lot. Volunteers with the North Carolina Baptists on Mission (NCBM), who comprise North Carolina's SBDR outreach, along with volunteers from churches in town, cooked and distributed meals to residents, many of whom lost everything during Hurricane Florence.

Some of the volunteers, like Hyde Park member Donna DiChiara likewise endured severe damage to their homes. "This storm, my whole yard was ... worse than a swimming pool; it looked like the river," DiChiara said. "Underneath my house, it was flooded to the sub-flooring. Then all of my air conditioning is out, plus the duct work is down, full of water." Jeff Blackburn, Hyde Park's lead pastor, could gauge the severity of the storm by comparing church members' reactions to Hurricane Matthew in 2016, saying that he saw concern on their faces in 2016 but "desperation in their eyes" following Hurricane Florence.

"We have had serious flooding all over the community. At least half of our congregation is displaced, trying to find a place to live," Blackburn said. "They've lost their houses, many of them for the second time" as they did in 2016. Blackburn surmised that at least 200 volunteers from Hyde Park and other churches were serving and that at least a third of those volunteers were now homeless or living with other family members. "What's amazing is that even when their lives are upside down, they're still out there serving, which says a lot about their compassion and commitment to this community," Blackburn said.

Flooding made it difficult for food and supplies to get into Lumberton, creating a lot of anxiety in the community. The North Carolina SBDR team served food to those who could drive up and packed meals into American Red Cross vehicles that delivered meals to nearby shelters. The National Guard used high-water vehicles to deliver supplies and SBDR-prepared hot meals through the floodwaters.

Blackburn praised the NCBM for helping his church serve its neighbors. "I'm glad that we are here and that we have a shared vision together to see Jesus transform the hearts and lives of people in this community." SBDR teams with Missouri Baptists set up their kitchens and equipment in Wallace, N.C., led by Gaylon Moss, who recently became Missouri's disaster relief director after serving with NCBM. "I am grateful for the opportunity to come back," Moss said. "North Carolina is doing a good job coordinating and organizing. We appreciate the opportunity to be here and help serve."

One of Moss' team leaders, Wesley Hammond, noted how every disaster relief effort takes cooperation across each level of Southern Baptist life. Hammond, pastor of First Baptist Church in Paris, Mo., described how Bethel Baptist Church in Berea, Ky., housed his team for a night during their long drive from the "Show Me State." Bethel Baptist built a facility designed to house disaster relief volunteers, and the church's hospitality blessed Hammond and his team so that they could show up ready to work. "As we've come in to North Carolina, the church here, Poston Baptist Church, was already trying to do the ministry in the community themselves," Hammond said. "As they were ministering to the community, we were able to come in, and they saw us as the group of people who were there to lift them up and help carry the burden."

As SBDR teams from throughout the United States arrive, they work with different organizations, local leaders and churches to serve those in need. "As we've engaged ... we've seen God expand what we're trying to accomplish by involving the people of the community -- the mayor, chief of police, the National Guard, the American Red Cross,"

Hammond said. "All of us are working together to minister to the needs of the people here."

An SBDR team from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions set up their site at Southview Baptist Church in Hope Mills, N.C. As they awaited food to begin preparing meals, a few of their volunteers ventured into the surrounding neighborhoods to begin recovery efforts at peoples' homes. A team from Tennessee set up their kitchens at First Baptist Church in Kinston, N.C., and prepared meals for the community. A team from Kentucky began feeding out of Catalyst Church in Jacksonville, N.C., on Wednesday night (Sept. 19). A North Carolina SBDR team has been serving meals from First Baptist Wilmington, N.C., despite the city essentially becoming an island as roads in and out were flooded. Efforts continue at Temple Baptist Church in New Bern, N.C., where President Donald Trump visited Wednesday.

Teams from Mississippi and Florida will also be participating in the feeding and recover efforts. "We'll probably be feeding there for at least a month," said Shane McGivney, the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's director of men's ministry, reporting that a second team of credentialed SBDR volunteers is being readied to relieve the initial team being deployed to North Carolina. Also, McGivney reported, training has been scheduled by Mississippi's Gulf Coast Baptist Association for volunteers in that area for immediate mobilization to the hurricane area.

As of Wednesday evening, SBDR teams across North and South Carolina had served over 118,000 meals. Around 20 chainsaw jobs or yard cleanup have been completed. SBDR will accelerate its recovery efforts in the coming days and weeks as many homes still remain flooded.

To donate funds for national or state convention DR work in North Carolina or otherwise get involved in Hurricane Florence recovery efforts, visit [namb.net/Florence](http://namb.net/Florence). As noted by McGivney, "In-kind gifts of clothing and household items are not as important right now as monetary gifts that can be used for food, disinfectants and other cleaning supplies and emergency items when and where the need arises."

About the author: Brandon Elrod writes for the North American Mission Board. William Perkins, editor of the Mississippi Baptist Record, contributed to this report.

### **Salvations 'on a daily basis became normal'**

by Alex Sibley

Date: September 17, 2018 - Monday

ASIA (BP) -- When Jeremiah Farmer\*, an architect, and his wife Joy\* sensed a clear call from the Lord to minister in Asia, they had been active in their local church but had no seminary training and hadn't planned to leave for a foreign country. Nevertheless, in obedience to the Lord, they followed their church's advice and applied with the International Mission Board, which accepted them and then deployed them to a closed part of Asia.

From the beginning, Farmer told fellow believers he did not qualify to be on the mission field. Even so, he and his wife agreed to stay as long as the Lord told them to stay and to maintain a "laser focus" on a specific goal: figuring out how to get the Gospel to their region's 650 million people, 80 percent of whom had never heard the message of Jesus. Thirteen years later, the Lord has never told the Farmers to stop. Despite their initial lack of qualifications, they have witnessed the Holy Spirit do miraculous things: More than 700 churches have been planted; an estimated 2.5 million people have heard the Gospel; 45,000 people have come to faith in Christ; and 2,500 new leaders have been raised up in an environment hostile to the Christian faith.

"For us, people coming to faith on a daily basis became normal. Baptisms every Sunday, that was normal. To start new churches every month, that was normal." Farmer calls it "extremely" rewarding "to get to be a part of that kind of movement; to see millions of people get to hear the Gospel, most of them for the first time in their entire lives; to see tens of thousands come to faith and all these churches started."

Before deploying to the mission field, the Farmers were assigned six core tasks by the IMB: entry, evangelism, discipleship, leadership development, church formation and missions-sending. Their first term focused primarily on entry and evangelism. Since eight out of 10 people in their location had never heard the Gospel, the evangelistic task required the Farmers to break new ground.

In that culture, relationships are everything, Farmer says, so rather than doing door-to-door evangelism or handing out Gospel tracts on the street (which likely would have gotten them arrested), the Farmers engaged in relational evangelism. As the only "foreigners" in the area, many local people wanted to get to know them and practice speaking English with them. The Farmers used this to their advantage inviting people, typically just one person or family at a time, to share a meal with them.

Another aspect of the culture is to reciprocate actions. Whenever the Farmers invited a family to share a meal with them, that family was socially obligated to later extend a similar invitation. "So we knew that no matter what, if we invited someone to dinner, we got two chances to share with them," Farmer says. "So we made sure we shared the Gospel both times." Each time people professed faith in Christ, the Farmers quickly taught them how to share their faith. These new believers learned to wake up each morning and ask themselves, "With whom am I going to share the Gospel today?" As more people came to Christ, more people shared their faith with lost friends and family members, resulting in yet more people coming to the Lord. Before long the Farmers were receiving reports daily of people turning to Jesus.

To keep up with the growing numbers, the Farmers had to develop leaders who could teach small groups and ultimately lead house churches (as each house church could only fit 10-20 people). So, the Farmers wrote small group lessons that taught the leaders to seek answers to their questions in the Scripture. "Whatever they asked, instead of referring back to my American traditions, we would say, 'What does the Bible say?'" Farmer recounts. "'What does it say about prayer? What does it say about worship? What does it say about teaching and preaching?'"

By this time, Farmer was enrolled in Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, selecting classes based on the needs in each phase of his ministry. Classes such as

missiology and cultural anthropology and various courses on evangelism in different contexts became instrumental in helping him think through issues he faced in his ever-developing ministry. "None of it was theory," says Farmer, who completed his master of divinity degree in 2018. "I was like, 'Oh, I need that now,' and we were able to apply it right away."

As the number of house churches surpassed 700, Farmer took on a supervisory role, training their leaders in evangelism, discipleship and missions. The latter task has been a key aspect of the Farmers' most recent efforts. "People became excellent evangelists among their own people -- very bold, very zealous, very excited for the Gospel, sharing their faith very loudly, proudly and boldly, and doing a very good job," Farmer says.

"The challenge was when it came to crossing cultures." We had to teach them when you're working with another culture and society, you have to learn their worldview, learn how to stand in their shoes, learn their language, and understand their culture and approach outreach from their culture ... to help them understand the truth of the Gospel, which transcends culture." Learning the how and why of missions has produced a "trickle" of effective missions-sending from the region, with more than 50 different volunteer teams sent out in a year's time, along with a number of families who have accepted a long-term missionary calling. Based on the number of churches getting involved, Farmer says "a tidal wave" of missions-sending is on the horizon.

Among the most encouraging testimonies the Farmers have seen is that of Ben, a "brilliant" but lost man whom they met during their first term. After Ben came to faith in Christ, the Farmers noticed in him "something different that we hadn't noticed in the other believers," Farmer says.

"He became other-centered very, very quickly. ... He really wanted to live his life out for a true purpose, a real cause."

The Farmers committed to mentoring Ben, having him over at their house as often as possible to disciple him and develop him as a leader. They gradually gave him more responsibilities within their house church, and eventually he started leading a house church of his own. Over time, the other house churches in the area came to see Ben as their mentor.

Later on, Ben "graduated," moving to another province to start more churches. He now leads a network of 40 underground churches that likewise are getting involved in missions. "To see the progress of a kid who was lost and just looking for a cause to live for, and seeing him now -- he's married, has two kids, he's grown so much in his faith, he's gone through all the different training systems that we have; he's training himself; and now he's leading this network of 40 churches in another province -- is exactly what we were hoping for," Farmer says.

Having begun as the first missionary presence in their region of Asia, the Farmers now supervise all the missionary work focusing on the 650 million people who live there. They continue to lead training and missions conferences in order to see Asian Christians bring the Gospel not only to their own nation, but to the whole world. Though they now

play a different role from a different location, the Farmers can look back on their first 13 years in Asia with awe because of what the Lord has done. "We were there to do exactly what God called us to do, and we worked as hard and as fast as we could to get it done in the power of the Holy Spirit," Farmer says. "We got to see Him work, which was miraculous and amazing."

\*Names changed.

About the author: Alex Sibley is associate director of news and information for Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. This article originally appeared in Southwestern News, the seminary's quarterly magazine.

### **SENDING: Reaching friends and family**

By Staff/NAMB

Question: "How can I evangelize my friends and family without pushing them away?"

Answer: At some point, every Christian has had a family member, a friend, co-worker, or acquaintance who is not a Christian. Sharing the gospel with others can be difficult, and it can become even more difficult when it involves someone with whom we have close emotional ties. The Bible tells us that some people will be offended at the gospel (Luke 12:51–53). However, we are commanded to share the gospel, and there is no excuse for not doing so (Matthew 28:19–20; Acts 1:8; 1 Peter 3:15).

So, how can we evangelize our family members, friends, co-workers, and acquaintances? The most important thing we can do is **pray for them**. Pray that God would change their hearts, and open their eyes to the truth of the gospel (2 Corinthians 4:4). Pray that God would convince them of His love for them and their need for salvation through Jesus Christ (John 3:16). Pray for wisdom as to how to best minister to them (James 1:5).

We must be willing and bold in our actual sharing of the gospel. **Proclaim the message** of salvation through Jesus Christ to your friends and family (Romans 10:9–10). Always be prepared to speak of your faith (1 Peter 3:15), doing so with gentleness and respect. There is no substitute for personally sharing the gospel: "Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ" (Romans 10:17).

In addition to praying and sharing our faith, we must also **live godly Christian lives** in front of our friends and family members so they can see the change God has made in us (1 Peter 3:1–2). Ultimately, we must leave the salvation of our loved ones up to God. It is God's power and grace that saves people, not our efforts. The best we can do is pray for them, witness to them, and live the Christian life in front of them. It is God who gives the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6).

Courtesy of the North American Mission Board, SBC 2018.

## Ten Ways Missions Has Influenced Africa

By Melanie Clinton

Sub-Saharan Africa - Missions has been a part of Africa's story since just after Jesus ascended into heaven. By the middle of the first century, churches had been established in northern Africa by early converts to Christianity. Two thousand years later, Christian presence has left indelible marks on the continent—some positive, some less so. Here are ten ways missions has impacted Africa.

### *Slavery: An Unlikely Catalyst*

In the fifteenth century, Christianity came to Africa's coastlines through forts established by European slave traders. Chaplains were assigned to forts, but their role was to serve the Europeans, not to evangelize Africans. By the 1800s believers from Europe and America, enraged by the slave trade, began establishing Christian missions in Africa.

It was fairly easy to raise funds to start the missions because of Christians' compassion for the plight of slaves. Some of these early missionaries focused on ministering to freed slaves sent to Liberia and Sierra Leone while others evangelized indigenous populations. Some freed slaves who had embraced Christianity in America also worked to spread the gospel upon their return to Africa.

### *Nigerian Church Planters: A Fruitful History*

In 1850, US Baptist missionaries arrived in Nigeria to work among the Yoruba people. The Yoruba embraced the gospel and planted Baptist churches throughout western Africa as they traveled for trade. When they realized they were not effectively evangelizing other ethnic groups due to language and cultural differences, they asked Nigerian and US Baptists for assistance.

Today, although many Nigerian churches embrace the prosperity gospel, most Yoruba Baptist churches remain theologically solid. The Nigerian Baptist Convention—the second largest Baptist convention in the world—is composed primarily of Yoruba churches and sends both national and international missionaries.

### *Colonialism: A Regrettable Bedfellow*

The spread of the gospel through foreign missionaries often occurred simultaneously with the spread of colonial rule by European nations. The British, French, and Portuguese, spurred by the desire to expand empires and mine resources, dominated Africa in the 1800s and 1900s.

Missionary efforts, though not necessarily tied to government activity, began concurrently and are sometimes considered as one and the same. Though the missionaries' primary aim was to bring the gospel to Africans, some Africans consider Christianity a "white man's religion" that was used to subdue and control them in the process of colonization.

### *David Livingstone: An African Hero*

Scottish explorer Dr. David Livingstone is well-known for marrying his colonial and missionary motives. In the 1800s he explored the African interior under the motto

“Christianity, commerce, and civilization.” His goal was to open up new river routes so the slave trade could be abolished through legitimate trade and the embracement of Christianity. Livingstone is considered a national hero in Zambia because of his desire to improve the lives of Africans.

When he died, his African attendants buried his heart under a tree in Zambia before transporting his body over one thousand miles to Britain for burial. Today, due in large part to Livingstone’s legacy, Zambians are generally sympathetic to the message of missionaries and see themselves as having a Christian heritage.

### *Hospitals and Schools: An Ongoing Legacy*

Missionaries who followed in Livingstone’s footsteps by addressing both spiritual and physical needs have had a profound impact on the continent. Hospitals established and often run by missionaries are frequently the only available source of health care, particularly in rural areas. Countless children have been and continue to be educated in schools established by missionaries. In South Africa, for instance, mission schools started educating African children in the mid-1800s, almost a century before government schools were built for them.

### *Literacy: A Double-Edged Sword*

Schools emphasized literacy because the ability to read offered Africans both the opportunity to study the Bible and to advance in society. Many young people educated in mission schools became leaders in the fight for independence, including Nelson Mandela in South Africa and Julius Nyerere in Tanzania.

Unfortunately, the emphasis on reading gave the impression that literacy was necessary to learn Scripture, and uneducated people were unintentionally alienated. Missionaries had not yet embraced traditional oral teaching methods like stories and songs, as many have today.

### *Westernized Christianity: An Unfortunate Outcome*

Missionaries have often unwittingly imported their cultural preference into the churches they started. Early African churchgoers were taught to sing hymns accompanied by a piano and to listen to sermons while sitting on rows of benches in a concrete building. Well-meaning Westerners simply mimicked their own church experiences rather than encouraged Africans to develop their own practices. Today, many established churches continue to operate in a Western fashion, even as some newer churches are choosing to worship with drums and dance or to teach God’s Word using call-and-response patterns while sitting on mats under trees.

### *Theological Education: A Flawed Effort*

The desire to train African church leaders led to the establishment of seminaries and Bible schools. Unfortunately, African pastors often were not empowered to be self-theologizing—that is, to examine Scripture and develop contextualized answers to the African church’s questions.

While seminaries offered insight into complex topics like the assurance of salvation, Africans are often more concerned with day-to-day concerns, like “How can I be cured of

this illness?” Now African believers are increasingly turning to the “health, wealth, and prosperity” teachings of televangelists and modern-day “prophets” who are tuned in to the everyday wants and needs of African people.

### *Unreached Peoples: A Push into Darkness*

In the 1990s, IMB missionaries pulled out of many seminaries, schools, and hospitals in order to focus on evangelism and church planting among unreached peoples—ethnic groups with few or no believers and little or no access to the gospel. In the past six years alone, 105,039 people became believers and 890 churches were planted among unreached peoples in Sub-Saharan Africa. Praise God for these new believers who will worship in the throne room of the Lamb!

### *Christianization: An Unprecedented Opportunity*

Today many countries, particularly in southern and central Africa, claim to be at least 80 percent Christian. Although some Africans who profess Christianity actually follow a mix of biblical teachings and animistic or neo-Pentecostal practices, there are also millions of faithful believers. Thanks to the efforts of missionaries and African believers who have diligently shared the gospel over the past two millennia, Africa is forever changed.

In fact, it’s predicted that almost 40 percent of the world’s Christians will reside in Sub-Saharan Africa by the year 2050. The question is, what kind of Christians will they be? IMB missionaries and indigenous believers are striving to ensure they are Great Commission-minded Christians whose faith is both Scripturally solid and culturally relevant.

### *Learning from the Past*

Examining the mistakes and successes of the past offers insights into how to work in Africa more effectively. As a result, missionaries are re-forming partnerships with seminaries and working alongside African leaders to teach sound theology that filters down into churches. They are embracing oral strategies, training believers to share the gospel in local languages through traditional methods like story and song.

While continuing to serve unreached peoples and places, they are also renewing efforts to disciple existing believers, empowering them to take the gospel to their own people and around the world. What part will you play as missions continues to influence Africa?

About the author: Melanie Clinton is a writer for IMB. She lives in Sub-Saharan Africa with her husband and two children.

## MICHIGAN NEWS

### **“Let me pray about it!”**

by Roy Henry

BATTLE CREEK, MI - We Southern Baptists are known for many things, some good (commitment to the Word, missions, and evangelism) and some, well, not so good (prohibitions against dancing and card-playing). And then, there are those business meetings.

Most of us can probably share a personal experience regarding a church business meeting that would raise goosebumps on even the most seasoned and stalwart Baptist pastor (ask me sometime about the six hour, single issue business meeting I once sat through that went unresolved and continued the next day!). It's no surprise, encouraging attendance at a state convention meeting can quickly elicit that classic Christian way of saying no - "Let me pray about it!"

Participating as a messenger to the annual meeting of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM) is nowhere near as bad as you might think. In fact, in the seven years I've been attending and actively involved, I have found it to be a joy – even during those meetings where some difficult and contentious decisions had to be made. As I think about how to encourage others to attend this year's convention, eight reasons come to mind.

- The business portions are a small part of the meeting, but they are important. We don't spend the entire convention in business session (thankfully!), but the items that are discussed and prayerfully handled are important for the advancement of the Kingdom in our state. Whether it's adopting the budget, voting for officers, or debating motions, your voice as a messenger helps set both the tone and the direction of our convention of churches.
- Hearing about works throughout our state. When you hear how God is moving in every corner of Michigan, from Iron Mountain to Detroit, you can't help but be excited. Churches are being planted, revitalized, and mobilized so that the Gospel is proclaimed and holes are punched in this present darkness.
- Visiting with, and making new, friends from around the state. Every year at the convention, I get to visit with brothers and sisters whom I have known for several years, as well as making new friends and connections. This is a sweet fellowship.
- Worshiping and praising the Lord together. It's wonderful seeing the people of God, from many different ethnic backgrounds and styles of worship, standing side by side, singing their praises to God. This is just a small foretaste of what we can expect before the Throne of God.
- Receiving reports from state and national entities. The annual meeting of the BSCM allows you the opportunity to hear and see first hand how your Cooperative Program (CP) giving is being used for the cause of Christ, as well as an opportunity to ask any questions you might have. Chances are, if you have a question, you're not the only one.

- Being encouraged and challenged. Each year we have the chance to hear some good preaching from solid pastors from both in and out of our state. The messages they bring from the Lord not only encourage us to continue running the race, but also challenge us to rely more on God's grace for that endurance.
- Becoming connected. By being involved in the annual meeting, you will get to know other believers and churches who are in similar contexts as you, and who can be helpful partners in Kingdom work.
- God is glorified in the unity of His Church. When the world sees us standing together despite our differences, the power of the Gospel is on display and God is glorified.

This year, I encourage you to join with your brothers and sisters from around Michigan as we meet at Grace Church in Jackson on November 9 for the BSCM Annual Meeting. You'll be glad you did.

About the author: Roy Henry is blessed to be the husband to Aryn and father of Isaac, Reagan and Elijah. He serves as Senior Pastor of Faith Baptist Church in Battle Creek, Michigan, as well as the Recording Secretary for the BSCM and the NAMB Trustee from Michigan. In his spare time, he enjoys making the Grand Rapids bookstore circuit, discussing theology, and cheering on his beloved UGA Dawgs!

### **Multiplying Ministry Momentum Shift...**

By Jerome Taylor

BURTON, MI - I can still remember the moment when the ministry horizon of my life shifted and broadened. In November of 2008, I was brought by my pastor to the state Annual Meeting. Now, you may think that coming to one state-level annual meeting is not that big of a deal, and I must confess that at many times I had felt the same way. But because my Pastor had taken the time to make sure that I would be invested in these moments, I knew that it mattered to him, so I would at least put on a good face and go along with it. When I got to the meeting, there were the normal expectations; agendas, formalities, reports, resolutions, motions, and elections, but there was also something new that I discovered... newfound interests and newfound invitations.

When you are in the room, you become a part of the process as you see how our unique cooperative partnership has come together to continually fan the flame of kingdom work.

Being in the room matters because of...

- Interests – In these gathering we get to share about our common interests and trajectory as kingdom laborers. And not only do we get to partake in those common shared, but new interests are also sparked as we begin to understand what is being accomplished and why.
- Intentionality – These gatherings have a way of putting all our philosophies about cooperation into intentional actions. The faith that we have is a practicing faith. It

doesn't merely exist in some theoretical abstract bubble...It is theological principles meeting the ground-level practices and actions.

- Investment – There are moments in our lives as believers where mutual fruit is produced in the work of mutual sowing and mutual reaping. During the annual gatherings, there are investments that are made for the good of the local church and also so that good might be made known to a lost world that needs the Gospel of Christ Jesus.
- Invitation – The annual meeting is not merely an invitation for attendance, but to see how God uses disciples from various churches and various walks of life to bring glory to Jesus with their unique talents, skills, gifts, and personalities. Initiatives are introduced at the Annual Meeting, and the goal is not just to pass on information but to invite others on the journey to multiply the endeavors and increase the harvest.
- Integration – The unique aspect of such invitations is the incredible partnerships/fellowships you will have with other brothers and sisters in Christ. Sometimes we can feel lonely and isolated as ministers, disciples, and/or local churches. Take the time to get to know new partners and be a part of this opportunity to connect with others. New faces become familiar friends and co-laborers at the Annual Meeting.
- Impact – The Annual Meeting has meaning because it leaves a lasting impact on our lives, our churches, our mission, our culture, and our time. May the impact this year be multiplied.

Perhaps you've looked at these gatherings and wondered if they are worth attending. I assure you if you are looking to broaden your ministry horizon, to see the opportunity for a momentum shift, and to take part in being a multiplier of kingdom-work, the gathering in November is the place to be.

About the author: Pastor Jerome and his wife, Melinda, began serving the people of Eastgate Baptist Church in the summer of 2013. They have been married since 2004 and have 4 children. Bro. Jerome has been serving in ministries & churches throughout the U.S. and across the globe since 1999.

## SBC NEWS

### IMB Sets the 2018 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering national goal

IMB Staff

RICHMOND, VA - Generous giving to the 2018 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering® makes a massive difference in the world. Men, women, children, and entire communities are transformed as a result of this offering. Your gifts enable thousands of missionaries to live among, serve, and share the gospel with people who have never heard it until now. This year the goal has been set at \$160 million.

Every December since 1888, the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering has empowered Southern Baptist's international missions work. At the beginning of this giving season, we start with a week of prayer dedicated to international missions, taking place December 2-9.

Through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, you and your church:

- Support over 3,600 missionaries
- Enable disciples to be made and churches to be multiplied around the world
- Continue the SBC's 173-year commitment to missions

Look for these stories and specific ways you can pray in this year's Week of Prayer guide, as well as the accompanying videos.

- Larry Pepper traded a space mission for a *medical mission* among the sick and hurting in Africa
- God is using a *small church in Tennessee* to make a big difference in the work of IMB missionaries in Asia
- *Hispanic churches* are crossing cultures and engaging the world with the gospel
- A partnership between a *Kentucky church and a Brazil-based team* is reaching Sao Paulo with the gospel
- *Ukrainian believers* are planting churches, trained by IMB missionaries and supported by a North Carolina congregation
- The impact is mutual when *American students travel to East Asia* to serve college students alongside IMB workers
- It takes the *support of many churches* to keep a small hospital running in Tanzania
- *Refugee ministry* is both local and global for a church in Atlanta

God continues His work in the hearts and lives of persons around the world. Why don't we get on board and financially support those on the front lines with the resources necessary. You and your church family can make the difference.

**Baptists feed Florence survivors, prepare for recovery**

by Brandon Elrod

Date: September 18, 2018 - Tuesday

NEW BERN, N.C. (BP) -- The sun began peeking through the clouds over New Bern, N.C., Tuesday morning (Sept. 18) after Hurricane Florence devastated the community. Despite the brief reprieve from rain, there are concerns flooding may worsen as water flows back to the Atlantic from farther inland. Memories are still fresh from the last big storm to hit the state. After Hurricane Matthew blew through North Carolina in 2016, the storm surge and rain afflicted coastal towns, and the resulting runoff created a resurgence of flooding over the next few days in cities like New Bern.

"We're at the bottom of the mountain, right here at the bottom of the hill," said Jim Pennington, pastor of Temple Baptist Church in New Bern. "All that rain water now will get here Thursday and we will be cut off again ... Hurricane Matthew did that" in 2016. Standing water from the initial flooding remains along stretches of Highway 70 from Kinston, N.C., to New Bern, and flood waters continue to fester around businesses and churches along that stretch.

At Temple, Southern Baptist Disaster Relief (SBDR) volunteer teams from North Carolina Baptist Men continue preparing meals out of a mobile feeding kitchen known as Manna 1, one of the largest food trucks ever built. "Standing here in New Bern and watching the steady flow of people who are coming for help is a reminder of just how desperate the need is," said David Melber, president of Send Relief, the compassion ministry arm of the North American Mission Board. "People are not only worried from the initial flooding from Florence but also the runoff that will be coming in the next several days."

Across North Carolina, white tents have popped up in eight sites across North Carolina to begin feeding residents who are recovering from Florence. SBDR teams from North Carolina, Virginia, Alabama, Kentucky, Tennessee and Missouri are already active with the expectation that teams from Florida and Mississippi should be set up and ready to start feeding in the next few days. "North Carolina Baptists have one of the largest and best equipped disaster relief teams," said Sam Porter, NAMB's national director of SBDR. "All of our Southern Baptist state conventions have been working overtime to ensure that needs are met, whether through actively bringing teams or through their heartfelt prayer."

Along with their feeding equipment and volunteers, SBDR teams have also been asked to bring flood recovery and chainsaw teams. Assessment teams have been evaluating the need so recovery can begin. Southern Baptist chaplains are also active in communities across the affected areas in North and South Carolina. "I talked with a husband and wife this morning, trying to connect them with Temple Baptist Church because they lost everything," said Doc Marshall, chaplaincy coordinator for the New Bern site and a member of Spring Hill Baptist Church in Wagram, N.C. "We're like the spiritual first aid," Marshall said, "and we try to connect people with local churches so that they can get help over the long term."

Jim George, pastor of Fairview Baptist Church in Fredericksburg, Va., relieved Dean Miller as the leader of the feeding and recovery site in Washington, N.C. Their team from the Baptist General Association of Virginia is serving about 6,500 meals a day through the county's emergency operations center, The Salvation Army and the American Red Cross. "Dean loves missions and I love missions," said George, "and we love helping people in Christ's name." Other active feeding sites include the cities of Wilmington, Kinston, Hope Mills, Jacksonville, Lumberton and Wallace in North Carolina. Feeding continues in Conway and Florence, S.C., as well.

A Send Relief semi-trailer of flood recovery supplies made deliveries to the Washington and New Bern sites on Monday and Tuesday. A second Send Relief semi-trailer will be arriving later in the week to serve sites in and around Wilmington. Florence projects to be more catastrophic than Hurricane Floyd, which struck the eastern coast of North Carolina in 1999. Floyd produced 500-year floods in every county on the coastal side of the state and wrought an estimated \$6.5 billion in damage. Porter called Florence the "the East Coast Harvey" after the system hovered over North and South Carolina, dropping feet of rain on entire regions as Hurricane Harvey did over the Houston in 2017.

Southern Baptist Disaster Relief is among the three largest providers of disaster relief assistance in the United States. Southern Baptist churches, associations and state conventions all partner to mobilize volunteers, resources and equipment to provide services. NAMB provides national coordination and assistance in larger, multi-state responses.

About the author: Brandon Elrod writes for the North American Mission Board.

### **COOPERATIVE PROGRAM: Friends sharing life-giving faith**

By BP Staff

EDITOR'S NOTE: October is Cooperative Program Emphasis month in the Southern Baptist Convention.

NASHVILLE (BP) -- "Let me introduce you to a friend," folks say. Every Southern Baptist has innumerable friends who are sharing the Gospel in unique ways and in unique settings. You may not know any of these friends personally, but they share a bond with all Southern Baptists who support their outreach through the Cooperative Program.

CP is the channel by which Southern Baptists, through their churches, provide the financial means necessary for state, national and international missions and ministry to lead people to the wholesomeness of faith in Christ. BP has asked the four CP catalysts of the SBC Executive Committee -- Chad Keck, Matt Crawford, Curtis Cook and Nate Millican -- to introduce some of their CP friends. From U.S. urban contexts to Asia, here are their stories:

**Chad Keck, CP catalyst for the Midwest region and pastor of First Baptist Church in Kettering, Ohio**

Let me introduce you to my CP friends Tony and Beth Loseto, church planters in Cleveland with the North American Mission Board's SEND network. Cleveland is a city where only 8.5 percent of the people claim an evangelical faith and almost half the population claims no religious affiliation at all. Tony grew up in the Old Brooklyn neighborhood of Cleveland and in 2013 he and his wife returned there to plant Gateway Church.

The primary focus of Gateway church is to serve the community in Jesus' name and to evangelize the lost with the Gospel of Jesus. They desire to take the Gospel outside the church and into the hurting lives of those in their city. Tony shares one example of how God has been working in the life of his neighbor Jerry. "Jerry had been saved many years ago but had never become involved in any church. After several attempts Jerry finally agreed to come to one of our home Bible studies. Through that small group, Jerry grew in his faith. That deepening walk with Jesus created a desire for him to share the Gospel with his own family. His adult daughter began attending our church with her own family and heard the Gospel with clarity in a way she had not heard it before. Jerry's daughter recently put her faith in Christ and has been baptized as a follower of Him. We are praising God for His work through the Gospel in a multi-generational way through the ministry of Gateway."

Tony first learned about the Cooperative Program as a member of Parma Baptist Church (now Pleasant Valley Church) in the Cleveland area. His understanding and appreciation was deepened as a student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary - Boyce College. Tony talks about CP as being like "scaffolding" for their church plant. For Gateway Church it provided the early support needed for the work to build up to capacity. It has allowed him to be fully devoted to the work of ministry, sharing the Gospel, and developing relationships with the community and believers in the church. CP has made a vital impact on the work of reaching Old Brooklyn with the Gospel.

When Tony thinks about the people and churches who give faithfully through the Cooperative Program, he thinks of the words of the apostle Paul in Philippians: "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now" (Philippians 1:3-5). Church planting with the SBC has reflected the truths of Scripture through partnership from the very beginning that demonstrates a belief that resourcing efforts to see the Gospel reach the lost is always worth it.

**Matt Crawford, CP catalyst for the South region and East Campus pastor for City Church Tallahassee**

Byron Cutrer II is pastor of Faith Baptist Church in New Orleans. I've known Byron for nearly 20 years. It's been incredible to witness God use him and his family in ministry. While Byron was a student at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, he was called to lead Faith Baptist Church, with about 25 attendees in uptown New Orleans. This

elderly congregation -- who joked that their youth group was in their 60s -- had a strong spiritual heritage but their numbers had been devastated by Hurricane Katrina.

About a year ago, Faith Baptist called Byron as a transitional pastor to help them make critical decisions about their future. Under his leadership, the church has engaged in NAMB's Replant program. Faith Baptist has stepped out in faith, hiring a children's ministry coordinator in order to actively pursue the next generation for the sake of the Gospel. According to Byron, "Specifically, we pray for baptisms.... God has already answered that prayer. We had one baptism a few weeks ago and we will probably have a couple more in a month or so." And after beginning Henry Blackaby's "Experiencing God" curriculum, Sunday School attendance has doubled.

Through NAMB's Replant program, Faith Baptist has benefited from Cooperative Program funding. "We're really grateful," Byron said. "Where we're at in our context is so unique; we're on the front lines of charging the gates of hell.... For our people [in the SBC] to know that there are some hard-to-reach places, that they're being represented there -- it's making a difference."

### **Curtis Cook, CP catalyst for the Northeast region and pastor of Hope Fellowship Church in Cambridge, Mass**

Dane Helsing is a church planter in Belmont, Mass., who, along with a team, started Beacon Community Church nearly three years ago. From the beginning, the plant has been supported by Cooperative Program funding through the Send Network of the North American Mission Board. In the fall of 2017, a visiting professor from China named Michelle saw a flier about the church. When she walked through the doors that Sunday, the first thing she shared was, "My English teacher in China from the U.S. once told me about Jesus. Is this a place where I can learn more about Jesus?" Dane replied that she had come to the right place!

Over the next nine months, several members of the church invested time sharing the Gospel and answering questions, and eventually Michelle placed her faith in Jesus Christ. On Father's Day, she stood before her church family and spoke of her faith in Jesus Christ before she was baptized. As she shared, "The more degrees and money I earned, the emptier I became." But now, Michelle's deepest longings have been filled and she has found lasting satisfaction in Jesus Christ.

As Beacon Community Church prepares to celebrate its third birthday, Dane spoke of how they have been blessed by the Cooperative Program. "Our church exists because of the thousands of dollars that the Send Network and numerous Southern Baptist churches who have so generously partnered with us. We couldn't do what we are doing in reaching out to people like Michelle without this partnership. We are so thankful."

### **Nate Millican, CP catalyst for the West and pastor of Foothills Baptist Church in Phoenix**

I've asked my friend David York\* to share about his work with a Muslim people group in Asia.

David York: In our part of the world, I get to oversee a mentoring program for new personnel Southern Baptists are sending to the lost world. This program lasts for the

duration of their first term, and through it we traverse a vast array of challenging territory: language and culture acquisition, adjusting to life overseas, strategies for engaging the lost in a cross-cultural ministry setting, abiding in Christ as we're going and growing into Christ-likeness.

When I have the privilege of getting face time with these new families, it doesn't take long to realize Southern Baptists are sending us some of their best! These are faithful brothers and sisters who long to put down deep roots spreading out to the farthest corners of global lostness so that Christ may be known and cherished among the nations, especially among those who've never heard the Gospel before.

Recently our team received one of these precious new families you've entrusted to us. They were affirmed and sent out by their home church. After a season of stateside preparation and orientation, and then a year of language study in what we call a landing city, they arrived in the province of our focus people group just under two months ago. Tom Callahan\*, the husband/father of this family, has been eagerly connecting with established churches to cast vision and mobilize new partners as he continues studying the language diligently. His wife Cara\* just started homeschooling their three adorable children again after a one-year hiatus in an international school.

Their arrival has been tremendously encouraging to the rest of our team, and we're getting caught up in their zeal as they stand on the front end of a new career centered on engaging the lost with the Gospel, making disciples of Jesus, and planting churches who will catch the same vision. There are few things in this life that brighten their eyes more than getting to put their hands to what Jesus called the "Greater Works" (John 14:12), the nuts and bolts of the Great Commission.

A few weeks ago, Tom and I went out sharing the Gospel in the streets together. After having modeled an approach for him a few times, I let him take the lead as we settled in next to a group of four students at a roadside food stall. It was getting dark outside, the street lights were buzzing, the traffic wasn't slowing down, the street musicians were making their rounds and the grilled chicken was tender and spicy. The students were enthusiastically anticipating the beginning of their freshman year at the university. They were all from different parts of this country, but each hailed from the same majority faith.

It took Tom a few minutes to get his bearings, but he soon began to navigate skillfully and intentionally through an interactive "get-to-know-you" stage of the conversation that he ultimately steered toward more important, eternal and epic truths. Within about 40 minutes he'd landed on the Gospel and shared our life-changing, soul-saving message with a young man who'd never heard it before.

Tom met with him again, and the young man professed faith in Jesus, saying, "What should I do now?" What Tom did was simply put into practice some very basic evangelism patterns and principles we observe Jesus using in His conversation with the Samaritan woman at the Well of Jacob in John 4. Like Jesus, Tom was being **intentional** in an **informal** setting through an **interactive** conversation in which he was taking the **initiative to introduce** Jesus, the Messiah. (Those are the five "I's of our basic method of evangelism.)

It is difficult to put into words the joy and gratitude I felt in that moment. But I'll try. I prayed and worshipped the Lord Jesus while Tom leaned in with everlasting truth. Consider just how profound and majestic the Father's ways are! God is orchestrating what we couldn't even imagine through His Spirit working in and through us to glorify His Son, Jesus the Messiah! Through the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists are affirming and entrusting; we're receiving and equipping; the lost are hearing and believing; and Jesus' name is becoming increasingly famous on the other side of the world. That's the fruit of our partnership in the Gospel.

Thank you for sending people like the Callahans to the lost world. Thank you for supporting them and us by acknowledging God's call and the priorities of Great Commission obedience.

\*Names changed.

Compiled by Baptist Press senior editor Art Toalston.

### **Hurricane Florence relief mobilization underway**

by Brandon Elrod

Date: September 20, 2018 - Thursday

LUMBERTON, N.C. (BP) -- Cars stretched from Hyde Park Baptist Church in Lumberton, N.C., down Highway 211 waiting to receive hot meals in a makeshift drive-thru set up by Southern Baptist Disaster Relief (SBDR) in the church's parking lot. Volunteers with the North Carolina Baptists on Mission (NCBM), who comprise North Carolina's SBDR outreach, along with volunteers from churches in town, cooked and distributed meals to residents, many of whom lost everything during Hurricane Florence.

Some of the volunteers, like Hyde Park member Donna DiChiara likewise endured severe damage to their homes. "This storm, my whole yard was ... worse than a swimming pool; it looked like the river," DiChiara said. "Underneath my house, it was flooded to the sub-flooring. Then all of my air conditioning is out, plus the duct work is down, full of water." Jeff Blackburn, Hyde Park's lead pastor, could gauge the severity of the storm by comparing church members' reactions to Hurricane Matthew in 2016, saying that he saw concern on their faces in 2016 but "desperation in their eyes" following Hurricane Florence.

"We have had serious flooding all over the community. At least half of our congregation is displaced, trying to find a place to live," Blackburn said. "They've lost their houses, many of them for the second time" as they did in 2016. Blackburn surmised that at least 200 volunteers from Hyde Park and other churches were serving and that at least a third of those volunteers were now homeless or living with other family members. "What's amazing is that even when their lives are upside down, they're still out there serving, which says a lot about their compassion and commitment to this community," Blackburn said.

Flooding made it difficult for food and supplies to get into Lumberton, creating a lot of anxiety in the community. The North Carolina SBDR team served food to those who could drive up and packed meals into American Red Cross vehicles that delivered meals to nearby shelters. The National Guard used high-water vehicles to deliver supplies and SBDR-prepared hot meals through the floodwaters.

Blackburn praised the NCBM for helping his church serve its neighbors. "I'm glad that we are here and that we have a shared vision together to see Jesus transform the hearts and lives of people in this community." SBDR teams with Missouri Baptists set up their kitchens and equipment in Wallace, N.C., led by Gaylon Moss, who recently became Missouri's disaster relief director after serving with NCBM. "I am grateful for the opportunity to come back," Moss said. "North Carolina is doing a good job coordinating and organizing. We appreciate the opportunity to be here and help serve."

One of Moss' team leaders, Wesley Hammond, noted how every disaster relief effort takes cooperation across each level of Southern Baptist life. Hammond, pastor of First Baptist Church in Paris, Mo., described how Bethel Baptist Church in Berea, Ky., housed his team for a night during their long drive from the "Show Me State." Bethel Baptist built a facility designed to house disaster relief volunteers, and the church's hospitality blessed Hammond and his team so that they could show up ready to work. "As we've come in to North Carolina, the church here, Poston Baptist Church, was already trying to do the ministry in the community themselves," Hammond said. "As they were ministering to the community, we were able to come in, and they saw us as the group of people who were there to lift them up and help carry the burden."

As SBDR teams from throughout the United States arrive, they work with different organizations, local leaders and churches to serve those in need. "As we've engaged ... we've seen God expand what we're trying to accomplish by involving the people of the community -- the mayor, chief of police, the National Guard, the American Red Cross," Hammond said. "All of us are working together to minister to the needs of the people here."

An SBDR team from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions set up their site at Southview Baptist Church in Hope Mills, N.C. As they awaited food to begin preparing meals, a few of their volunteers ventured into the surrounding neighborhoods to begin recovery efforts at peoples' homes. A team from Tennessee set up their kitchens at First Baptist Church in Kinston, N.C., and prepared meals for the community. A team from Kentucky began feeding out of Catalyst Church in Jacksonville, N.C., on Wednesday night (Sept. 19). A North Carolina SBDR team has been serving meals from First Baptist Wilmington, N.C., despite the city essentially becoming an island as roads in and out were flooded. Efforts continue at Temple Baptist Church in New Bern, N.C., where President Donald Trump visited Wednesday.

Teams from Mississippi and Florida will also be participating in the feeding and recover efforts. "We'll probably be feeding there for at least a month," said Shane McGivney, the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's director of men's ministry, reporting that a second team of credentialed SBDR volunteers is being readied to relieve the initial team being deployed to North Carolina. Also, McGivney reported, training has been scheduled

by Mississippi's Gulf Coast Baptist Association for volunteers in that area for immediate mobilization to the hurricane area.

As of Wednesday evening, SBDR teams across North and South Carolina had served over 118,000 meals. Around 20 chainsaw jobs or yard cleanup have been completed. SBDR will accelerate its recovery efforts in the coming days and weeks as many homes still remain flooded.

To donate funds for national or state convention DR work in North Carolina or otherwise get involved in Hurricane Florence recovery efforts, visit [namb.net/Florence](http://namb.net/Florence). As noted by McGivney, "In-kind gifts of clothing and household items are not as important right now as monetary gifts that can be used for food, disinfectants and other cleaning supplies and emergency items when and where the need arises."

About the author: Brandon Elrod writes for the North American Mission Board. William Perkins, editor of the Mississippi Baptist Record, contributed to this report.

### **Salvations 'on a daily basis became normal'**

by Alex Sibley

Date: September 17, 2018 - Monday

ASIA (BP) -- When Jeremiah Farmer\*, an architect, and his wife Joy\* sensed a clear call from the Lord to minister in Asia, they had been active in their local church but had no seminary training and hadn't planned to leave for a foreign country. Nevertheless, in obedience to the Lord, they followed their church's advice and applied with the International Mission Board, which accepted them and then deployed them to a closed part of Asia.

From the beginning, Farmer told fellow believers he did not qualify to be on the mission field. Even so, he and his wife agreed to stay as long as the Lord told them to stay and to maintain a "laser focus" on a specific goal: figuring out how to get the Gospel to their region's 650 million people, 80 percent of whom had never heard the message of Jesus. Thirteen years later, the Lord has never told the Farmers to stop. Despite their initial lack of qualifications, they have witnessed the Holy Spirit do miraculous things: More than 700 churches have been planted; an estimated 2.5 million people have heard the Gospel; 45,000 people have come to faith in Christ; and 2,500 new leaders have been raised up in an environment hostile to the Christian faith.

"For us, people coming to faith on a daily basis became normal. Baptisms every Sunday, that was normal. To start new churches every month, that was normal." Farmer calls it "extremely" rewarding "to get to be a part of that kind of movement; to see millions of people get to hear the Gospel, most of them for the first time in their entire lives; to see tens of thousands come to faith and all these churches started."

Before deploying to the mission field, the Farmers were assigned six core tasks by the IMB: entry, evangelism, discipleship, leadership development, church formation and missions-sending. Their first term focused primarily on entry and evangelism. Since eight out of 10 people in their location had never heard the Gospel, the evangelistic task required the Farmers to break new ground.

In that culture, relationships are everything, Farmer says, so rather than doing door-to-door evangelism or handing out Gospel tracts on the street (which likely would have gotten them arrested), the Farmers engaged in relational evangelism. As the only "foreigners" in the area, many local people wanted to get to know them and practice speaking English with them. The Farmers used this to their advantage inviting people, typically just one person or family at a time, to share a meal with them.

Another aspect of the culture is to reciprocate actions. Whenever the Farmers invited a family to share a meal with them, that family was socially obligated to later extend a similar invitation. "So we knew that no matter what, if we invited someone to dinner, we got two chances to share with them," Farmer says. "So we made sure we shared the Gospel both times." Each time people professed faith in Christ, the Farmers quickly taught them how to share their faith. These new believers learned to wake up each morning and ask themselves, "With whom am I going to share the Gospel today?" As more people came to Christ, more people shared their faith with lost friends and family members, resulting in yet more people coming to the Lord. Before long the Farmers were receiving reports daily of people turning to Jesus.

To keep up with the growing numbers, the Farmers had to develop leaders who could teach small groups and ultimately lead house churches (as each house church could only fit 10-20 people). So, the Farmers wrote small group lessons that taught the leaders to seek answers to their questions in the Scripture. "Whatever they asked, instead of referring back to my American traditions, we would say, 'What does the Bible say?'" Farmer recounts. "What does it say about prayer? What does it say about worship? What does it say about teaching and preaching?"

By this time, Farmer was enrolled in Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, selecting classes based on the needs in each phase of his ministry. Classes such as missiology and cultural anthropology and various courses on evangelism in different contexts became instrumental in helping him think through issues he faced in his ever-developing ministry. "None of it was theory," says Farmer, who completed his master of divinity degree in 2018. "I was like, 'Oh, I need that now,' and we were able to apply it right away."

As the number of house churches surpassed 700, Farmer took on a supervisory role, training their leaders in evangelism, discipleship and missions. The latter task has been a key aspect of the Farmers' most recent efforts. "People became excellent evangelists among their own people -- very bold, very zealous, very excited for the Gospel, sharing their faith very loudly, proudly and boldly, and doing a very good job," Farmer says.

"The challenge was when it came to crossing cultures." We had to teach them when you're working with another culture and society, you have to learn their worldview, learn how to stand in their shoes, learn their language, and understand their culture and approach outreach from their culture ... to help them understand the truth of the Gospel, which transcends culture." Learning the how and why of missions has produced a "trickle" of effective missions-sending from the region, with more than 50 different volunteer teams sent out in a year's time, along with a number of families who have

accepted a long-term missionary calling. Based on the number of churches getting involved, Farmer says "a tidal wave" of missions-sending is on the horizon.

Among the most encouraging testimonies the Farmers have seen is that of Ben, a "brilliant" but lost man whom they met during their first term. After Ben came to faith in Christ, the Farmers noticed in him "something different that we hadn't noticed in the other believers," Farmer says.

"He became other-centered very, very quickly. ... He really wanted to live his life out for a true purpose, a real cause."

The Farmers committed to mentoring Ben, having him over at their house as often as possible to disciple him and develop him as a leader. They gradually gave him more responsibilities within their house church, and eventually he started leading a house church of his own. Over time, the other house churches in the area came to see Ben as their mentor.

Later on, Ben "graduated," moving to another province to start more churches. He now leads a network of 40 underground churches that likewise are getting involved in missions. "To see the progress of a kid who was lost and just looking for a cause to live for, and seeing him now -- he's married, has two kids, he's grown so much in his faith, he's gone through all the different training systems that we have; he's training himself; and now he's leading this network of 40 churches in another province -- is exactly what we were hoping for," Farmer says.

Having begun as the first missionary presence in their region of Asia, the Farmers now supervise all the missionary work focusing on the 650 million people who live there. They continue to lead training and missions conferences in order to see Asian Christians bring the Gospel not only to their own nation, but to the whole world. Though they now play a different role from a different location, the Farmers can look back on their first 13 years in Asia with awe because of what the Lord has done. "We were there to do exactly what God called us to do, and we worked as hard and as fast as we could to get it done in the power of the Holy Spirit," Farmer says. "We got to see Him work, which was miraculous and amazing."

\*Names changed.

About the author: Alex Sibley is associate director of news and information for Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. This article originally appeared in Southwestern News, the seminary's quarterly magazine.

## AROUND THE STATE

### SUBMIT YOUR UPDATES

Send in your ministry staff updates, changes and open positions that we might share with all of Michigan. [Click here](#) to submit your information.  
Relaunch!

We are excited to announce our relaunch of the **LifeChangers** one day! Our theme this year is "Mission: Possible!" Word of mouth is our greatest tool, so please share with everyone! We would love if everyone came out and supported LifeChangers one day! If you have any questions please call or text 734-620-9592 or 313-820-0391. Thank you and God bless!

Genesee Baptist Association Annual Meeting  
Monday October 15, 2018, 7:00 pm  
Heritage Baptist Church  
5199 E. Hill Road  
Grand Blanc, MI 48439

All messengers are encouraged to attend and everyone is welcome.

### READ IT!

READ IT! Is a ministry of Eastside Community Church. It is a kids reading program and the children in our community love it. The program is designed to help with reading skills, especially for families with little help, no money and no time. READ IT! Focuses on getting children to read the Bible and grow in confidence both in the Word and in their reading skills. Last week 20 students attended. Eastside Community Church is providing this tool free to churches seeking ways to be part of the community. Contact Pastor Mathew Vroman for more information and to get started. Call (313) 657-1100 or email [pastor@eastsidecommunitychurch.com](mailto:pastor@eastsidecommunitychurch.com).

## CLASSIFIEDS

### Classified Ad Submission Guidelines

1. Baptist Beacon classifieds are posted free of charge.
2. All classified posts will run for 2 consecutive months. Longer or shorter times may be requested. Publication of classifieds correspond with the monthly publication of the Baptist Beacon.
3. Classifieds must be from a BSCM church.

4. Be sure to include thorough details of request, name of church, contact information as well as a point of contact.
5. Submissions must be made no later than the 10th of the month prior to publication.
6. Submit all classified ads to [beacon@bscm.org](mailto:beacon@bscm.org)

### Senior Pastor Needed

The Monroe Missionary Baptist Church (MMBC) located in Monroe, Michigan, a Southern Baptist Convention affiliate, is seeking to fill the position of Senior Pastor to lead a congregation of more than 600 regular attending members. Our current Senior Pastor of 22 years desires to retire from the pulpit to pursue missionary opportunities. Monroe Missionary Baptist Church constituted in 1937 and currently meets at a campus-style 41 acre site and facility just south of Monroe. MMBC is also affiliated with the Baptist State Convention of Michigan and the Southeastern Baptist Association. We are currently fixed-debt free and focused on the mission of the New Testament Church. MMBC currently supports full-time ministerial Minister of Families and Discipleship, Minister of Worship and Media, and office clerical and support members in addition to the position of Senior Pastor.

The desired candidate will have the following characteristics:

- A born-again believer in Jesus Christ and living an exemplary life modeling the call, character, and competencies becoming of a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ,
- Demonstrates a servant spirit as a growing disciple of Jesus Christ,
- Agrees with and supports the Baptist Faith and Message,
  
- Displays honorable work ethics by maintaining adequate office hours in order to effectively administrate the ministries of the church,
- Displays the spiritual gift of edification to this local body and the general community through preaching, teaching and pastoral ministries,
- Proven ability to lead a Pastoral team in planning and leading in worship, discipleship in fulfilling the Great Commission,
- Provide effective direction and oversight of the administrative and volunteer ministry teams of the congregation.

A Bachelor's degree in a Christian ministry field is highly desired and consideration will be given to candidates with a combination of equivalent education and proven experience including at least five (5) years of proven experience as a Senior Pastor.

Additional information on MMBC may be found at our website, [www.mmbconline.org](http://www.mmbconline.org). If you feel the Holy Spirit prompting you to consider this ministry opportunity, additional information may be obtain at the following link: [www.mmbconline.org/learn/employment/](http://www.mmbconline.org/learn/employment/)

Search Team Contact:

Audie (Russ) Bates

Personal Phone: (419) 340-3132

Resumes may be emailed to [searchteam@mmbconline.org](mailto:searchteam@mmbconline.org) or mailed to:

Senior Pastor Search Committee  
Monroe Missionary Baptist Church  
14260 South Dixie Highway  
Monroe, Michigan 48161  
Bi-Vocational Pastor Needed  
SALARY: TBD

LOCATION: Davison Meadows Baptist Church, Davison MI

Small Southern Baptist church **seeking Bi-vocational pastor** with a deep love for God and a heart for people. We have a loving, kind and helpful body of people whose standard is the King James Bible. We are also an aging congregation. Sunday services include Bible study at 10am, Worship at 11am and 6pm. Mid-week Bible study at 6pm.

**REQUIREMENTS:**

If you feel called to this ministry, please submit the following to the email address provided below:

- Cover Letter introducing yourself and your interest in this position
- Narrative of your Salvation Experience (Testimony)
- Your resume with your ministerial experiences, educational background, and at least three references
- Doctrinal statement regarding your theological views of core doctrines
  
- Must concur with the Baptist Faith and Message

**CONTACT:**

Chris Gilbert

[dmbcpastorsearch@gmail.com](mailto:dmbcpastorsearch@gmail.com)

**Full-time Lead Pastor Needed**

Colonial Hills Baptist Church in Mt. Morris, MI is seeking a full time lead Pastor. The church currently has an average Sunday morning attendance of 100. They have been at their present location since 1972. Please send your resumes to Colonial Hills Baptist Church Search Committee, P.O. Box 432, Mt. Morris, MI 48458.

**Learning Center Director Needed**

Eastgate Early Learning Center (Bethel, Roseville, Motor City Metro) seeks a new director for their center. The full time position opens at the end of August but we look to hire in before then so the new person can settle in with the help of the outgoing director. Request job description at [bethelbapt@sbcglobal.net](mailto:bethelbapt@sbcglobal.net).

**Associate Pastor of Worship and Discipleship**

**CrossPointe Church Overview:** CrossPointe Church is a medium-sized church affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) located in Monroe, Michigan. We offer two identical gathered worship services on Sunday mornings which include; biblical preaching, scripture reading, prayer, theologically rich music, and regular observance of the biblical ordinances (Lord's Supper and Baptism). Our music style may be considered "contemporary" as we are led by a team of musicians (piano, guitar(s), drums, bass, vocals, etc.). Within our "contemporary" style of music, we value both old and new songs that are theologically rich and seek to glorify God (examples: Citizens & Saints, Sojourn Music, Getty Music, Sovereign Grace Music, Indelible Grace Music). Please see the following website for more information regarding CrossPointe's doctrinal statement, leadership, history, and various ministries.

**CrossPointe Church Website:** [www.crosspointemonroe.com](http://www.crosspointemonroe.com)

**Monroe, Michigan Overview:** Monroe is a city of approximately 20,000 people located on the western shore of Lake Erie. It is equal distance from Detroit (MI), Ann Arbor (MI), and Toledo (OH). Monroe offers a great blend of outdoor activities, historical landmarks, and city life.

**Position Overview:** The associate pastor of worship and discipleship works with the lead pastor in planning and implementing all areas of the gospel-centered worship ministry at CrossPointe Church. The associate pastor of worship and discipleship also works with the lead pastor in developing and strengthening the various ministries at CrossPointe Church.

#### Qualifications:

- The associate pastor must be a man who humbly and joyfully desires to serve as an elder in a local church (1 Tim 3:1, 6; Titus 1:5-9).
- The associate pastor should be recognized by a local church through ordination (or willing to go through the ordination process at CrossPointe) as a man qualified for the office of elder (Titus 1:5; Eph 4:11-13; 1 Pet 5:1-3).
- The associate pastor should be a man who is actively pursuing holiness of life by the grace of God (1 Tim 4:7-10).
- The associate pastor should be evangelical, conservative theologically, and in agreement with the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.
- The associate pastor should be proficient to lead vocally in gathered worship services.
- The associate pastor should be proficient to lead instrumentally with guitar and/or piano in gathered worship services.
- The associate pastor should have experience in leading a team of musicians.
- The associate pastor should have experience with audio and video technology.
- The associate pastor should have experience developing and leading discipleship ministries in a local church.

#### Gathered Worship Service Responsibilities:

- Direct the planning, organizing, and evaluating of a gospel-centered worship ministry.
- Recruit, train, and schedule the worship team members (music, sound, media).
- Lead and oversee weekly rehearsals for the worship team.

## Additional Worship Ministry Responsibilities:

- Develop and manage all church media content (website, social media).
- Work with the lead pastor and ministry team leaders to actively and creatively use all media content as a tool to communicate about the ministries of CrossPointe Church.
- Supervise and maintain all supplies, instruments, and equipment related to the worship ministry.
- Prepare an estimated annual worship ministry budget and administer the approved worship ministry budget.
- Upon request, assist in musical preparation for weddings, funerals, and other church and/or denomination related activities.

## Discipleship Ministry Responsibilities:

- Disciple the worship team members and worship intern(s).
- Work with the lead pastor to identify and train ministry leaders.
- Work with the lead pastor to develop ministry vision for CrossPointe Church.
- Work with the lead pastor to lead CrossPointe to fulfill the Great Commission.
- Participate in scheduled ministry team leader meetings and staff meetings.
- Maintain regular office hours for focused time of prayer, study, and counseling.
- Perform other duties as assigned by the lead pastor.

## Compensation:

- \$30,000 per year (25-30 hours per week)
- 3 weeks of paid vacation per year

For more information or to apply, please contact Pastor Jay Anderson:

CrossPointe Church

[1675 Stewart Road](#)

[Monroe, MI 48162](#)

(734) 457-1024

[crosspointeworshipleadersearch@gmail.com](mailto:crosspointeworshipleadersearch@gmail.com)

## Bi-vocational Pastor Needed

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

## ABOUT US

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

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