

Bambi is not closing

By Mike Durbin

“Bambi is not closing.” I have said these words over and over again in recent months. There is no plan to close the camp. None. We understand that many Michigan Baptists are concerned about the future of Bambi. For years, attendance at retreats has been down from days past, buildings need remodeling, equipment needs to be purchased, and we need a new camp leader. These are just some of the challenges. People hear about these challenges and are concerned that we might be considering closing the camp, but just the opposite is true.

The BSCM is committed to realistically addressing the issues facing Bambi as we challenge Michigan Baptists to pray, work, attend, and give to make Bambi a premier retreat and conference center in Michigan that will help meet the spiritual needs of our churches.

Yes, there are challenges, but there are also great things happening at Bambi. Michigan Baptists have been investing in the camp for decades. Together, we have built a camp that many Michigan Baptists love. In fact, several generations of families have experienced God through the ministry of Bambi. Some of our retreats this year actually set attendance records and others came close. The infrastructure of the camp is sound and the location is ideal to get away from life's distractions to intentionally focus on our relationship with God. A massive clean up project was conducted last spring by staff and volunteers. Mission teams continue to serve at Bambi from Michigan and beyond. One mission team is making plans to paint the Lodge next summer. Renovations on the retreat speakers' guest room are already in progress.

The reality is that the challenges facing Bambi can be overcome. Attendance can and will go up, retreat content is being strengthened, buildings can be renovated, equipment can be purchased, and new staff can be called. As we plan for Bambi's future, let me remind you of how Bambi came to exist.

Michigan Baptist churches from across the state made their way to the Roscommon area on June 21, 1958. The 240 acre Lauren Gun Club was for sale for \$44,000. Fred Hubbs, Executive Director of the Baptist State Convention (BSCM) at the time, thought it would make an excellent state camp. He challenged Michigan Baptists to consider buying the club. He knew the price would be an incredible financial undertaking for the recently formed and struggling convention, so he called Michigan Baptists to a time of prayer. He also set a date for churches to meet and look at the property. Hubbs set a goal of 100 people being present as a sign from God that the Convention should purchase the property and make it a retreat center.

Michigan Baptists gathered at the appointed time. The group formed a circle near the lake and began to count. Excitement grew as they counted 60, then 70, then 80. It was going to be close. Many, no doubt, were counting ahead to see how many were there. Some say Fred Hubbs was the 100th person, some that he was the 101st, but all agree that there was a clear sense that God was leading Michigan Baptists to purchase the property we now call, “Bambi.”

Michigan Baptist Churches demonstrated the power of partnership, not only when we purchased the property, but also as we built and develop it. Bambi has been and continues to be a great part of our Convention's history. The future of Bambi depends (just like it always has) on our churches. It takes churches working together that make a camp like Bambi possible.

So what can a church like yours do?

1. Pray for God's direction as we call our next Bambi leader. Having the right person lead Bambi in the days to come is critical. Our desire is to build on Bambi's wonderful heritage as we develop retreats and add amenities that will impact lives and punch holes in the darkness for the Glory of God. Leadership matters, and we are committed to find the very best leader for the future. Let's join together in prayer and seek God's direction knowing He's got this! (1)

2. Lead your church to participate in Bambi retreats. The reality is that people are transformed, believers are encouraged, and churches are strengthened through Bambi retreats. Tears filled my eyes at Girls' Camp this summer as I watched them carry flags into the chapel from the places we have missionaries. I listened as they studied about and prayed for the advancement of God's Kingdom in our world. My mind was captivated by the thought there could be some in the service that day who would become the next generation of missionaries sent out by Michigan Baptists. I experienced the presence of God as I greeted people for the Harvest retreats, Men's retreats, WMU retreats, and Metamorphosis Youth retreat. Retreats impact people and churches for Christ! Take advantage of the many marvelous opportunities held there each year.

3. Send a mission team to Bambi. It's a great way for your church to make a difference in Michigan as people all over the state benefit from your ministry. There are a number of ways your church can get involved. We need teams to get the camp ready for next summer - everything from yard work to general maintenance and remodeling. Your church could send and sponsor summer missionaries to serve at Bambi. Your mission team could volunteer to help staff a retreat. Your church could send a financial gift to help with repairs, purchase of equipment, or provide scholarships for people to attend a retreat.

The future of Bambi is what we make it. We are not closing Bambi.

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

(1) Arthur L. Walker, jr. BY THEIR FRUITS, published by the Baptist State Convention of Michigan.

Lottie Moon and the IMB Christmas Offering

By IMB

Richmond, VA - Well over one hundred years ago, a single missionary named Lottie Moon, serving in China, began writing letters challenging the church back here to send and support more workers to go there. After her death on the field, her challenge was heeded in the formalization of an offering in her name. In 1918, Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) named the annual Christmas offering for international missions after her. Even if you're not a Southern Baptist who has given to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, her life is a reminder of why we must give to send and support missionaries serving among unreached peoples in unreached places.

Edmonia Moon, Lottie's sister, was appointed as a Southern Baptist missionary to Tengchow, China, in 1872. The following year, Lottie was appointed and joined her sister there. Lottie served 39 years as a missionary, mostly in China's Shantung province. She taught in a girls' school and often made trips into China's interior to share the good news with women and girls. Lottie Moon was passionate about people knowing Christ and she didn't hesitate to speak her mind.

Today's China is a world of rapid change. It's home to 1.4 billion individuals – one-fifth of the world's population. Village dwellers flock to trendy megacities with exploding populations. And China holds its own in the world's economy. It's very different from the vast farmland Lottie Moon entered in the 1800s. But one thing hasn't changed: China's need for a Savior.

When she set sail for China, Lottie was 32 years old. She had turned down a marriage proposal and left her job, home and family to follow God's lead. Her path wasn't typical for an educated woman from a wealthy Southern family. God had gripped her with the Chinese peoples' need for a Savior. People feared and rejected her, but she refused to leave. The aroma of fresh-baked cookies drew people to her house. She adopted traditional Chinese dress, and she learned China's language and customs. Lottie didn't just serve the people of China; she identified with them. Many eventually accepted her. And some accepted her Savior.

Lottie wrote letters home detailing China's hunger for truth and the struggle of so few missionaries taking the gospel to the 472 million Chinese in her day. She also shared the urgent need for more workers and for Southern Baptists to support them through prayer and giving. She once wrote home to the Foreign Mission Board, "Please say to the [new] missionaries they are coming to a life of hardship, responsibility and constant self-denial." Disease, turmoil and lack of co-workers threatened to undo Lottie's work. But she gave herself completely to God, helping lay the foundation of what would become the modern Chinese church, one of the fastest-growing Christian movements in the world. Lottie Moon died at 72 — ill and in declining health after decades ministering to her beloved Chinese. But her legacy lives on. And today, when gifts aren't growing as quickly as the number of workers God is calling to the field, her call for sacrificial giving rings with more urgency than ever.

For more information about the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering visit imb.org/lmco or contact the BSCM www.bscm.org. Office: (810) 714-1907.

Bivocational church planting

By Brad Brisco

Kansas City, KS (BP) - Over the past several years there has been an increasing interest in church planting. As a result of declining attendance and the closing of many existing churches, every major denomination is focusing more resources toward starting new congregations. In recent years, we have also seen the creation church planting networks that emphasize church planting across denominational lines.

In the midst of this proliferation of church planting, one of the most significant trends is the starting of new churches by bivocational leaders. Historically the phrase “bivocational pastor” was used to refer to a leader who served a church that was unable to compensate a pastor with a full-time salary. Therefore, the pastor would work a second, or third job, to supplement what the church could provide. In many cases, it was out of necessity not preference. However, today there is a new movement among bivocational leaders. More church planters are choosing to plant bivocationally. They are making this decision out of conviction that bivocational church planting actually provides a more desirable way to plant a new church, rather than on the basis of limited funds. In other words, it is becoming a first option, not a last resort.

While there is no need for bivocational church planting to compete with the more traditional approach—it is clearly a both/and proposition—there are some significant benefits to planting bivocationally, especially in a post-Christendom context. Lets consider three.

1. Missional engagement

Perhaps the most significant benefit of planting as a bivocational leader is that it gives the planter greater opportunities to connect relationally with people in the community. Their jobs give them access into a mission field that is not readily available to a full-time pastor. Many traditional pastors find themselves working inside a church bubble, spending the majority of their time talking with church people about things of the church.

Even when a full-time pastor makes the effort to engage people in their community they often find it challenging to fully relate. It is not until a person actually incarnates into the local context that they begin to understand the values and interests of the people. It is difficult to really love and serve the people God has sent us to from a distance. We might call this approach “marketplace planting” because the majority of relationships that are developed are the result of the planter’s vocational connections. Their marketplace job isn’t a hindrance to what God is doing; it’s actually an advantage to engaging God’s mission.

Bivocational planting also helps to diminish the sacred-secular divide when it comes to vocation. The congregation has the opportunity to see the church planter model the fact that all vocations are sacred. Regardless of what God has called them to do, if it paid or volunteer, or if it is inside the home or outside the home, it is a sacred calling. As a result, the benefits of being in the marketplace are multiplied exponentially as ever member recognizes how their vocation fits into the mission of God.

Additionally, working a job in the community builds credibility with both those inside and outside the church. In a post-Christian context, where people are skeptical of the church, it is important

for non-Christians to see that church leaders have jobs like everyone else. In a time when Christianity doesn't have the best reputation, it can provide significant "street-cred" with those outside the church.

It is important to understand this new breed of "bivo" planting is missiologically driven. Planting the church begins by engaging in missionary behaviors in the local context, rather than focusing on the creation of a Sunday morning worship service. The planter allows their missiology to inform their ecclesiology. By thinking and living like a missionary in a local context, new communities of faith are birthed out of missional engagement.

2. Financial Stability

A second major benefit of bivocational church planting relates to the financial stability it provides in at least three different areas - The planter, the church, and the church planting entity.

The church planter - When the primary financial support comes from a marketplace source rather than the church plant, there is usually less financial strain on a family. This is especially true when the planter is employed full-time in a vocation that provides benefits like insurance, vacation and retirement.

The new church - A church led by bivocational leaders usually finds its financial base is much stronger. Without the need to provide full-time salaries and benefits the church can put more of its financial resources into mission and ministry.

The church planting entity - Many denominations have made the commitment to plant hundreds, if not thousands of churches over the next several years. However, there simply aren't enough finances to plant the needed churches with the current funding model. Bivocational planting provides the opportunity for funding entities to embrace more sustainable church planting practices. This is especially necessary for planters who are engaging socioeconomic diverse contexts that are made up of the very poor or immigrant populations.

Many traditional church plants start with a large annual budget supported by multiple funding streams, including partnering churches and denominational entities. Because most funding models are structured over a three to five year period, it puts pressure on a church planter to grow the church quickly so it can become self-sustaining before funding runs out. The unfortunate reality is that a planter is often forced to attract financial givers rather than engaging the brokenness in their community. Bivocational church planting, on the other hand, provides a more viable financial model that allows the planter to focus primarily on mission.

3. Shared Leadership

Bivocational church planting creates opportunities for leaders in the congregation to use their God-given talents to create a culture of participation rather than one of spectatorship. More church members, out of necessity, become involved in the mission of the church. Bivocational leadership helps to diminish the laity-clergy divide. If pastoral leadership is reserved only for the "professionals" then many gifted leaders will miss opportunities to pursue what God has called them to.

It is important to understand that bivocational church planting is not simply about having two or more jobs; it is really about aligning one life. It's about blending our calling to support our families and ourselves, with our calling to live a life engaged in God's mission. We are called to be a missionary people sent into the world to participate in God's redemptive purposes. One

vital and urgent means to accomplish that task is to plant new communities as bivocational, kingdom leaders.

Brad is currently the Church Planting Catalyst with the North American Mission Board in Kansas City. He holds a doctorate in the area of missional ecclesiology; his doctoral thesis was on assisting existing congregations in transitioning in a missional direction. Brad is co-author of *Missional Essentials*, a twelve-week small group study guide and *The Missional Quest*.

Thank You God for 2016

By Tony Lynn

Fenton, MI - Our state is filled with missionaries who plant churches. God-called people who dedicate themselves to sharing Christ, creating disciples, planting or replanting churches, and multiplying that process all over again. We are blessed to live among them and we can rejoice over what God did during 2016.

Lives were transformed. There were 209 baptisms reported through Michigan church plants. On an average Sunday in Michigan 1,564 people were worshipping God in our new church plants.

Devoted missionaries surround us. At the time of this writing, 72 persons are currently training or active apprentices, interns, or church planters throughout Michigan & Canada as partners in church planting.

New missionaries were added this year throughout Michigan. There were 24 church planting missionaries approved for service this past year. Of the 24 missionaries in Michigan 22 of them are married, many with children in the home. We added 2 single missionaries. We conducted 3 church planter assessment retreats.

Our new church plants gave back to God's Kingdom. They contributed \$85,554 to the Cooperative Program. They contributed \$5,415 to other SBC mission offerings. They contributed \$46,961 to other mission causes by church plants. In total, the new church plants in Michigan gave a sum total of \$137,930 to Cooperative Program & missions.

It takes an elite squad of dedicated people to create vibrant new churches. There were 17 pastors and churches from within Michigan who supported specific church plants. From outside of the conventional Michigan churches, 10 other churches supported specific church plants. There were untold thousands who gave so that we could assist 4 church plants in purchasing equipment for their ministries. There were many who prayed for the missionaries.

"But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus – the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God," said Paul as recorded in Acts 20:24 (NLT).

Tony Lynn is the State Director of Missions for the Baptist State Convention of Michigan. Before coming on staff at the BSCM, Tony served as lead pastor for more than six years at Crosspoint

Church in Monroe, Michigan. He and his wife, Jamie, also served with the International Mission Board in Africa and in Europe.

Together We Can

By Tim Patterson

Fenton, MI - It is hard for me to believe that another year has come and gone. This has been one of the greatest years of our lives as Sabrina and I have had the opportunity to get to know and fall more deeply in love with the people and places of Michigan. We have had the privilege of traveling thousands of miles, preaching in a myriad of churches and attending numerous meeting and events. As a result, we have come to realize some of the finest people on the face of this globe reside right here in the mitten and U.P. of Michigan. To say we are blessed to serve here is an understatement.

I am thrilled to tell you that we are seeing the goals that were set forth in previous months being reached and accomplished. This is happening because of the great leadership within our state and the superb staff you have called to serve along side me. I so love and thank God for these men and women.

Since "day one" we have had an unquenchable burden to impact the lostness of this state with the Gospel of Jesus. We know that this will be accomplished as we start strong and stable reproducing churches, strengthen and bring to good health our existing churches and help provide motivation and means by which these churches can send their members into a very needy state, nation and world to share that Good News.

I have been asked on several occasions why we would put such emphasis on starting and sending when so many of our existing churches need strengthening. Of course, we need to strengthen churches and as a result the Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM) is putting a great deal of effort and funding into doing just that. This year we've had multiple trainings and encouraging events for pastors and leaders around the state. We just experienced a very successful CEC where 400 people were trained in various areas of church ministry. This year we've had Pastor Appreciation Meals, Prayer Boot Camp, Evangelism Training, and Galatians 6:6 Marriage Enrichment to name a few. Yet experience and statistics show that churches involved in helping plant other churches and in mobilizing for missions are discovering that these efforts in turn strengthen and provide healthy internal conditions and improved financial bottom lines.

It is my vision and desire to see every Southern Baptist Church (SBC) here in Michigan actively involved in partnering with other churches to start new works here and beyond our borders. I have a passion to see our churches so engaged in mission efforts that every member has an opportunity to say that they have impacted the life of someone else with the Gospel. Evangelism must be at the heart and center of all we do. We must have a passion for and be prepared to share the Gospel with anyone at anytime.

I have a vision that Michigan Baptists will be known throughout our Zion as the state that loves to give and does so generously. It is my belief that we are never more like Jesus than when we

are giving. We must give, not just for that which benefits our family or tribe, but give to and for those from which we may never see any personal benefit.

It is my belief that all of our churches can work together to “punch holes in the darkness” of Michigan. African American churches, Anglo churches, Asian churches, Hispanic churches, Urban churches and any other Southern Baptist church can join hearts and hands to do this and more. When we look across this great nation we sense and see a great deal of unrest. The Church must rise and shine in the midst of this. The day of “us and them” is over. Cultural and ethnic differences will remain, but unity in Christ must reign! We are a very diverse state but it is my conviction that this diversity must be reflected in our churches and our mission.

Will you join with me and the rest of the BSCM staff, as we pray and work in order for this vision to come to fruition? Together we can start more, strengthen more, and send more than ever before. Together we can do more. 2016 has been a great year. 2017 will be even better!

Pastor Tim Patterson
Executive Director Treasurer
Baptist State Convention of Michigan

Bay Area Baptist Association Celebrates 54 Years!

By Dr. David Roberts

LAKE, MI – The Bay Area Baptist Association (BABA) celebrated 54 years of ministry at its Annual Meeting on October 8 at Bethany Baptist Church in Lake, MI. At this meeting, the messengers conducted business, heard reports, fellowshiped together and celebrated many things God has done over the past year. BABA pastors received gift bags for Pastor Appreciation month containing lots of resources and access to more than 100 books.

The Audit Committee brought a favorable report stating that the Association was in good financial shape. In addition, they recommended a financial policy manual be developed and an external audit be conducted in 2017.

The BABA Constitution was given a complete overhaul including clarifying wording on marriage, gender and sexuality. We relaxed the definition of “participation” for cooperating churches to include any financial support, physical attendance/involvement at various meetings/events of the Association and/or by submitting an Annual Church Profile each year. Doing any of these things keeps a church in good standing with the Association. Also, the title was changed from Associational Minister to Associational Missionary to better fit the nomenclature used around the Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM) and Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

Reports were received from each of the BABA ministry groups and from our BSCM guests, Darren and Sharon Greer. They shared about church planting around the state and the work of Michigan WMU. The Bay Area Baptist Association recognized, with a certificate and gift card, Helen Henley for serving faithfully as WMU leader for the last 22+ years. Also recognized, in absentia, was Pastor Steve Roe of Riverwalk Baptist Church, Bay City, for the three years he served as our Moderator.

In a major act of new business, Pastor Rodolfo Diaz-Pons of Riverbend Baptist Church, St. Louis moved that the Association establish an offering to be promoted annually in May. It was approved as the Tom and Sandy Martin Associational Offering. Tom faithfully served our Association for 23 years as the Director of Missions.

New officers were elected:

Moderator – Mike Wester (Lighthouse, Caro)

Vice-Moderator – Terry Wilson (Harmony, Mt. Pleasant)

Clerk – Patty Albright (Saginaw Valley, Saginaw)

Treasurer – Denise Taglauer (Crossway, Bay City)

Allan LaVigne, Pastor of New Beginnings Baptist Church in Dodge City, brought the annual sermon. The meeting concluded with a meal in the church fellowship hall. After the meal, many stayed to participate in Crossover Lake. Last year, the BABA began to hold Crossover events in conjunction with the Annual Meeting to help the host church reach their community with the gospel.

Bethany Baptist Church, led by Pastor Malcolm Brown and Assistant Pastor Gene Hockey, has been extremely aggressive this year reaching into the community. They have gone door-to-door, hosted cookouts at a local park, held a hayride, and held a Fall festival. They are planning to have Thanksgiving and Christmas outreach initiatives as well. They have seen new people attending and getting involved in the church. Associational Missionary, David Roberts said, “I am extremely proud of all their efforts to get outside the walls of the church and reach people for Christ. I hope more of our churches will step up and step out in a similar fashion.”

Next year’s 55th Annual Meeting will be held October 7, 2017 at Harmony Baptist Church in Mt. Pleasant.

Dr. David Roberts serves as Associational Missionary of the Bay Area Baptist Association of Michigan.

MOVE Conference: Unity in the Body

By Keturah Bouyer

Lansing, MI - In a day and age where so many things divide us, Michigan Baptist women are being invited to join the second annual MOVE Conference for Women April 28th and 29th, 2017 at Trinity Church in Lansing, Michigan.

The MOVE conference’s beginnings started with a simple question before the women of the Kingdom Life Church traveled to Dallas, Texas.. Worship Director, Keturah Bouyer, remembers, “As we gathered in the front room of a fellow member’s house for our bi-weekly discipleship meeting, I asked how things were going concerning our plans to travel to a women’s conference. As the conversation flowed, one of the women asked a simple question: “Why do we have to raise money to travel to conferences? Why isn’t there a conference here, where women can simply go and be fed no matter what they look like?” Immediately, I became angry

and frustrated...why couldn't they just get with the program?" Kingdom Life Church in Lansing is close to 50% white and 50% black with a small percentage of Hispanics. Bouyer adds, "That's why we go to different conferences and retreats."

Bouyer says as she left that discipleship meeting, she was filled with conflicting emotions and one of them was anger. She says, "I thought 'I don't have time to search for this Lord!' and I held onto that frustration for two days until I gave myself a mental shake and said to the Lord, 'Okay, starting tomorrow I will look for 'this conference.' As I woke the next morning, I said a small prayer: 'Help me, Lord as I look.' My mind was unlocked as I began to recall conversations I had with other pastors' wives in the area concerning partnering to put on a women's conference. I began to recall names of churches with whom we had built relationships."

Bouyer says the name of the conference became clear: "The MOVE Conference for Women." And the purpose became clear: "To bring women together from different churches, different walks of life, different seasons of life, and different cultural upbringings, from different parts of the city, in order to worship and experience God together. She recalls, "As I thought of this, fear immediately gripped me. 'Who would come to this conference? I am just a church planter's wife. No one knows me.' I had these doubts and questions from the first meeting to the last...But God used my 12-year old daughter as she simply said to me one morning, 'Mom, even if 50 women come, that's amazing!'

So last April, they opened the doors to the first MOVE Conference for Women. More than 300 women from at least eight different churches came together to worship God and to lift high the name of Jesus Christ. At the conference a wide variety of emotions and beauty were displayed as diverse women from various churches sang songs, held each other, cried and worshipped God together. Bouyer says, "At this conference, I believe we caught a glimpse of what Heaven will truly be like."

For more information about the MOVE Conference, contact Keturah Bouyer by phone at 517/882-4660.

Keturah Bouyer currently serves as the Community Liaison for Kingdom Life Church. Keturah is passionate about reaching, teaching, and leading women. She is married to her best friend and love, Rev. Coye Bouyer, where they are church planting in their hometown of Lansing, Michigan. They have four beautiful children: Sierra, 12; Seth, 10; Cayla, 7; and Coye II, 5.

Breaking Through Church Culture

By Timothy Jones

Allen Park, MI (BP) - In the eight years of being a pastor, my focus has been on revitalizing churches. In the last two and a half years in my current position of Senior Pastor of the Southfield Road Baptist Church, we have been in a continued effort to revitalize our church which means breaking through the church culture that is no longer effective. This year alone through the work of God we have seen a 33% growth rate and a 280% increase in baptisms.

Many of our churches are struggling because they cannot seem to let go of the Church culture from the good old days, and embrace new ways of reaching those both inside and outside of the church. The struggle of evolving the Church culture from the past is real, and undoubtedly a major factor in the struggle to go into the world to make disciples, baptize, and to disciple its members. It is also the single reason that churches struggle to maintain relevance in the ever changing cultures within our communities.

The fact is, change has to come within the church in order to grow our members and to be relevant to those who are unchurched. Evolving the Church culture is not easy, but it can be done. Many of our older members remember a time when the church was full and ministries abundant, but those days are gone. The truth is many churches are dying before our eyes, and there are many others who are in need of desperate repair and revitalization.

We must answer the statement of “we have never done it that way before” by casting the vision, and not letting the Church limit God. Let’s be clear: The Word of God never changes. God’s Word is as true and relevant today as it was yesterday. But, the way we connect with our neighbors may need to change to share the Good News with them. How do we do that?

After Nehemiah surveyed the crumbling walls surrounding Jerusalem, he cast a vision for revitalization: “You see the trouble we are in. Jerusalem lies in ruins and its gates have been burned down. Come, let’s rebuild Jerusalem’s wall, so that we will no longer be a disgrace.” I told them how the gracious hand of my God had been on me, and what the king had said to me. They said, “Let’s start rebuilding” (Nehemiah 2:17-18) HCSB.

First, we must catch the vision that God has cast for He spoke of the present issue: “Jerusalem lies in ruins and its gates have been burned down”. He painted the picture of satisfying the goal: “Come, let’s rebuild Jerusalem’s wall, so that we will no longer be a disgrace.” We are to cast the vision by being honest about our current situation, but also we must convey what the future holds.

Second, we must encourage and empower the church members by telling the members what they are doing right. The Bible tells us “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up as you are already doing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:11). Paul admonished the leaders of the church in Thessalonica to encourage the members. One of the most essential things I have done as a leader is to encourage God’s people by reminding them of the things that they are doing right and sharing how God has worked through their obedience. When you encourage God’s people with the things that they are doing right, you empower them to do even more. Change means you have to have each other’s back. The people of Jerusalem rebuilt the walls halfway up, then received opposition, they became discouraged. Nehemiah could have given up, but what he did instead altered what happened to the completion of the wall and empowered the people. “So I stationed people behind the lowest sections of the wall, at the vulnerable areas. I stationed them by families with their swords, spears, and bows. After I made an inspection, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials, and the rest of the people, “Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the great and awe-inspiring Lord, and fight for your countrymen, your sons and daughters, your wives and homes.” (Nehemiah 4:13-14).

When you encourage the people, and remind them of things that they are doing right, it builds their confidence and strength to accomplish anything. When your members know that the

leadership will fight for them - even in opposition - individual members move forward with increasing boldness. We break through the old church culture and empower the people to embrace how God wants them to change the world.

Third, give all the honor and the praise for everything that has been accomplished to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Teach the people that God is working through them to complete His glorious mission to reconcile others back to Him and praise Him. By far my favorite part of this step is watching the awe and wonder in the lives of people who come to realize that God's power is truly unchanging! The joy is infectious, and when that happens you find your members running toward the next obstacle with faith and boldness.

Gathering together, working together, building together, we can accomplish more together than apart.

Rev. Timothy Jones serves as Pastor of Southfield Road Baptist Church in Allen Park, MI. He also serves as our Greater Detroit Baptist Association Moderator.

FIRST-PERSON: Bring your wounds to Jesus

by Doug Munton

O'FALLON, III. (BP) -- We are all wounded to some extent. We are wounded by living in this sinful and fallen world. We are wounded by the sins of others. We even carry wounds as a result of our own sins. All of us know pain and all of us need healing. Your pastor, your parents, your spouse, your neighbors -- all of us. The question is not really who wounded you or how many scars you carry or how deep the cut is. The really important question is: What do you do with those wounds?

Do you ignore them? Try to drink them into oblivion? Use them as rationalization to lash out at others? We can bring our wounds to Jesus. He can forgive and He can heal. He knows and He cares and He binds our brokenness. By His mercy we can find new life and new meaning. We can be forgiven and we can forgive -- really forgive. And through that forgiveness we can find a balm for our sin-scarred souls.

Jesus said, "Those who are well don't need a doctor, but the sick do need one. I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17). Some pretend they don't need any help. The truth is we are all sinners who need a doctor. The Doctor. The one who died in our place to take our sin upon Himself. The One who loves, forgives and heals. Come to Jesus as you are. Broken and wounded and needy. Bring your past and your pain. Bring your sorrows and hurts. Bring your anger and disappointment and questions. Surrender your life to Jesus as your Lord and Savior for salvation and abundant life in His loving arms. The Great Physician heals.

Doug Munton, online at dougmunton.com, is first vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention and senior pastor of First Baptist Church in O'Fallon, Ill. His latest book is titled "30 Days to Acts."

“That Halloween Thing”

By Savanna Lynn Burnett

Fenton, MI - The mist gathered as I scuttled about the church property issuing instructions for the afternoon's happenings. The Potter's Wheel was hosting, "That Halloween Thing," an outreach event for the local community, complete with bounce houses and overflowing with an assortment of sugary confections. I was the right hand gal to Mrs. Angell Burnett, pastor's wife, mother, grandma and event coordinator extraordinaire. She could entertain any group armed with nothing more than shoelaces and chewing gum, and God saw fit to utilize this gift in Fenton. Our church plant is nearing its sixth year and though our numbers are humble, the spirit and church body participation was full of enthusiasm. I spun in circles realizing that it was just about "go time" and I had yet to don my costume.

Verifying the last details, I shivered in my hooded sweater. I scowled up at the sky and sighed. We begged God for beautiful weather and were greeted with a chilly rain all morning. Finally, the rain had stopped, but as I hurried to transform into a Jellicle Cat, I silently pouted to God about the chill that still hung in the air. Convening back at the church, Pastor Marc gathered the workers for prayer, pizza, and a pep talk. He imbued energy that left the assembly completely unaware of the frigid weather they were to endure for the afternoon.

As the event officially began I busied myself, filling in and offering help where ever there was a need. I scanned the scene, and was struck with the blessing I was seeing. The pitiful weather had me so distracted that I failed to take in the way God had already shown up.

Pastor Marc Burnett was wandering the property, high fiving monsters and being spooked by post-apocalyptic scavengers. He would enter easily into dialogue with guests and leave them surprised to know that the man greeting them was in fact the pastor of the church. Our members were busy and oblivious to the cold as they championed tasks like serving coffee to parents or giving a teddy bear to a victorious child. The Rock Church had sent support in the way of finances and members. The bounty of candy and parking lot attendants were a result of these believers living out Acts chapter 2. Furthermore, the Genesee Baptist Association equipped us with a grant furnishing advertising, bounce houses, and food for the event. To know that someone believes in you is one thing, to see it come to fruition is a wholly other.

As the day wore on and I made sure my team had been given a break or at least a hot dog, people from the community continued to arrive. We have had "trunk or treat" events in the past which essentially fell to an assembly line that issued patrons on and off the property like a fast food restaurant. "That Halloween Thing" brought an atmosphere that encouraged parents to linger and children to explore.

We are not seeking mere numbers or community status, but because Jesus is the Risen Savior we are asking for souls. We counted approximately 150 to 200 people on our property that day; new faces, familiar faces, and church family. We always want more because Christ's offering hasn't a maximum capacity. Still we know that Jesus would move for just one soul, and so we consider it a privilege that we were able to connect with those who came.

About the Author, Savanna Lynn Burnett, Hospitality Ministry Team Leader at The Potter's Wheel of Fenton, Michigan

The Angel Gabriel's most sensitive mission

by Dr. Ralph F. Wilson

Loomis, CA - As the tall, stately angel rose and walked toward the front of the chapel, there was a buzz among the cadets. Gabriel was a living legend. He cleared his throat. I've been asked to speak to you today about what I've learned throughout my career. Foremost is this: we are servants of the Most High God. This lesson I learned not during my days here at the academy, but from a human being, a girl.

I had been summoned before God to be briefed on a new mission. He told me: "Gabriel, you have a most delicate assignment. I am sending my Son to redeem the earth. To do this he must become a human himself. Your mission is to announce this plan to the young woman I have chosen to be his mother. Her name is Mary. She lives in the village of Nazareth in Galilee. She is betrothed to be married. That means that she is already considered a wife, though she is living at home until the final ceremonies a few months from now. And Gabriel ... she is a virgin." He went on to describe my role and brief me on the various contingencies, concluding with these words. "Gabriel, by all means, be gentle."

I arrived one spring morning as Mary was climbing the path from the well and came to where I was sitting on a large boulder. She's only a child, I thought when I first saw her — But such were the customs of that place and I was assured that the Father knows what he is doing. As she approached, I stood, dressed as I always dress — long white robe, golden sash, and so forth.

"Greetings, Mary," I began. She gasped. "Hail, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you!" All the color drained from her face. I motioned for her to sit. She carefully removed the full water jug from her head, set it down, then eased herself onto the far end of the rock. "Don't be afraid, Mary," I said. "You have found favor with God." I waited a moment for her to calm down.

"You will conceive in your womb and bear a son. You are to name him Jesus." She appeared stunned by these words, but I continued. "Your son will become a great man. He will be called the Son of the Most High God. What's more, the Lord God will give him the throne of David his ancestor. And he will reign as Messiah over Israel forever. Of his kingdom and reign there will be no end!" I paused.

The message shocked me; I couldn't imagine the impact it must have had on her! She was quiet for a time. Then she asked in her young teenager voice: "How will this happen, since I am not yet married?"

I answered: "The Holy Spirit will come to you,
The Power of the Most High will overshadow you,
Therefore your son to be born will be holy,
He will be called 'Son of God.'"

Amazing! The Father was prepared to rest his entire Christ-enterprise on this young girl — her response, her whim, her decision. She was to be the mother of God's own Son — so young. I continued to reassure her. "And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has conceived a son." Mary murmured, "Old Elizabeth? Really? Oh!" I could see just a glimmer of a twinkle return to her eyes. "Yes, they called her 'barren,' but she's already six months pregnant." Mary was almost grinning for a moment. Then I saw her smile fade. I couldn't read her thoughts, but could only imagine what she must be thinking.

How could she ever explain this to anyone? Who would understand? Who would ever believe her? Her father would be furious, her mother deeply hurt. And Joseph? There would be no wedding. Her dreams of marriage and family vanished in an instant. And the town fathers? Would they try to stone her?

I had been given one sentence by the Father with which to respond: "Nothing will be impossible with God," I said. "Nothing!"

She was quiet a moment longer, lost in her thoughts. Then she looked up at me with clear eyes and said intently: "Here I am. I am the Lord's servant, his handmaid. Let what you have said come to pass." She stood up. As she began to lift the heavy water jug to her shoulder and then hoist it up to her head, I reached to help, but she shook her head and lifted it up herself. As she made her way up the path to the village, her steps were assured, almost a spring to them. At the top of the hill she steadied the jar with one hand and waved to me with the other. Then she was lost from view.

And that is how I met Mary. She taught me what it means to be a servant when it's hard to obey, when there seems to be no hope except God's promise. Mary took the words, "For nothing will be impossible with God," and believed them. Whenever I struggle with obedience, I think of this young girl who began a servant's journey with the words:

"I am the servant, the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be! Let it come! I am His servant."

The tall angel touched the corner of his eye for a moment, then stepped down and took his seat. Gabriel had learned faithfulness and servanthood from an even greater servant than himself — a young virgin from Nazareth named Mary.

May our spirits be renewed in this childlike faithfulness as we once again celebrate the birth of a king, our king, Savior of the world. Merry Christmas!

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Michigan Deaf Ministry Opportunities

By Phyllis Harbaugh

Sterling Heights, MI - Ministry to Deaf Iraqi Refugees - There are 24 students enrolled in the second session of the English/American Sign Language Class. They are eager to learn and were so excited to be able to write their name and address. Students are learning 2 languages and 10-12 are participating in a Bible Study Class two nights a month. Sign language

interpreting provides opportunity for them to learn spiritual things since most of them could not go to church in Iraq because of persecution.

Partners - The Michigan Deaf Ministry is happy to partner with Michigan individual and churches on mission projects. They can schedule the Memorial Signing Choir to come to your church. If you have deaf members they can help. Contact Phyllis Harbaugh for details. Phyllis will pray with churches and show opportunities to join in on God's plan.

Blankets For The Cancer Center - Ladies from the Deaf ministry have made more than 100 tie blankets for the Beaumont Hospital Cancer Center. Precious stories come back telling how the blankets not only warm the bodies, but warm the hearts of those who receive them. We are blessed to have a small part in brightening someone's day!

Support - Please pray about being a part of God's work among the Deaf in 2017 by partnering in prayer, encouragement ministry through cards, letters and emails, and through financial support. Some of our needs in 2017:

- 1) Flannel for tie blankets (Made for Beaumont Cancer Center)
- 2) Birthday Gifts (Given out monthly)
- 3) Christmas gifts (Given out in December)
- 4) Gas Cards (Providing transportation for those who do not drive)
- 5) Monthly Deaf Fellowship Dinner (Meal provided for the Deaf Community)
- 6) Chaldean Iraqi Refugees Classes (Supplies for Classes, Interpreter Services & Assistants)
- 7) New computer for missionary (approximate cost is \$800)
- 8) Memorial Deaf Ministries(MDM) Opportunity for DVC LiveStream Network. The mission goal of DVC.tv is to communicate the gospel to the Deaf community in their language, American Sign Language (ASL) by providing visual communications of Bible Stories, Sermons, Deaf worship services, children's lessons in sign language, Bible Studies, Dramas, and music in American Sign Language. They are praying that the DVC LiveStream will be used by God's appointed servants for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry and for the edifying of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-12)

Memorial Baptist Church (MBC) has an opportunity to have a TV channel that will broadcast services live or taped. While DVC Network focuses on Deaf churches and Deaf ministries, MBC could livestream or tape hearing services as well. MBC would have its own channel available through dvc.tv 24 hours a day/7 days a week. It broadcasts around the world. The estimated cost is \$4000 for equipment (cameras, lighting, set-up for channel, encoder, etc.) plus a monthly charge of \$50 (Standard usage) or \$100 (Heavy usage) and any additional monthly cost to upgrade the internet server. Check out DVC.TV website ministry to learn more.

Donate - Send donations to Memorial Deaf Ministries, 12651 Clinton River Road, Sterling Heights, MI 48313. Make checks payable to "Memorial Deaf Ministries" and indicate "Missionary Support" on the memo line.

When being sent requires loss

by Kathy Ferguson Litton

Mobile, AL (BP) - "As the Father sent me so send I you" (John 20:21). Sent is a word straight from the lips of Jesus. He was the model of what being "sent" means. He was sent on a particular mission: "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Then He sent His followers. All of His followers. Not just a select few. Jesus was willing to incur losses to be sent to a lost and dying world. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). He let go of what was His. He gave away comfort, status and prestige—moved toward obscurity, poverty and even humiliation.

Being sent and being willing to sacrifice and endure losses is normative in both experience and example of Jesus and is also consistent with New Testament narrative. "Sent" is familiar language to our tribe at the North American Mission Board (NAMB). Since church planting is vital part of our strategy to reach North America. We use the term "[Send Cities](#)" to describe 32 cities which reflect the greatest spiritual need and most potential influence throughout North America. NAMB's strategy is to intentionally send people to these under-served, under-reached cities.

Recently, I was in one of our Send Cities with planter's wives. We spent one day together in the Word, getting connected and having ministry conversations. There were only two indigenous wives in the room. The remaining dozen or so had been "sent" there. I asked that group of women "What is the greatest personal cost to you and your family in coming to this city to plant a church?" No one said a word. I waited. Still no one spoke.

Clearly, they had significant personal costs in their move to this city where crime is high, weather is challenging, traffic is terrible and cost of living significant. Yet they were not comfortable in voicing their sacrifices. I sensed they did not want to appear whiny or negative—I understand that. Yet, like other losses in life, never talking about them in our mission context is not entirely healthy.

While we may shy away from this topic, oddly enough, Jesus did not. "As they were going along the road, someone said to Him, 'I will follow You wherever You go.' And Jesus said to him, 'The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.' And He said to another, 'Follow Me.' But he said, 'Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father.' But He said to him, 'Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God.' Another also said, 'I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home.' But Jesus said to him, 'No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God' "(Luke 9:56-62).

He was clearly up front with the concept that following Him would require losses and sacrifice. He did not candy coat this issue. Jesus goes on to say: "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:37-38). Jesus sets the bar high with potential losses when he discusses our families. Following after Him means loving Him more than family. Following "after me" may mean leaving that family in pursuit of Him and His calling. "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross DAILY and follow me. For whoever loses his life for MY sake will find it" (Luke 9: 23-24).

Besides "follow me," this is the most often repeated phrase of Jesus in the New Testament. "Deny self" means "to forget oneself, lose sight of oneself and one's own interest" -Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament. To put other's spiritual needs ahead of our own needs and interests is the essence of true discipleship, according to Jesus. In doing this we will be called to deny ourselves. Jesus modeled it. Then He called us to do the same. "To be a follower of the Crucified means, sooner or later, a personal encounter with the cross. And the cross always entails loss," writes Elisabeth Elliot in *These Strange Ashes*.

Kathy lives in Mobile, AL with her husband Ed Litton, 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 3 children and 9 grandchildren. Presently, Kathy serves at NAMB as National Consultant for Ministry to Pastor's Wives.

Celebrating Missions: The 2016 BSCM Annual Meeting

By Anne Glissman

Burton, MI - Every year, sometime in the beginning of November, messengers from our cooperating, convention of churches gather together to conduct the business of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan. And, some years, God comes along side us to move our hearts to see Him and His glory, and experience a revival of the spirit. I believe we just experienced one of those years.

Thank you Church Starting Mission Action Team for giving us an opportunity to meet and pray over our church planters, for helping us understand the struggles and blessings of these men and their families, for giving us hope that we as Michigan Southern Baptists can transform our state for the glory of God by expanding His Kingdom, and for thanking Old Navy for selling shirts for triplets (you would have had to been there.) Thank you Church Sending Mission Action Team for showing us opportunities to serve and for championing evangelism, not only in our churches, but more importantly, in our hearts. Thank you Church Strengthening Mission Action Team for informing us about all the opportunities that we have individually and as church bodies to be trained, to be encouraged, to be challenged.

Thank you Dan and Angela Kucharczyk for faithfully serving as our camp managers for the last six plus years and for reminding us, as you so eloquently do, that Bambi Lake is a place where lives are transformed for the glory of our Lord.

Thank you to the women who gathered for the Ministers' Wives Fellowship led by our Executive Director's wife, Sabrina Patterson. It was a good time of laughter, delicious food, and sharing - finding strength together.

Thank you to all our Southern Baptist Partners; our International Mission Board, our North American Mission Board, LifeWay, GuideStone, our seminaries, for sharing with us what our partnership means and giving testimonies as to what the power of our cooperating together does to shape our world to better reflect our heavenly home.

Thank you Dr. Kevin Ezell, Pastor Chuck Turner, and Pastor Tim Patterson for bringing conviction to our hearts to do more than we think we are capable of by relying on the strength of the Holy Spirit in each of us. So often during the messages, God's Spirit taps us on our shoulder and says, "Did you just hear that? Take it to heart!" Thank you for being the vessels God can use to speak His truth.

Sure, we passed our budget for 2017, we elected some officers, we passed a motion or two, but I think more importantly we were reminded that even though we come from various walks of life and different racial and economic backgrounds, we are still brothers and sisters in Christ. That is what unifies us today and forever. I hope you can join us next year as we celebrate 60 years as the Baptist State Convention of Michigan. We will gather together at our Bambi Lake Retreat and Conference Center on November 7-8, 2017. Come prepared. We may experience another revival!

Anne Glissman is the Office Manager and has been employed at the Baptist State Convention of Michigan for 22 years.

Study: What are Americans thankful for?

by Bob Smietana

NASHVILLE (BP) -- When Americans count their blessings at Thanksgiving, God will get most of the credit, a new study shows. And money might be the last thing on their minds. Nearly two-thirds of Americans (63 percent) say they give thanks to God on that day, according to LifeWay Research. Fifty-seven percent give thanks to their family. About a third (31 percent) thank friends. Eight percent thank themselves, while 4 percent thank fate.

Most Americans are thankful for family (88 percent), health (77 percent), personal freedom (72 percent) and friends (71 percent). Fewer give thanks for wealth (32 percent) or achievements (51 percent), the study shows. "The blessings that matter most are the ones money can't buy," said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research. In a representative online survey of 1,000 Americans, researchers gave respondents 10 options to be thankful for -- from family and health to achievements and wealth. Their responses were shaped in part by demographics.

Those 65 and older are more thankful for family (92 percent) and health (86 percent) than fun experiences (48 percent). Those under 25 are thankful for fun experiences (70 percent) and their achievements (61 percent) but still cherish family (77 percent). Americans with bachelor's degrees (45 percent), graduate degrees (46 percent) or evangelical beliefs (41 percent) are more thankful for wealth. Those who didn't go to college (23 percent) or who don't have evangelical beliefs (31 percent) are less thankful for wealth.

Women are most likely to give thanks for family (91 percent), health (83 percent) and friends (75 percent). Men are slightly less likely to give thanks for family (84 percent), health (71 percent) and friends (67 percent). Overall, giving thanks seems alive and well in America, despite the stresses of the recent election season. Only 2 percent say they are thankful for none of the 10

options provided. "Many Americans have felt discouraged about events of the past year," McConnell said. "But they still find a lot to be thankful for."

When asked to rate what they are most thankful for, family wins in a landslide. Six in 10 Americans (61 percent) say they are most thankful for family. Thirteen percent say health, while 9 percent say personal freedom. Few choose safety and security (3 percent), memories (3 percent), friends (2 percent), opportunities (2 percent), achievements (2 percent), fun experiences (1 percent) or wealth (1 percent) as what they are most thankful for.

Past Thanksgivings

Americans have celebrated days of thanksgiving in the fall since 1621, when the Pilgrims at Plymouth Plantation held a feast at the end of their first harvest. In 1789, President George Washington set aside Nov. 26 of that year as a thanksgiving day in honor of "that great and glorious Being who is the beneficent Author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be."

States celebrated Thanksgiving Day on different dates until 1863, when President Abraham Lincoln set aside the fourth Thursday of November as an official federal holiday. Lincoln credited God for the nation's blessings: "They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy." Still, Thanksgiving isn't for everyone. Seven percent of Americans say they don't give thanks on Thanksgiving Day. Another 4 percent say they don't thank God, family or any of the other survey options.

Americans living in the South (72 percent), African-Americans (83 percent), those attending religious services at least once a month (84 percent) and Christians (80 percent) are among those most likely to thank God. Protestants (90 percent) are more likely to thank God than Catholics (67 percent). Those with evangelical beliefs are most likely to thank God (94 percent). One in 4 nones -- those with no religious affiliation -- also say they thank God. Catholics (65 percent) are more likely to thank their family than Protestants (49 percent). Those with evangelical beliefs are half as likely to thank family (32 percent) as those without evangelical beliefs (62 percent).

Those in the Northeast are more likely to thank themselves (14 percent) than Midwesterners (7 percent) and Southerners (6 percent). Men (9 percent) are more likely to not give thanks than women (5 percent). Those younger than 25 (14 percent) are also more likely to skip giving thanks than those 65 and older (5 percent).

For more information on this study, visit LifeWayResearch.com

Methodology: LifeWay Research conducted the study Sept. 27 to Oct. 1, 2016. The survey was conducted using the web-enabled KnowledgePanel, a probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. population. Initially, participants are chosen scientifically by a random selection of telephone numbers and residential addresses. Persons in selected households are then invited by telephone or by mail to participate in the web-enabled KnowledgePanel. For those who agree to participate but do not already have internet access, GfK provides at no cost a laptop and ISP connection.

Sample stratification and weights were used for gender by age, race/ethnicity, region, metro/non-metro, education and income to reflect the most recent U.S. Census data. The completed sample is 1,000 surveys. The sample provides 95 percent confidence that the sampling error does not exceed plus or minus 3.1 percent. Margins of error are higher in subgroups.

LifeWay Research is a Nashville-based, evangelical research firm that specializes in surveys about faith in culture and matters that affect churches.

Bob Smietana is senior writer for Facts & Trends magazine.

Gaines: 10 things Christians can do after election

by Lonnie Wilkey/Baptist and Reflector

SEVIERVILLE, Tenn. (BP) -- Following the recent election of a new U.S. president, Southern Baptist Convention leader Steve Gaines challenged American Christians to once again ask, "What can I do for my country?"

In his Nov. 13 message to Tennessee Baptists, Gaines shared a well-known quote from John F. Kennedy's inaugural address in January of 1961: "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country?" An estimated 1,600 Tennessee Baptists from across the state gathered Nov. 13 at the Sevierville Convention Center for a worship service on the opening night of their annual gathering. Gaines, SBC president and pastor of Memphis-area Bellevue Baptist Church, cited 10 things that Christians can do:

1. Pray for your country

Gaines observed there are some people in the U.S. who say they should not pray for the country's success. "There is nothing wrong and everything right for Christians who live in the United States of America to pray for God to bless our country," Gaines said. He urged Christians to pray for the president, president-elect and others in leadership whether or not one agrees with their views.

2. Prioritize your family

No country will be stronger than the families who live in that country, said Gaines, emphasizing the importance of strong, godly families.

3. Work for a living

Gaines noted that God did not create men and women to be lazy. "Unless you are physically or mentally challenged, you are supposed to work," he said. Gaines said the church or government does not owe anything to people who are able but choose not to work due to laziness.

4. Be involved in the local church

"The United States needs more Bible-believing, Jesus-exalting churches," Gaines said. He added that Christians are the "conscience and heart" of the country.

5. Love your fellow man

"Christians are commanded to love everyone, not just other Christians," he said. He said Christians "are to love even those who are engaged in open sin; we just don't love the sin." Additionally, Christians are commanded to love people of all skin color and ethnicity. "All lives matter to God. Jesus died for all people," he said.

6. Minister to "the least of these"

Find a need and meet it and find a hurt and heal it, Gaines urged. "We must care for those who are in need."

7. Take care of your finances

Gaines challenged the crowd to tithe, avoid debt, and save for future needs. How Christians use the money entrusted to them by God says a lot, he said. "Your checkbook tells where your heart really is. ... God gives you that money to be a steward. You don't own anything," he said. "Until you learn how to deal with money, God can't bless you or your church."

8. Share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with lost people

"One of the best things you can do is to win lost souls for Jesus Christ," he said.

9. Make disciples

"Once you've won someone to Jesus you don't throw them in a corner. You take care of them, love them, and disciple them," Gaines said.

10. Know you are saved, be filled with the Holy Spirit, and live a holy life

Gaines noted there are people who made a decision for Christ 30 years ago yet today never go to church or pray. "Where there is no fruit, there is no root," he said. He challenged Christians to make sure they know they are saved and then be filled with the Holy Spirit and live holy lives.

America is in trouble, Gaines said in closing. The answer, he said, "is right here in this room," referring to Christians and local churches. "We have to wake up and focus on God. We have to be salt and light," he said. "We have to love our country enough to stand up for our Lord Jesus Christ." Gaines closed the service by leading those in attendance in the pledge of allegiance to the American flag and the "Star Spangled Banner."

Lonnie Wilkey is editor of the Baptist and Reflector (www.baptistandreflector.org), newsjournal of the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

IMB taps 5 megacities for global initiative pilot

by Keith Collier/ Southern Baptist TEXAN

LONDON (BP) -- "There's no lack of church buildings in London, but the average congregation is fewer than 20 people," missionary James Roberts noted. Roberts is part of an International Mission Board team in London strategizing a comprehensive missions approach to reach this city of 8.6 million.

More than 50 non-indigenous communities, each with 10,000 people or more, have been identified in London, making it truly a global city. More than 300 languages are spoken in

London, and 37 percent of the city's population was born outside the U.K., one-fourth of whom have moved to London in the last five years. A city that once served as fertile ground for great Christian preaching and churches, London has grown fallow over the last 50 years. In 1963, 3.2 percent of London's population claimed to have no affiliation with religion. In 2015, that number had soared to 44.7 percent. The Anglican Church alone saw a 33 percent drop during this span.

Recognizing global migration patterns from rural to urban settings, IMB has named London -- along with Dubai, Shanghai, Kuala Lumpur and a major city in South Asia (unnamed for security purposes) -- as focal points in piloting a Global Cities Initiative. The five GCI cities were selected based on their potential for global influence as well as their vast numbers of unengaged, unreached people groups. The goal is that as members of the people groups are transformed by the Gospel while living in the cities, they will return to their homelands as indigenous missionaries.

In London, the GCI initiative involves using the city's 280-plus underground tube stops as key points for missional communities. The team's "God-sized vision" includes having a missional community near every stop. The plan is in the initial stages of mapping the areas and conducting demographic research to aid in future evangelism and discipleship. "We want to engage people groups; we want to see London reached," said Roberts, the IMB's senior city manager, adding that their strategy includes the "goal of starting new groups, doing evangelism and training leaders, with the hope of starting new churches."

IMB President David Platt's vision of "limitless missionaries" requires "multiple pathways" for engaging lostness all over the world. In addition to career missionaries, IMB is looking for Christian students, business professionals and retirees willing to move overseas to aid mission teams in one of the five GCI cities. These life stages, combined with numerous opportunities for education and employment, serve as platforms for either short-term or long-term missions engagement. "Our hope for students and business professionals who come with GCI is not only will they help engage with us in what we're doing in the city, but they will start ministry in their areas of influence," Roberts said.

Retirees, for example, can be "incredible because they have resources, time and a ton of wisdom. They've been walking with God longer than most of us, and they have a different perspective. We can release them into the city and engage them in all different kinds of ways."

IMB also wants partner churches in the United States that will select a city and mobilize its members who might be interested in connecting with a CGI team. The mission board has access consultants in each city to help business professionals discover potential job openings and an abundance of opportunities for Gospel engagement.

For more information on the Global Cities Initiative, visit imb.org/gci.

Keith Collier is managing editor of the Southern Baptist TEXAN (www.texanonline.net), newsjournal of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention.

New England Baptists embrace ethnic diversity

by Kimber Ross

HUDSON, Mass. (BP) -- "We've all got to set aside our differences for the sake of the Gospel." The words spoken by Terry Dorsett, executive director of the Baptist Convention of New England, at the BCNE annual meeting reflected New England Baptists' diversity: Forty percent of the convention's 376 churches worship in a language other than English.

"Embracing the Future by Celebrating Our Ethnic Diversity" was the theme of the BCNE's 34th annual meeting, Nov. 4-5 at Grace Baptist Church in Hudson, Mass. More than 200 messengers, representing 105 churches and all seven New England associations, were present, along with 44 visitors.

David Um, senior pastor of Antioch Baptist Church in Cambridge, Mass., preached the annual sermon, using the text of Galatians 3:26-28 to speak about finding unity in Christ despite our diversity. Sharing personal stories of experiencing discrimination as a Korean-American, Um urged listeners to find their identity in Christ, which will lead to humility and harmony in the church. "Let's show the world that when we live out the Word of God in our life, true healing, true ethnic diversity can happen," Um said. "And through that let's declare the glory of God, the power of Jesus Christ and the wonder of His blood."

Messengers passed resolutions expressing appreciation for the host church and retiring associational director Rafael Hernandez as well as two resolutions calling for prayer in light of turbulent political and social conditions. One of the resolutions, titled "Resolution on Prayer for Elected Officials," encouraged New England Baptists to "pray earnestly for our current elected officials, as well as those who will be elected in the November election" in light of America's "evidence of moral decline" and "political leaders who have demonstrated a deficiency of biblical values."

In addition, a "Resolution on Praying for Young People and Law Enforcement Officials" -- citing "increased violence due to many different reasons," such as young people and law enforcement officials who "have been injured or lost their lives in this violence" and "complex" and emotional causes and solutions -- called on New England Baptists to pray for the following things:

- Safety of both young people and law enforcement officials.
- Peace in our society that only the Gospel can bring.
- Wisdom and safety of community leaders, politicians, faith leaders and law enforcement officials in dealing with each situation.
- Families of both young people and law enforcement officials who have been injured or lost their lives in these violent acts.

Messengers approved a 2017 budget of \$2,840,950. This budget increase of more than 18 percent is due to increased designated giving from various sources. In 2017, the BCNE anticipates income of \$840,000 through Cooperative Program giving from the convention's churches. This year the BCNE has pledged that all New England CP giving will be used for ministry and missions, rather than administration expenses. A total of \$134,400, which represents 16 percent of New England CP giving, has been allotted for SBC Cooperative Program ministries outside of New England, an increase from 15 percent last year.

The convention also celebrated God's provision, as churches and individuals gave nearly \$121,000 toward the convention's Embracing the Future campaign, leaving just over \$100,000 left to raise. Embracing the Future is a special initiative to provide a one-time influx of funds to five ministries critical to the future of Southern Baptist ministry in New England and help the convention eliminate a lingering debt.

Gary Rowe, chairman of deacons at Island Pond Baptist Church in Hampstead, N.H., was unanimously re-elected as the convention's president while Joe Souza, pastor of Celebration Church in Charlestown, Mass., was unanimously chosen as vice president. Sandra Coehlo, leadership development director at the BCNE and volunteer staff member at Church of the Vine in Carver, Mass., will continue to serve as clerk.

Next year's annual meeting will be Nov. 3-4 at Grace Church in Avon, Mass. Fady Ghobrial, assistant pastor at the Arabic Baptist Church Boston of Newton, Mass., will preach the annual sermon on the meeting's theme, "Embracing the Future Through Reaching the Next Generation," with Grace Church providing the music.

Kimber Ross is the communications coordinator for the Baptist Convention of New England.

A Christmas Carol

By Tim Patterson

Fenton, MI - As the "official Christmas season" begins there comes with it a crescendoing cacophony of cultural Christmas clutter that for the most part obscures the heart and soul of true Christmas. As I have said on many occasions, I love the Christmas season and the trappings that surround it, but it is the joy and happiness that accompanies this time and celebration that helps me to appreciate the Gift this is all about.

One of the first things we notice that comes with the season is there is a preponderance of Christmas themed movies on almost every television broadcasting system. One that I watch and for that matter read every year is 'A Christmas Carol', by Charles Dickens. My favorite rendition of the story is the one where George C. Scott portrays Mr. Scrooge. Each year, in the weeks leading up to Christmas, a great number of people find delight in the marvelous message that is brought into our homes via print and electronic media. There is something in the story that lures us back to it year after year; we never seem to grow tired of hearing its message.

The main character in the story is a surly old man named Scrooge, who lives a miserly existence. He sees no benefit in being generous with the poor, or even providing a fair living wage to his dedicated worker. He clutches onto his money and despises the thought of parting with any of it. It is not only his money that Scrooge withholds from others, it is his entire being. He withholds love, kindness, warmth and even friendship. To say the least, he is a miserable, lonely old soul that recoils at even the mention of Christmas much less having to endure the celebration itself. Mr. Scrooge would rather Christmas be removed from public life altogether and that a totally secular celebration take its place. He just didn't want to be bothered by any of this "peace and goodwill to men stuff" and his opinion was, it should be relegated to the realms of "bah! Humbug!"

Then, one night, Scrooge undergoes a profound crisis. He sees himself through the eyes of others. He has a vivid vision of his past and then his present. But what is most frightful to him - what shakes him to the core of his being - is when he is granted the opportunity of a lifetime. He is allowed to witness his future. His future proves to be so dark and frightening, that it prompts within him a dramatic change. He undergoes a radical transformation and becomes an entirely new person. Rather than being cold and indifferent to people, he becomes generous and compassionate. A smile breaks out across his face.

How can a person who is so crusty and calloused to the core become so soft and pliable? How can a person change so radically and completely in a matter of moments? Did he just turn over a new leaf, as some would say, or was it just sheer tenacity and determination that transformed this miserable miser? The answer is found in Christmas itself. That is the message and theme that keeps drawing us back to this story. It is a message of hope that can only come from the gift of a transformed life. It is the message of our Transcendent God coming to earth as a baby in a manger and providing for us the opportunity of being changed from the inside out. Each of us can identify with Mr. Scrooge in some way or form. Each of us knows full well how crusty our souls have become and that despite all of our good efforts we can never really change our hearts.

This Christmas season as you have opportunity to watch or read The Christmas Carol, ask God to give you a glimpse of your future and then ask Him if you are ready for it. If you are not prepared then ask Him to give to you the Gift of Christmas. Ask Him for the gift of a new heart.

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

2 Memorable Trip Destinations for 2017

By Tony Lynn

<https://vimeo.com/82290068>

<https://vimeo.com/176377582>

December is here so there's no better time to plan a trip for next year. Let me recommend two destinations that will enlarge your faith: Detroit and Montreal.

You know we are focused on starting churches in the rural areas, the small towns, suburbs, and urban centers of our world. Yet, 83% of the population lives within the metropolitan areas. We have identified 32 cities throughout North America that if reached with the Gospel of Jesus Christ are poised to affect a radical change throughout the world. Detroit and Montreal are two of those 32 cities that can influence populations and people groups throughout the world.

With Detroit and Montreal easily accessible to those of us who live in Michigan we are without excuse. Apply for your passport. Save some money. Arrange the dates. Raise the funds and prepare your group for your excursion to Detroit and Montreal.

In Detroit or Montreal, you could serve in the suburbs, in the inner city, near a university campus. You could speak with people whose first language is Spanish, French, or Arabic, and yet they speak English as their second language. You could create and lead a women's conference, a men's conference, a remodeling project, a neighborhood party/cookout, a Bible club for children, or a painting project for a local school or church. The possibilities are endless.

Detroit

Our Detroit coordinator is Pastor Wayne Parker. He is the full-time senior pastor at Merriman Road Baptist Church in Garden City, Michigan. Yet, he makes the time and his congregation shares him with us as he matches the needs of Greater Detroit with the talents and resources of volunteers like you. Wayne (wparker@namb.net) would welcome your questions about short-term mission trips in the Greater Detroit area, or better yet you might want to direct your questions directly to one of the area's church planters by clicking here:

<https://www.namb.net/send-cities/detroit/profiles>

Montreal

Chad Vandiver is the city coordinator for Montreal. He is involved ministry all over North America and yet he carves out time to tell stories of God's miraculous activities in Montreal. Jamie and I lived in Montreal 8 years ago, when it appeared that few were interested in the Gospel. Now, with our own eyes, we visited Montreal and saw that the people are responding to the Gospel of Jesus Christ like never before. The churches need volunteers like you to come engage people in conversation. Less than 1% of the population is evangelical Christian. Chad (cvandiver@namb.net) would welcome your questions about short-term mission trips to the Greater Montreal area, or better yet you might want to direct your questions directly to one of the area's church planters by clicking here:

<https://www.namb.net/send-cities/montreal/profiles>

Chad Vandiver has a Catch the Vision Tour schedule for April 24-26, 2017 where if you will get there at your expense, he will cover your expenses once you arrive in the area. What better way to see first hand what the needs are and where God may be calling you and your church to serve. So, what's keeping you? Go or send a champion from your congregation.

Please, do me a favor and let me know when you're going to Detroit or Montreal in 2017 so I can pray for you. It would be a privilege sharing in your ministry through prayer.

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

Bambi is not closing

By Mike Durbin

“Bambi is not closing.” I have said these words over and over again in recent months. There is no plan to close the camp. None. We understand that many Michigan Baptists are concerned about the future of Bambi. For years, attendance at retreats has been down from days past, buildings need remodeling, equipment needs to be purchased, and we need a new camp leader. These are just some of the challenges. People hear about these challenges and are concerned that we might be considering closing the camp, but just the opposite is true.

The BSCM is committed to realistically addressing the issues facing Bambi as we challenge Michigan Baptists to pray, work, attend, and give to make Bambi a premier retreat and conference center in Michigan that will help meet the spiritual needs of our churches.

Yes, there are challenges, but there are also great things happening at Bambi. Michigan Baptists have been investing in the camp for decades. Together, we have built a camp that many Michigan Baptists love. In fact, several generations of families have experienced God through the ministry of Bambi. Some of our retreats this year actually set attendance records and others came close. The infrastructure of the camp is sound and the location is ideal to get away from life's distractions to intentionally focus on our relationship with God. A massive clean up project was conducted last spring by staff and volunteers. Mission teams continue to serve at Bambi from Michigan and beyond. One mission team is making plans to paint the Lodge next summer. Renovations on the retreat speakers' guest room are already in progress.

The reality is that the challenges facing Bambi can be overcome. Attendance can and will go up, retreat content is being strengthened, buildings can be renovated, equipment can be purchased, and new staff can be called. As we plan for Bambi's future, let me remind you of how Bambi came to exist.

Michigan Baptist churches from across the state made their way to the Roscommon area on June 21, 1958. The 240 acre Lauren Gun Club was for sale for \$44,000. Fred Hubbs, Executive Director of the Baptist State Convention (BSCM) at the time, thought it would make an excellent state camp. He challenged Michigan Baptists to consider buying the club. He knew the price would be an incredible financial undertaking for the recently formed and struggling convention, so he called Michigan Baptists to a time of prayer. He also set a date for churches to meet and look at the property. Hubbs set a goal of 100 people being present as a sign from God that the Convention should purchase the property and make it a retreat center.

Michigan Baptists gathered at the appointed time. The group formed a circle near the lake and began to count. Excitement grew as they counted 60, then 70, then 80. It was going to be close. Many, no doubt, were counting ahead to see how many were there. Some say Fred Hubbs was the 100th person, some that he was the 101st, but all agree that there was a clear sense that God was leading Michigan Baptists to purchase the property we now call, “Bambi.”

Michigan Baptist Churches demonstrated the power of partnership, not only when we purchased the property, but also as we built and develop it. Bambi has been and continues to be a great part of our Convention's history. The future of Bambi depends (just like it always has) on our churches. It takes churches working together that make a camp like Bambi possible.

So what can a church like yours do?

1. Pray for God's direction as we call our next Bambi leader. Having the right person lead Bambi in the days to come is critical. Our desire is to build on Bambi's wonderful heritage as we develop retreats and add amenities that will impact lives and punch holes in the darkness for the Glory of God. Leadership matters, and we are committed to find the very best leader for the future. Let's join together in prayer and seek God's direction knowing He's got this! (1)

2. Lead your church to participate in Bambi retreats. The reality is that people are transformed, believers are encouraged, and churches are strengthened through Bambi retreats. Tears filled my eyes at Girls' Camp this summer as I watched them carry flags into the chapel from the places we have missionaries. I listened as they studied about and prayed for the advancement of God's Kingdom in our world. My mind was captivated by the thought there could be some in the service that day who would become the next generation of missionaries sent out by Michigan Baptists. I experienced the presence of God as I greeted people for the Harvest retreats, Men's retreats, WMU retreats, and Metamorphosis Youth retreat. Retreats impact people and churches for Christ! Take advantage of the many marvelous opportunities held there each year.

3. Send a mission team to Bambi. It's a great way for your church to make a difference in Michigan as people all over the state benefit from your ministry. There are a number of ways your church can get involved. We need teams to get the camp ready for next summer - everything from yard work to general maintenance and remodeling. Your church could send and sponsor summer missionaries to serve at Bambi. Your mission team could volunteer to help staff a retreat. Your church could send a financial gift to help with repairs, purchase of equipment, or provide scholarships for people to attend a retreat.

The future of Bambi is what we make it. We are not closing Bambi.

(1) Arthur L. Walker, jr. BY THEIR FRUITS, published by the Baptist State Convention of Michigan.

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

Around the state: church events & staff changes

On 11/11/2016 8:46 PM, Nathaniel Bishop, Sr wrote: Pastor John Williams was taken off the ventilator about 5:45, this afternoon. His wife, family, church members, and friends came together for prayer and gave the final Salute about 7:15 pm. A memorial service was planned by the family and held later that week. Your prayers and continued support is greatly appreciated, a blessing to the family and church.

On 11/25/2016, Pastor Terry Lee Farwell of Frontier Baptist Church passed into the arms of his waiting Lord and Savior. Condolences can be sent to his loving wife, Ruth, at Frontier Baptist Church, 9151 Steamburg Rd, Hillsdale, MI 49242. The funeral service was held on November 30th at Hillsdale Baptist Church and was officiated by Terry's longtime friend, Pastor Elton Spurgeon.

Classifieds

Israel Tour Information/Interest Meeting

All who are interested in traveling to Israel in late 2017 or spring of 2018, please join experienced Israel tour host, Tim Shrader (CPC-BSCM) at the Baptist State Convention of Michigan office, 8420 Runyan Lake Road, Fenton, MI, Monday, December 12, 7 pm. Detailed information will be shared and interest will be determined. Invite your friends. Please RSVP to Tim Shrader at tshrader1@gmail.com

FREE Lifeway Bible Study curriculum

Merriman Road Baptist Church has boxes full of FREE Lifeway Bible Study curriculum from 2015-16. All new or gently used, it includes; Bible Studies for Life (young adult, adult and senior adult), Explore the Bible and Masterwork series, Preschool curriculum for Babies thru Kindergarten. All you have to do is come by and get it. Interested parties can have as little or as much as they like. Contact David Ferraro at Merriman Road Baptist Church, 2055 Merriman Road, Garden City, MI 48135. Phone 734-421-0472 or their website www.mrbc.us

Computer Repair

Need a trusted and reliable laptop & desktop repair or a basic networking technician in the Detroit Metro area? Golgotha Romanian Baptist Church strongly recommends Victor Sabadus. Contact at (248) 520-0930 or domn100@hotmail.com.

Worship Pastor Needed

Lakeside Community Church is a strong contemporary church in the suburbs north of Detroit. We are seeking a person called to the worship ministry. This will start as a part-time position with the expectation the position will become full-time in the future. We are specifically seeking someone with strong vocal ability, skill in a lead instrument and a passion and skill for leading worship. We currently have multiple vocalists and instrumentalists. Our worship style is fully contemporary using music from Hillsong United, Chris Tomlin, Fee, Lincoln Brewster, and others. Send resume and video/audio link of you leading worship to Ken Render at worshipposition@lakesidechurch.net.

Church Information Packets

The information previously mailed out in the Church Information Packets will now be available online at www.bscm.org for all churches to download, print, and use!

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

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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