

STARTING

5 Mistakes new church planters make

By Garth Leno

Windsor, ON - In April (2016) Dan Rockwell posted a piece on his leadership blog called “The Five Biggest Mistakes New Leaders Make.” I’ve been reflecting on this since I attended a Church Planting Pipeline Roundtable in Atlanta where we talked about leading potential church planters or interns in the pipeline, and what it’s going to take to plant 1,200 healthy churches every year.

What are the five biggest mistakes new church planters make?

#1. Leading an unprioritized life. Church planters, and church planting interns, with too many priorities fail at everything they do. The top three priorities for all church planters:

1. Priority #1: Personal development and well-being.
2. Priority #2: Family.
3. Priority #3: People development and relationships.

You’ll spend most of your time working in and on your church plant. Just don’t neglect your priorities.

#2. Working too hard. A bias to action – something most church planters possess – leads to low performance as time passes, unless you learn how to prioritize and rest. Learn to trust the people around you. You can’t bring your best when you’re lost in the busyness.

#3. Chasing too many opportunities. Limit the sphere of your activities to the things you do well. Your first question is, “What needs to be done?” Drucker said the second question is, ““Of those things that would make a difference, which are right for me?”

#4. Neglecting feedback, both giving and receiving. Ask teammates, ask your core team, ask your launch team:

1. Based on my use of time, what are my priorities from your point of view?
2. Based on my interactions, how am I making others feel about themselves?
3. Based on my strengths, when am I at my best?

#5. Having all the answers. Tap into your ignorance. The practice of “not-knowing” elevates leaders more than having all the answers.

1. Lead with confidence while staying curious.
2. Ask, “What else?”
3. Ask, “What do you think?”

I don’t want to be a church planter. I want to be an effective church planter. I don’t want to be a coach for church planters or interns. I want to be an effective coach. Paying attention to these five mistakes that Rockwell writes about should help.

Garth Leno is Senior Pastor at The Gathering. Garth and Patty Leno planted The Gathering in Windsor, Ontario in 2014. The Lenos have three grown children, Nathan, Jamie, and Kristin.

3 to 4 Yards at a time

By Bryan Ball

Chesterfield, MI - When you're down 18 points at the half, on the biggest sports stage ever, it can be easy to think "it's over." Many sports fans around the world believed the Atlanta Falcons would be the winners of Super Bowl 51. Think about it: you only have 2 quarters of football left and you're down 18 points. The only offensive success had been to get within field goal range! But after an epic comeback, the Patriots emerged victorious 34 – 28.

Church Planting is not always crazy, overnight "unexplainable" growth.

We launched Storytellers Church (Chesterfield, Michigan) in January of 2014. Our initial group consisted of 4 people. We then began holding "worship services" in the basement of my home in the summer of 2013. Then we began having public, monthly preview services at the local high school. By the time we launched, nearly 100 people showed up. The next week? 20 people showed up. In 3 years, we've gradually seen more people in attendance. These days we average between 80 – 120. Most days, I find myself disappointed and anxious thinking "why aren't more people coming? It's been 3 years!" To be honest, there are days where it seems like it'd be easier to call it quits and go do something else.

But God has been doing a work in me. It's been a slow grind but I had a breakthrough a few weeks ago while at lunch with our guest speaker from our 3 year anniversary service. He said "you're like the quarterback of this team and it seems like you're heading into the locker room with your head down. You need to learn how to celebrate the 3 to 4 yard plays. There's nothing wrong with gaining 3 to 4 yards every play. Eventually they'll add up to a first down and eventually you'll make it to the end zone! Sure, it'd be great to have that long pass down the field but they won't all be that way and you can't only look for that. Sometimes God needs us to just put our heads down and march down the field 3 or 4 yards at a time."

Learn to celebrate those hard fought 3 to 4 yard gains.

He was right! The type of growth we've seen as a church plant is by no means flashy or resembling long yardage passes or exciting breakout runs to the end zone. But it's most certainly the 3 to 4 yard plays and we are definitely moving the ball down the field! Imagine if Tom Brady went into the locker room at halftime and said "Listen guys. We should be much farther ahead than we are right now. Other teams who have won have typically been doing better at this point so we might as well call it quits." That would've been the worst halftime speech ever! Instead they figured out a way to get back out on the field and march the ball down the field a few yards at a time.

Stop constantly looking down the field for the long pass that looks amazing or waiting for that breakout play that everyone gets excited about. Church Planting is not always crazy, overnight

“unexplainable” growth. Learn to celebrate those hard fought 3 to 4 yard gains. Celebrate strengthened marriages in your church or people reading their bibles or tithing for the first time. God may be calling you to a season of short yardage gains that never make the highlight reel. And if that is the call on your life or in your ministry in this season, the only response is “Here I am Lord. Send me, even if it’s 3 to 4 yards at a time.”

Bryan Ball is lead pastor for Storytellers Church and part of a dynamic team committed to impacting the community God has given them to plant.

It Began With a Vision

By Vilna LaVigne

Dodge City, MI - The story of New Beginnings Baptist Church began with a vision. Allan and Vilna LaVigne are church planters in Dodge City. Vilna LaVigne says, “ I should say I was very nervous about becoming a church planter.”

But God gave Allan LaVigne this vision for the people of Dodge city. Somehow they had to build a church and get the people to attend of Dodge City to attend. The LaVignes didn't have the finances to do a big outreach and initially they no idea what the outcome would be. Vilna says, “I just know that prayer was the only way. So I prayed for God to please help us in anyway he sees fit. I prayed for my husband that help would come to him.”

Many people told the LaVignes that building a church in Dodge City was a big mistake. Vilna adds, “ I was really scared at times that we weren't going to be able to get off the ground. I confess, I cried many nights asking God to please let his will be done.”

God never left the LaVignes during this time of uncertainty. He sent many people to lend a hand. With support from the North American Mission Board, the Baptist State Convention of Michigan and the Bay Area Baptist Association, the LaVignes have begun to fulfill God’s plan of starting New Beginnings.

The church planting couple took every training that was available, and even had other people from other churches come and help. They did a few different ministries and outreach events to let the community know that they were there. Vilna says, “We wanted them to know that we weren't looking for anything from them except friendship and fellowship. We were there to share the love of God and to meet their needs.”

Allan LaVigne was always seeking God's wisdom and guidance, and came up with a few ideas. They held a family movie night once a month, and a Christian skate night once a month, which allowed them to get to know the people in the community. The outreach efforts were a big success. Vilna says, “What joy filled our hearts to be a blessing to so many people with a simple act of kindness. There are no words to describe the happiness.” She adds, “There were times when I became very discouraged because I didn't know how we were supposed to make this work and questioned what God has called us to do. But by following through on our vision, God has touched many lives.”

Vilna LaVigne and husband Allan, are church planters at New Beginnings Baptist Church in Dodge City, MI.

Walk By Faith

By Nathaniel Bishop, Jr.

LOUISVILLE, KY – If God gave you a pen and said you could write the story of your life from here on out, what would you write? I often tell people that if given that opportunity, I would have written the story too low. Reflecting on the past seven years, the Lord has taught me that for most of my life, I had been living by “sight” and not by “faith.”

God revealed this to me in 2009 when I began to sense a desire to pursue theological training. At the time, I was serving as the Youth Minister for Middlebelt Baptist Church in Inkster, Michigan. I had been born, raised, and planned on living in for the rest of my life in Inkster. By American standards things were great, I had a beautiful wife, three wonderful children, and a great career in Information Technology, all while being surrounded by the love and support of family and friends. Yet, there was a deep conviction in my heart that if I was to prepare for what the Lord had in store, and I needed to receive specialized training for the work of the ministry.

After much prayer, my wife and I believed that the Lord was calling us to leave the great state of Michigan and head to Louisville, Kentucky in order to attend The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. During this time of transition, we began to learn what a “by faith” walk was. One example is when we were just 6 weeks away from relocating, I still had not found a job. I eventually sent my resume to the IT department at Southern Seminary, not knowing they had just been approved to hire an additional Software Developer. I received a follow up email and phone interview the same week. Also, without my knowledge my former pastor spoke with the pastor of our sister church in Lansing, and informed him we were headed to Louisville. That pastor called his former youth minister who had just begun serving as the lead pastor for a local church, and they were looking for a youth and family pastor. After a quick trip for interviews, I returned with not one, but two jobs. The job at Southern Seminary would pay for seminary and the position at the church would pay for books.

I could go on and on about how God has been a constant source of protection and provision since we’ve been in Louisville. I have since graduated from Southern, and now have the privilege of serving that same local body of Christ as lead pastor. I also have the privilege of serving as an ambassador for the ERLC, and have the honor of personally hearing from Dr. Moore and his team on key topics regarding kingdom focus cultural engagement. I can’t help but wonder what Abraham may have thought when God instructed him to go to a land that He would show him. I’m sure he had all sorts of questions and concerns, but I have to believe that at the end of the day, Abraham believed that if God had enough power to call him, He would have enough power to equip him. I’m so glad that we serve a God who’s not only capable of calling but He’s more than capable of equipping. So I ask you again, if God gave you a pen to write the story of your life, would you right it too low because of fear or would you simply write what He tells you by faith?

Nathaniel Bishop Jr. is lead pastor of Forest Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky.

He also serves on the board of the Louisville branch of Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA), and is a trustee for Crossings Ministries (Kentucky Baptist Convention), and part of the 2017 ERLC Leadership Council

Follow the Leader - Jesus

By Tim Steele

Roseville, MI - You desire to follow the Great Commission and be a disciplemaker, but wonder if your efforts are bearing any fruit. Cross Waves Church's goal is to make disciples so we designed the church to be more of a ministry that guides people to be better disciplemakers. We model our process to make disciples after Jesus since He is our perfect example (Hebrews 11:2 NLT). Jesus started his earthly ministry by saying, "Follow me" to the men who were to become his disciples. Jesus' discipleship ministry contained four elements:

Jesus invited men to follow Him (Matthew 4:19; Mark 1:17)

Jesus allowed these men to watch Him minister publicly (John 18:19-20)

Jesus taught them privately (Matthew 17:19; 24:3; Mark 4:10; 6:31; 9:28; Luke 10:23)

Jesus sent them out to minister themselves (Luke 10:1-20; Mark 6:7-13; Luke 9:1-6) He ended his earthly ministry by telling these same men who now were His disciples to go and reproduce and make more disciples (Matthew 28:18-20).

This four step process of Jesus sounds simple enough, so why are there not more Christians making disciples? Why is the percentage of people who are Christians not keeping up with the percentage of population growth in North America? Let's make this even more personal. if you were asked the question, "who are you discipling?" Could you provide names? Who are you asking to accompany you as you minister publicly? Who are you meeting with in private sessions to teach the Word of God? Who are you encouraging to go out and minister to others?

Many people aren't able to give any specific names, but can supply you names of people who they have invited to their church. We identify these people as "pastor pointers." Their idea of discipleship is to invite people to come visit the church they attend to listen to the master teacher teach the Bible, and hopefully receive Christ and follow Him. People pointing others to their favorite master teachers has been a problem for nearly 2,000 years. The writer of Hebrews said, You have been believers so long now that you ought to be teaching others. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things about God's word. You are like babies who need milk and cannot eat solid food (Hebrews 5:12 NLT).

However, Christ did not tell his disciples to be "pastor pointers" or "apostle pointers," He told them to make disciples. Telling someone to come and hear your pastor is not enough for mass discipleship to occur because discipleship is a personal endeavor. Discipleship happens face to face, happens over time, happens through life events, and due to time and location, your pastor does not have the same access to your friends and family like you do. God uniquely placed you in a position to connect others to Christ. Therefore, we need to do more than be "pastor pointers," we need to take personal responsibility in discipling others.

Remember the game you played as a child called "Follow the Leader" where one child leads and all the other children mimic what he or she does? Those who do not follow correctly are out of

the game. Last one following wins. At Cross Waves, we teach that our HotSpot Hosts allow others to mimic/imitate them in following Christ. We use a phrase at Cross Waves Church to encourage our people to have the right mindset as disciple-makers, we say, "Follow me until you see Jesus."

I believe the main reason disciple-making is not happening at the growth rate of the early church is that we are afraid to accept the mindset of "Follow me." I understand why this statement trips people up. Many respond with statements like, "I don't want people following me, I want them following Jesus." We too want people to follow Jesus and not us, however we understand that before people see Christ, they must see Christ in us as their model.

Our culture is becoming more and more pagan, and more like the culture that the Apostle Paul faced when he was teaching the gospel. Paul understood that new believers learn better through example than explanation. Therefore, Paul said to the church in Corinth, "So I urge you to imitate me" (1 Corinthians 4:16 NLT). He fleshes this concept out even more later in his letter to the Corinthians by explaining, "And you should imitate me, just as I imitate Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1 NLT). Paul accepted the responsibility of having others follow his lead in how he followed Christ. Paul told the Thessalonians that they should imitate his missionary team (2 Thessalonians 3:7) and he told the Philippians that they should pattern their lives after him (Philippians 3:17).

Some respond, "well that's Paul saying, follow me; he was an apostle and someone worth following." However, Paul claimed that he was the worst of all sinners (1 Timothy 1:15), and Paul explained he had a sinful DNA flaw that you and I can relate to; even when he tried to do good, he would mess up and commit sin (Romans 7:15-21). Some of you may try to sidestep your disciple-making responsibility by claiming that people will not listen to you because you should have more years under your belt as a follower of Christ. Paul warned Timothy, "Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity" (1 Timothy 4:12 NLT).

Even the Apostle Peter shared this same challenge as he told leaders to lead others by their own good example (1 Peter 5:4). So what does it mean to lead by your own good example? What did Paul mean when he wrote for people to imitate him as he followed Christ? Obviously, Peter and Paul did not want disciples imitating character flaws or clothing attire, but to imitate how their discipler followed Christ. Here are three principles to understand when accepting Peter and Paul's admonition to be a disciple-maker and accept the mantle of "follow me until you see Jesus."

1. You need to be likable. People listen to people they like. We need to be kind, ready to teach, patient, and be gentle even when we need to criticize (2 Timothy 2:24-25a). No one will accept your invitation if you are not approachable and accessible.
2. You need to understand that God is the one who changes people from the inside-out (2 Timothy 2:25b); your role is to set up the opportunity. God uses your pain and experiences as a platform to introduce others to Christ. People in pain typically only listen to others that have dealt with pain. Only God can transform us into people that bear fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

3. You need to live a life of intentionality in following Christ so others can follow you. Live a life that intentionally follows the three great statements that Christ gave in the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-38) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). The Great Commandment tells us to love God and to love others and the Great Commission tells us to make disciples.

How do you live a life of intentionality in following the Great Commandment and Great Commission? At Cross Waves, we keep it simple. We love God by having a relationship with Him, but to have a relationship with God, we must know Him. So we study the Bible and obey its instructions. Therefore, together we study the Bible weekly.

Paul told the Galatians that you show your love for others by serving them (Galatians 5:13-14). We love our neighbors as ourselves by serving others together through community projects throughout the year. The Great Commission says that all Christians must share their faith and help others follow Christ. So together we design fun events throughout the year to share relationships with people so we may introduce them to Christ (Matthew 9:10). You will notice one other word that keeps getting repeated, “together.” God never intended for us to follow and serve Him in isolation. We are to follow Christ and become more like Him together in the company of others who are on the same path. Cross Waves Church is a place where we become more like Christ—together.

Therefore, we sum up our strategy to become more like Christ by; studying the Bible, serving others, and sharing our faith, together. This is a simple discipleship plan that is easily taught and caught by others.

Do you see yourself as a “pastor pointer,” but want to do more? Seize the disciple-maker mindset and look at your pain and experiences as opportunities to reach hurting people. Understand your life is a platform where God speaks and transforms people’s hearts. A perspective where obeying the Great Commandment and Great Commission becomes a living example of intentionality in following God. Through your kindness and love to others, you gain opportunities to speak to them about God and faith. With this mindset, you can join Paul and Peter’s idea of discipleship, “Follow me until you see Jesus.”

Tim Steele is Lead Bible Teacher at Cross Waves Church in Roseville, MI.

New Hope, New Home, New Hustle

By Drew Ansley

My wife and I had a disagreement in the car while riding with two recent college graduates in the back seat. We did not even remember it happening, but months later, one of the young women told us how deeply it impacted her. We both shared our opinions, said whatever we said and moved on. “My mom would have gotten out of the car, and my dad would have driven off,” she shared. Something so insignificant (to us) that we did not even realize it happened, radically redefined family for her.

He wasn't the outside or sports type at all. Our 20-something friend was at a BBQ with us, and there was a football that I never would have thought to throw with him, assuming he would not be interested. Yet he initiated a game of catch with me and another guy. I was deeply moved when he told me, "I never had my dad around to do that, that was really cool. That was kind of a dad moment for me."

Another young man shared, "My family was angry all the time. I never knew what a real family was like before I experienced this." There is a group of young men who call us whenever one of them has a birthday, so my wife can make a cake and they can all come over and celebrate. Another young man we were investing heavily in stopped and said, "You know, I guess we're brothers now. I have never had a brother before!"

What do all these have in common? They are pictures of our longing for the deep, family relationships that God designed in His world and in us. These pictures are vivid because the world we now know is full of broken relationships. Our first parents, Adam and Eve were created in perfect relationship with God as Father, with each other, and with the created order so that they might reflect - image - the beauty of our God who is by His very nature relational - Father, Son, and Spirit in perfect communion for all eternity. The fall broke these relationships, but Jesus came to restore them. Hebrews says He suffered "to bring many sons to glory," and that "He was not ashamed to call them brothers." Jesus came to make family out of His enemies. Through His work, we who were far from God have been adopted by the Father.

Ephesians calls the church "his body, the fullness of Him who fills all things in every way." Luke introduces the book of Acts as a continuation of "all that Jesus began to do and teach." So the church, God's adopted family, exists as the concrete presence of Jesus on earth, continuing His work and mission to extend the family of God to more and more people. We do this through the gospel message proclaimed, so that the power of God awakens sinners from death to life resulting in their adoption and inclusion in the family. We also ought to live in such a way that people see and experience the goodness of the family of God through us, both before and after we have proclaimed the gospel word.

This is the work of the church, of discipleship, of church planting: to speak the gospel word over believers and unbelievers and through it, establish a family who will put on display the real, tangible good news of Jesus in their neighborhood and everywhere God sends them. Because of this, our lifestyle and our "strategy" means a lot of everyday experiences, sharing our lives with each other and with our neighbors. It means our home and hospitality are a primary weapon for the kingdom. It means intentionally inviting young adults to live with us for a season of intensive development and discipleship, while getting to observe how we live as a family and how we follow Jesus.

At Refuge Detroit, we exist to cultivate spiritual families who live out their common hope publicly with the aim that each person we encounter will receive a NEW HOPE in the gospel, a NEW HOME in the family of God, and a NEW HUSTLE (purpose) in the mission of God.

Drew Ansley is a church planter in Southwest Detroit. He lives there and ministers with his wife, Alisha and daughter Makaela. They have been in the neighborhood since 2015 making disciples and building a team which will help train more disciple-makers and leaders for the city. They

hope to launch the public face of Refuge Detroit church in 2018. Find out more at refugedetroit.org or email Drew directly at drew@refugedetroit.org

Power of Praying Impossible Prayers

By Kevin Hester

St. Joseph, MI - When I excitedly stepped out to plant the The Shore Church in St. Joseph, Michigan, I set out with a call and a vision from God. That vision was skewed by many of my own ideas about church planting. At the time a special needs prom and a veteran's pantry were about the furthest ministries from my mind. However, these are ministries to which God has recently led us and through which He has given us opportunities to share the gospel. In 1 Corinthians 9:22, Paul said that he had become all things to all men so that by all possible means, he might save some (paraphrased). I may have had my own ideas initially about ministries that would grow the church, but I learned to be willing to truly apply the words of Paul and to be willing to do whatever could effectively administer the gospel. I have learned to embrace change and adaptability and the church has been blessed by it.

God placed on my heart the community of St. Joseph on Lake Michigan in the Southwest corner of the state. As Jesus called his followers out along the shore in Matthew Chapter 4, I intended to do the same along the shore of Lake Michigan. God had used me to grow other ministries and movements in the past, and I thought I would use some of the same ministry and outreach ideas to grow this new plant. To say the least, I turned out to be wrong. God is a creator, not a duplicator and He shows His power, His infinite greatness and creativity through His church.

Over the last 2 years, God has taught me the priority and the power of praying impossible prayers. He has taken me deeper in my faith than I knew it was even possible. I have grown in my relationship with Him. I have enjoyed and learned the importance of good connections with others who are like minded about the importance of church planting, who will walk with me and the people of the church plant; our sponsoring church in Monroe, the BSCM leadership and fellow Christians across our state and even some in Arkansas.

In some of Paul's writings in the New Testament, he mentioned there were some things he had to learn and there have definitely been lessons that I have learned too, but they were not fun. I want to be very real here so that others may be spared some of the pain that I suffered from making these mistakes. One temptation that I gave into on more than one occasion, was people pleasing. I can't think of one time things ended well. Any time you are people pleasing, you cease to be a God pleaser. This is not a good place to be. Next, I have given into the fear of man which has also always ended badly. Lastly, I erred in the thought that everyone was a good fit for the church I was planting, and that I could minister to and work with anyone. This also did not turn out to be true, good, or healthy for the church. I have learned many other lessons from church planting, but they can be summed up with this truth; I was called by God to plant His church and if I do it His way, with His book, following His leading, and using His power, the church will be exactly what He intends it to be. The only ability that God needs from me is my availability. It took praying impossible prayers for me to understand this important lesson, and I pray my story helps you.

Kevin Hester, Church planter of The Shore Church is also the Sending Team Leader for the BSCM and the Moderator of Southwestern Baptist Association.

SEND Detroit News Brief - February 2017

As we look back on 2016, we can clearly state that it has been a year where God has shown great favor to starting new churches in Send Detroit. Over the past 12 months there have been seven new church starts: Redeemer Community Church, Crossover Church, Heart and Soul Community Church, Life-Giver Church, Restoring Hope Church, The Church at Clawson and Victory Fellowship Harper Woods.

There are so many great stories with church plants in Detroit! Crossover Church had a strong launch in September, with 200 plus just had their first baptismal service of 4 people after being 4 months in to their plant. Life-Giver's first baptism was Pastor Alin's mother who was shortly after reunited to his father! Mile City celebrated one year in September with over 20 baptized in the first year, preparing to launch a new church within a year, and has over 80% of its body connected in small groups. Sameer Kabul* had Christmas Party to Muslims, Buddhists and partners stepped up to help. Even a Jewish, Holocaust survivor was saved this December through the ministry of John Denson and Congregation Shalom.

Vision Tours: This year Detroit hosted 6 total Catch the Vision (CTV) Tours with 24 church represented (13 mobilized currently) and 42 participants. In October, primary partners Guy Melton and Gary Jared hosted our first "CTV32", a special vision tour where churches new to church planting partnerships have ground expenses covered. On this tour, 14 churches were represented among 26 participants. Of those churches 9 have been mobilized. One of those new partners helped make Sameer's* Christmas party a reality. In 2016 we added a total of 14 new sending churches and 27 new supporting churches, which brings our current number of partnerships to 29 sending, 64 supporting churches.

Send Relief played a major factor in creating a ministry base for 3 of our current church planters as flood recovery and rebuilding efforts ended, in July after 18 months of having a unit staged in Warren, MI at a vacant elementary school. Also, in June, First Spanish Baptist Church of Detroit was able to host the Mobile Dental Unit on site in June to help persons in need of dental care.

Our Coaching Network continues to grow as we added 18 new coaches at the second One-Day MAP Coaching Training in November. We also held our first Coaching Intensive for 9 current coaches to build on their coaching skills to work toward the goal of delivering great coaching to every church planter.

The Planter Care Ministry has been another central feature to fostering unity among the church planting families of Detroit. We have been blessed to see great attendance and fellowship at our 2016 events: Family Retreat at Castaway Bay (Feb., 40 people), Wives Spa Day (May, 15 planter wives), Mystery Dinner Theatre (Sept., 9 couples), Family Day at Three Cedars Farm (Oct, 64 adults and kids). In December, Michigan Baptists (BSCM) hosted a Frankenmuth Winter Retreat, where 7 Detroit couples went to be enriched in their marriage by BSCM staff and Brian and Amy Bloye of Westridge Church.

Answered Prayers! We are continually amazed at how God answers the prayer of Luke 10:2. Priority planting areas are continually being given laborers, Canada was priority, now there are 3 active plants there! Not only that, The Gathering (Garth & Patty Leno) is an Annie Armstrong featured church plant! The Gathering has experienced amazing growth, sending capacity demonstrated by the grace of God through multiplication into Sarnia, ON (The Bridge Gathering, Cecil and Jayne Cogswell) and generous giving back to missions through the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering (CDN \$13,000) and Lottie Moon Christmas Offering (CDN \$10,000)! Muslim populations are being reached by two MB planters.

Please Pray for Detroit: As we look to 2017, please continue to pray for laborers in the following cities, Amhurstburg, ON, Waterford, MI and the Rivertown area of Detroit. Also, pray for church planters who will be preparing for launches this year: Chad Nelson of The Journey Church (Mt. Clemens), Alin Patularu of Life-Giver Church (Windsor), Stephen Murphy of Victory Fellowship, (Madison Heights) and Corey Parker of The City Church (Ypsilanti). Please also pray that the Lord would send the necessary partners needed as sending and supporting churches who will help see that these church plants would be sustained.

We continue to covet your prayers, partnership and advocacy for Detroit as we are witnessing it live up to the motto "rise from the ashes."

We Grow People

By Ken Nether

Southfield, Mi - Any avid basketball fan knows that a crossover is a move used on the court to change direction. While playing basketball overseas, Pastor Ken Nether, Lead Pastor at Crossover Church, finally crossed over and embraced his call as a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ. Now he is passionate about helping other people change the direction of their lives through Crossover Church.

Pastor Ken and his wife Tolice, launched Crossover Church in September 2016. They launched with 202 people at their first service, and are currently making their mark in Southfield. They are fulfilling their mission by helping people grow closer to Jesus Christ. Both were students at Southfield High School and recently the Lord allowed them to move their Sunday services where

they once roamed the halls together. "I was on the basketball court and my wife was in the library so we never connected in high school, but it's amazing that He knew the whole time we would eventually come back to where we first went to school together," said Nether.

Crossover Church has a simple strategy. Sunday services are designed to **REACH** people who are far away from God. Throughout the week, we focus on **RAISING** people to be fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ by mobilizing discipleship groups throughout the city. Lastly, we concentrate on **RELEASING** people to make a difference for the Kingdom of God by investing in our members by helping them discover their gifts, and providing resources to equip them for their assignment. Simply put their motto is "We Grow People."

On January 15th, 2017, Crossover church had it's first baptismal service. During the service, Pastor Nether had the privilege of baptizing four family members. Ken states, "I was studying game film on baptizing all night to make sure I had the proper technique. I used to enjoy dunking on the basketball court but I received more joy in dunking the family members in the water." That baptism service represented what Crossover Church is all about. They REACHED a family who was far away from God. They are currently RAISING them up to be fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. All of the family members have been RELEASED into ministry and are excited to serve.

With the support of NAMB, Crossover Church plans to adopt a school by providing tutoring, mentoring and parental support for families who are in need. Pastor Ken was a teacher in the inner city of Detroit for the last 6 years and has seen how the erosion of education and lack of support can have a negative impact, not only on the children, but on the family as a whole. Pastor Ken and Tolice have two kids of their own, Kennedy (4) and Lincoln (2), which is a guiding force in the church's work in discipling the whole family. "We noticed that there seems to be a lack of churches that cater toward young families," says Tolice Nether. She goes on to say, "It's interesting we have now turned into a multigenerational church. The grandparents are telling their young adult children about Crossover, but they are staying too."

Crossover Church is establishing itself as a church for the whole family. They are ready to serve the city of Southfield and look forward to being an active part of the community. Ken and Tolice's kids joyfully run into church every Sunday and we believe one day the rest of the city of Southfield will follow suit.

Ken Nether is a NAMB church planter at Crossover Church. He has been married to his wife, Tolice, for five years and have two wonderful kids, Kennedy and Lincoln. They currently hold Sunday Services at Southfield High School A&T at 10:30 am in Southfield, Mi.

What they don't tell you

By Ian Minielly (Ironwood 6)

Fenton, MI - "Fenton 6, this is Ironwood 6, prepare to copy, over."

"Ironwood 6, this is Fenton 6, send it, over."

“Fenton 6, we had 110 new contacts last month, spread the full Gospel at least 31 times, and had at least 42 follow up contacts with the intention of moving the relationship further, over”

“Ironwood 6, this is Fenton 6, keep charging the hill, be prepared to do more with less, keep the updates coming, experience more success, and keep your chin up. We love what you are doing over there, over.”

“Fenton 6, this is Ironwood 6, roger, good copy, WILCO, out.”

Anyone with experience sending a transmission in the military will recognize the above exchange. A subordinate unit is passing to their higher HQ (headquarters) a SITREP (situation report) while receiving the standard response to carry on, do more, and stay positive. As the most distant church planter in the state of Michigan in one of the most spiritually dark areas, this is how it feels sometime to submit the monthly report. I feel like a fighting element out front of the main body to draw and return fire so the main body does not get decisively engaged and pinned down. Does this capture the essence of church planting and is that even possible? Of course not.

Catalyst Baptist Church had its first service 3 August 2015. In other words we have been in existence under the umbrella of First Baptist, Gwinn and the Upper Peninsula Association for 17 months. It felt like we rocked 6-10 bodies for the first year. The last six or seven months it has jumped to 15-20, which feels wonderful and great. During that time, as a planter, I have experienced a couple of really good highs and a whole bunch of lows. In the process my ability and skill at sermon prep, vision, and delivery has grown exponentially.

Unfortunately, time and again, new Christians and old have ripped our hearts out over and over again. We see God actively working in member's lives and they are experiencing that joy and Godly direction and freedom, but then some element of the old life calls and they answer that door and stumble. Walking with them in this process is crushing, because the path seems so clear and visible, yet the devil stays on prowling to tempt and pounce.

Is it all valleys and draws up here? It isn't, but at times we seem to drop a whole lot more elevation than we gain. Two weeks ago I was praying God would bring all the men to our Sunday Service. This was something that never happened, we would get 1-4 of the 7 men any Sunday, but never all of them. I was feeling called to challenge the men to a deeper faith, but I needed them to be in church for the challenge. Two weeks ago, all seven men showed up just as I finished developing what I called a “Mighty Man” path forward. God had answered my prayer.

All seven men signed up to deepen their faith and be mighty men, our first meeting we only had one abstention and that was due to a medical issue. Things were flying high, and we were taking ground from the enemy. No doubt I saw that mountain thrown into the sea and it was great. The night of our second meeting, one guy showed up. What happened to that commitment? Only one guy honored his commitment and we dropped right back into the valley.

This is church planting. We have a long ways to go, but I am learning. Chin up!

Ironwood 6 is church planter Ian Minielly, of Catalyst Baptist Church. Living deep behind enemy lines at the Catalyst Baptist Church of the Upper Peninsula Association is making ground, doing the work.

STRENGTHENING

Book of the Month

By Tim Patterson

It goes without saying that we have just come through one of the most belligerent and divisive political seasons in the history of our great nation. As a result, we as a people will not be the same.

As I reflect on our present political atmosphere, I thought it would be appropriate for my first book to review and recommend in this column would be one that covers the life of one of our forefathers. The book that I recommend is John Adams by David McCullough and published by Simon and Schuster. Even though it was released over 15 years ago, it is still most relevant today.

It is a nonfiction book that details the life of one of our Founding Fathers and gives us great insight into his foundation, family and faith. Biographies can, at times, be boring and tedious but David does an admirable job in keeping an identifiable human connection before us throughout the pages. The window that it opens to Adam's friendship with Thomas Jefferson is illuminating and fascinating.

The insight that is given into the life of Abigail, his wife and their loving, lifelong relationship is worth the read. It is not a short volume with more than 700 pages, including its source notes, but it will keep you engaged until the last page.

This will be a great book for these long winter nights and one that will instill hope amidst our present political climate.

From the desk of
Timothy C. Patterson

"Bringing the Word"

The January Men's Retreat

By Jimmy Jones

Roscommon, MI - The January men's retreat lived up to the theme. Jim Palmer, pastor of Miles Road Baptist Church, Summerville, SC brought four messages from the life of David that spoke to our hearts and challenged our lives. He began with "David's Greatest Fight." In his message he shared that it was the greatest upset in history, but included it was a "fixed fight." David couldn't lose, because the Lord was on his side. We were encouraged that the giants in our life can be defeated. We face giants every day; alcohol, drugs, pornography, bad job, little money, domestic problems, wayward children or grandchildren, cancer, death and more. These are giants that the Lord wants to give us victory over. Pastor Palmer gave four principles to victory:

1. Purpose: Surrender to Lord's will
2. Progression: Remember past victories
3. Power: Recognition of God's power

4. Promise: Remembering that the Lord said he would be the King of Israel. He couldn't lose and neither can we.

Palmer and his church have blessed Michigan Baptists for years. He along with his worship leader, Keith Wilson, have been a part of 8 retreats across the years. Their church has also provided the cost of transportation for them to get here and back home. In addition, they have provided for men from their church to come to our retreats. For three years they paid for 25-30 men to fly to Michigan. Then they started hosting their own, "Bambi South Retreat" in Carolina that is growing every year.

Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM) Executive Director, Tim Patterson, also spoke. His topic was about marriage relationships. He used Song of Solomon 2:15 to warn of the "little foxes that are ruining our vineyards." He shared the dangers around us, like foxes, that ruin our marriages.

- A. When the roles of husband and wife are reversed; fathers who abandon their children, leave moms to do the work of the father. This leads to confusion of gender. Boys don't know who they are. Boys need to see the leadership of a Godly father leading the home.
- B. Husbands need to provide the intimacy that a wife needs. The husband needs to provide a sense of teamship in marriage. There needs to be a bond no one or no thing can break.
- C. Husbands need to plan regular and focused communication and be interested in the things that concern their wife.
- D. Husbands need to not let other ministry, friends, internet, TV, or sports consume time he should be spending with his wife.
- E. Husbands must never let anyone outside his marriage meet his personal needs.

Jimmy Jones shared something of the history of Bambi Lake and the impact that Bambi has made on so many lives across the years. This was the last Men's Retreat he will lead. He was asked in 1983 to take over the Men's Retreats, and except for four years that Wayne Vann lead in the late 90's, he has been in charge of the Men's Retreats for the BSCM. More than 10,000 men have attended the Men's retreat during that time. He concluded by encouraging the men to be a part of the March Retreat. It will be March 10-12, with a wild game dinner with Chuck McAllister. There will also be a fall retreat in September.

Jones offers a special thank you to our state convention staff. Executive Director Tim & Sabrina Patterson, Mike & Shar Durbin, and Nancy & Dan Spears, without whom, we could not have had the retreat.

Jones says "the men who came to the retreat are the greatest blessing. The testimony time is so encouraging. Many men shared how they were saved and saw miracles in their families: children and grandchildren rescued, marriages restored; victories in their lives over alcohol, drugs, pornography concurred; victories in their churches all because of the decisions made during the Men's Retreat. God is good."

Jimmy Jones

A Chaplain's Sacred Moments II

By Bob Dennis

GRAND RAPIDS, MI – My office is at the entrance to the Veterans Home Chapel. It was a very quiet day as I sat at my desk working on my sermon for Sunday. My office door was closed, but God sent an unexpected sacred blessing my way. You see, Mr. “E” was in the chapel and had no way of knowing anyone was around but him and the Lord. I felt like an eavesdropper listening in on a party line. I listened as this broken bodied, disabled Marine sang “How Great Thou Art.” He was singing as best he could to an audience of one, his Lord.

Mr. “E” has an electric operated wheelchair to make it to the chapel because his “mangled” body no longer lets him walk. His voice raspy and broken allowed very little air into his lungs. He could only sing 3 words at a time, but what beautiful music he made. He was singing from his heart and I imagine how pleased God was with him. Mr. “E” may not have much left that works, what he does have he gave it all to the Lord. He was fighting the good fight that the Apostle Paul wrote about. He had finished the “race” in his electric wheelchair.

There was a second sacred moment that came to me on this day. It was when his wife came in to make his funeral plans. I asked her when her husband, Mr. “E”, became such a Spirit-filled Christian and she stopped and paused for a silent minute of personal revelation. She looked me in the eye with a look of amazement and said “it had to be when he moved in here and attended chapel services.” My head didn’t swell up from pride, but my heart began beating for joy. It was blessing two from my friend Mr. “E”.

I am so happy that I have the freedom in the Chapel Worship Service to preach the Word of God without interference. It is true that encounters in the rest of the facility have to be cautious and sensitive to non-Christians, but when our veterans come to the chapel they will hear the plan of salvation and sermon after sermon to ignite spiritual formation.

If you feel God may be talking to you about serving our military, police and emergency workers as a chaplain or have been called by God to be a chaplain or to be of support to our chaplains in prayer please contact me at (bdennis@bscm.org). You can also see more information on our BSCM website at bscm.org and look under “SEND” to find the Chaplaincy page.

We will have several chaplain training opportunities throughout the year. Keep checking our website for further information and registration.

Chaplain Bob Dennis is the new Chaplain Coordinator for the BSCM. He became a North American Mission Board endorsed chaplain for the State of Michigan after ministering as a pastor in the Woodland Baptist Association for many years. He currently is a chaplain assigned to the Grand Rapids Home for Veterans.

Pastor's Wife: What's Your SHAPE?

By Lori Stewart

Flint, MI - During the first few months of ONElife Church, the question kept booming in my head....what is my role? Being part of an inaugural church plant is a little different from being

new to a pre-existing body of believers. My husband had a vision of planting a church as he calls it a "pioneer work". We didn't have a band of other church members along with us from a previous church so we were basically a church of 6. Eric was the preacher. Dan (Dan Dameron) was the Worship pastor. The kids were the kids, but where did I fit? My past experience led me to believe I should fill in the gaps wherever my husband needs me, or be whatever the church needs me to be.

So I did just that. The biggest hole was in our children's ministry so I naturally snuck back into the classroom area to help where I could. Thankfully, we invited our mentors to come to the church early on to help us evaluate and offer suggestions. They were very encouraging, but wanted to share one word of advice: "As the pastor's wife, you add 50% of the effectiveness when it comes to connecting with people, particularly this early on in the church planting process." Fifty percent! My husband and I discussed what this meant and prayed over my role for several days. We identified 3 things that would keep me effective in the church, which could relate to anyone, not just a pastor's wife:

My main role is to be Spirit filled

In Galatians 5:22 Paul describes the fruit of the spirit which is addressing our heart and, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34). The condition of the heart is vital when it comes to fulfilling the role as a pastor's wife. For without the Spirit everything is vanities of vanities...as the preacher says. We can get so focused that we lose sight of the purpose and as a result the fruit of our lives start to rot. My husband often reminds our volunteers how their spiritual walk is more important than the task that they are completing.

Be a faithful church member

A pastor's wife is not an ordained position in the church. One of my roles as a member of the church is to identify how I best serve the flock just like all other church members. To help identify my God-given strengths, I used the acrostic SHAPE, by Rick Warren.

Every pastor's wife will be different. That is why we need to remove the title of pastor's wife and simply focus on being a faithful church member. I attend Sunday services, small groups and leadership conferences to grow and learn just as everyone else. Sometimes the elders ask me to specifically serve in the church based on my SHAPE, so I do, just like other leaders in our church lead in their unique areas.

Be a Wife and Mother

Are we the thermostat or the thermometers in our homes? If we are tired, limited on time and stressed out, our homes can go from warm to cold in seconds. We are the thermometer reacting to our environment, and everyone can feel it. In contrast, the thermostat sets the desired temperature and works to maintain it. Such requires constant awareness, of myself, and the rest of my family. My husband depends on me for that.

What an important task we have. Nothing compares to it. To be faithful, my heart needs to be ready above all to serve His people. Press on my friends for the Kingdom of God is not yet complete, and He wants to use US no matter what SHAPE we are!!

Lori Stewart is a member at ONELife Church in Flint, MI and is married to pastor Eric Thomas. She is a mother of three, former BIG 10 college athlete, 1/2 marathon runner, conference speaker, and an avid reader.

The Gospel of the Streets

By David Russell

Burlington, Vt - Street ministers like myself soon realize that the street has its own culture, its own community, that is often very different from the "mainstream culture" including the Christian evangelical culture. What we find is that those who have been on the streets a long time are part of that culture. It is very deeply rooted in who they are.

Some who come to Christ can and will get off the street and into mainstream culture again, but the reality is many will not. They just don't fit in with the mainstream anymore. But that does not mean that real conversions don't take place or that real spirituality does not take place on the street. It just means it looks different. The street folk to whom we minister, those who claim to be followers of Jesus, know who they are. They know they are sinners, losers, addicts, and that they do not measure up nor will they ever measure up to society's standards. But they are the ones who will quickly say "God have mercy on me, a sinner."

I remember when a group of the homeless asked me to do a Good Friday devotion in an alley in our city. Over 50 came out to worship. One of the long-time homeless, an alcoholic, had tears in his eyes and shared with us what would be the sermon for the day: perhaps the best sermon I have ever heard! He said, "All of us here are losers. We are sinners. We are not good people. But this Jesus, the Son of the Living God -- He was perfect, and He loves us so much. And He knew we are not able to clean ourselves up, but that is exactly why He came for people like us. I am not worthy to be here, but He calls us anyway. And I love Him, and I will be ever grateful for what He did for me, and I await the day I can jump into his arms and never have to worry about another thing."

After the service was over, I thought to myself that this man -- this long-time street person, this man who has been into treatment over 50 times in his 66 years, this man who fought for our country in Vietnam and came back from war forever damaged -- he understood the truth of Scripture. He understood the finished work of Jesus on Calvary's cross. He had a spirituality and a faith that is strong and living, and helps him in his very difficult life on the street. And there are many like this man who live out their faith on the street.

But I can hear some say, "If this man were truly saved, he would be clean and sober, off the street and have a job, be in a real church and pay his tithe." All I can say is perhaps. But after forty years on the street ministering to all kinds of people, I have seen and experienced genuine faith and real love among the homeless even in the midst of addiction and the ugliness that the streets dish out. That Good Friday Service so many years ago was the most powerful worship experience I have ever had in any church. The streets have become my church, my parish, and for the people who call the streets home, I am honored to be their pastor.

If you want to help the homeless, be their friend. Look at them, don't ignore. Share a smile or a friendly hello, or perhaps take one of these precious people to lunch. Get to know them as a person and find out their story. Listen to them. Never ever give them money -- their addictions will win over, and that money you gave them will not go for food but for drugs or alcohol. We use \$5.00 McDonald's gift cards. I carry them with me at all times and give these out freely to all who need them because they can only be redeemed for food at McDonald's.

Luke 18:9-14 states that Jesus told this parable to someone who trusted in their own righteousness and regarded others with contempt. He said, two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee standing by himself said, "God, I thank you that I am not like other people; thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give a tenth of all my income." But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Jesus said, "I tell you this man went down to his home justified rather than the other, for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted."

David Russell is the director of Burlington Street Ministries in Burlington, Vt. This article first appeared in the New England Baptist Newsjournal.

SENDING

Children as Missionaries

By: Sue Hodnett

FENTON, MI – Hey Parents! Are you looking for an opportunity to teach your children that they, too, can be missionaries every day in their own communities and neighborhoods? How about sharing time together with your kids on a project that will not only meet a need in your community but also inspire your family. Do you want to continue to develop your child's desire to serve others throughout their life? Well, join us for "Love Your Neighbor!"

For the past ten years during the month of March, children across Michigan have shared God's love with people in their communities on Children Ministry Day (CMD). From feeding hungry people to visiting the elderly in nursing homes, boys and girls have been following God's command to "put your love into action" as they participate in local ministry projects.

This year, on March 18th, Children in grades Kindergarten through 8th grade, with their parents and leaders, will meet at eight church locations across Michigan to participate in community outreach events. Children will engage with the CMD 2017 "Love Your Neighbor" theme by giving of themselves to meet needs and share God's love. As they participate in hands-on projects, the children, parents and leaders, will be reminded to give their all. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Love him with all your strength and with all your mind. And, "Love your neighbor as you love yourself." (Luke 10:27) This verse is our mantra and our passion.

Children's Ministry Day is an amazing missions experience for girls and boys with their parents and leaders. We are excited that eight churches across Michigan will be hosting this event. Each location will be staffed with qualified, Godly Children's leaders who have a passion to reflect the love of Christ to your children, and help them experience the joy of missions and helping others. This event is conducted at no charge plus a pizza lunch will be provided. Parents are encouraged to stay on site, or may fill out a permission form at the location if they would prefer to leave their child for the four hour program (10AM – 2PM). Please register with the host church where

you are planning to attend so they will be able to plan accordingly for food and project materials.

Host churches:

Harvest Baptist, 7650 23 Mile Rd, Shelby Twp, MI 48316, Contact: Anne Kinser, 586-731-7650

New Covenant, 4217 Squirrel Rd., Auburn Hills, MI 48326, Contact: Susie Birge, 248-249-0204

Legacy Church, 45301 W. 11 Mile Rd, Novi, MI 48375, Contact: Betty Ward, 248-349-5665

Springview Community, 12881 Andersonville Rd, Davisburg, MI 48350, Contact: Becky Swain, 248-701-0486

Sunrise Baptist, 2138 N. Jefferson Rd, Midland, MI 48642, Contact: Helen Henley, 989-980-0252

The Orchard Church, 4288 US 31, Traverse City, MI 49685, Contact: Sharon Greer, 989-329-4403
Churches hosting on a different day. Please contact leader for more details.

Southfield Road Baptist, 14880 Southfield Rd., Allen Park, MI 48101, Contact: Gayle Jones, 314-650-4653

Warren Woods Baptist, 14251 12 Mile Rd., Warren, MI 48088, Contact: Mary Allen, 586-216-6439

Bring your children, be an example, and share the love of Jesus in our world. For more information visit our website: bscm.org/missions or call us at 810.714.1907

Travel ban doesn't slow outreach to Muslims in Michigan

By Diane Chandler

DEARBORN, Mich. (BP) -- Southern Baptist pastors will continue attempts to build friendships in Dearborn, Mich., among the sizable Muslim community, despite the fear pastors say President Donald Trump's now suspended travel ban has generated among immigrants there.

Monthly, pastors Dave Ferraro and Carlos Liese gather small groups of volunteers and eat at restaurants Muslims frequent, starting conversations that lead to discussions of religious beliefs. Their outreach is in Dearborn, where one-third of residents claim Arab-American heritage but are not necessarily Muslim, according to the Arab American Institute in Washington, D.C. "I think the need is just that [Muslims] would continue to learn that Christians love them," Ferraro, pastor of discipleship at Merriman Road Baptist Church in Garden City, told Baptist Press. "We just seek to let them know that we love them regardless of their immigration status. There's certainly some fear there, so we just try to dispel that by imbibing the truth and showing them Christian love."

The outreach set for Feb. 17 was expected to draw between 10 and 15 evangelism volunteers who are coached in proper technique before each outing. "The only way that lie [of hatred] is dispelled that Satan wants to perpetuate is if Christians go out and just meet with people face to face," Ferraro said, "and seek to demonstrate the love of Christ to them, that they're important,

they're valued and maybe misguided in the truth, but that's part of our mission to love on them and point them to the truth."

At issue is an executive order Trump issued Jan. 27 temporarily suspending travel from seven majority Muslim nations for 90 days and banning refugees from Syria indefinitely. Federal district Judge James L. Robart of Seattle suspended the ban Feb. 3 and the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld Robart's ruling days later. Matthew Vroman, a pastor who is building a friendship with a leading imam (Muslim leader) in the community, cautions Christians against mentioning politics when interacting with Muslims in the U.S. "If you're going to be effective reaching Muslims," Vroman said, "you keep it Gospel-centric. And maybe if you [support] the refugee ban ... you'd better not be advertising that, or you won't have much Muslim ministry."

Muslims think the ban was "completely against Islam and Muslims," Vroman said. "It's very scary for them, definitely.... They're waiting to be rounded up and sent home," regardless of their immigration or citizenship status. "They feel on the defense and scared." Vroman, pastor of Eastside Community Church in Harper Woods, is building a friendship with Imam Muhammad Ali Elahi, leader of the Islamic House of Wisdom in Dearborn Heights. The Detroit Free Press reported that Elahi described the refugee ban as lacking "common sense" during a Feb. 1 press conference at his mosque and is the "greatest gift for ISIS [the Islamic State]" because it further alienates the U.S. from foreign countries. Liese, Vroman's partner in the evangelistic outreach who pastors First Spanish Baptist Church in Detroit, has told Baptist Press, "In all the years that we have been doing this we have been able to share the Gospel with many people, so many seeds have been sown, and we have never been mistreated or disrespected, ever." The outreach has done "a lot of seed planting and people have been very, very receptive. Our experience has been nothing but positive."

Diana Chandler is Baptist Press' general assignment writer/editor. BP reports on missions, ministry and witness advanced through the Cooperative Program and on news related to Southern Baptists' concerns nationally and globally.

SBC NEWS

Boy Scouts Opens Membership To Transgender

By Gabe Lyons

Nashville, TN (ERLC) - The Boy Scouts of America (BSA) announced on Monday they will now allow [girls who identify as boys to participate in its boys-only programs](#). Since the organization was created more than a century ago, the Boy Scouts has relied on the information on an individual's birth certificate to determine eligibility for their single-gender programs. But in a [video announcement](#), Chief Scout Executive Michael Surbaugh said the organization "will accept and register youth in the Cub and Boy Scout programs based on the gender identity indicated on the application." The change in policy will force all Scout troops to include transgender girls, that is, girls who are struggling with gender dysphoria (feeling one's emotional and psychological identity as male or female to be opposite to one's biological sex).

The BSA has recently been accused of “discrimination” for refusing to include girls who identify as transgender. Last year an 8-year-old transgender girl [sued her local New Jersey Boy Scouts’ Council for discrimination](#) after she was kicked out of a Cub Scout troop. The suit claims the Boy Scouts of America Northern New Jersey Council violated the state’s [Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity \(SOGI\) law](#) by excluding the girl who identifies as a boy. “State laws like the one in New Jersey are precisely what this BSA statement cites as its rationale for this decision,” [says Denny Burk](#), professor of biblical studies at Boyce College. “Because these laws are on the books, the BSA would be exposed to lawsuits in every state that has a SOGI law in the books . . . Rather than fighting these lawsuits, the BSA has apparently decided to capitulate.”

As the [Baptist Press noted](#), this latest policy change follows a 2013 decision by the BSA to permit openly homosexual scouts and a 2015 change that approved the inclusion of openly gay and bisexual adults as unit leaders and employees. “Now we see once again that the Boy Scouts really is committed to a gender-theory culture war that evangelical Christians and many other Americans just can’t accept,” ERLC president Russell Moore [told the New York Times](#). Dr. Moore noted in his interview with the newspaper that Southern Baptist churches and others had been dismayed by Boy Scout policies for several years, as the Scouts moved first to allow openly gay youth members, and then openly gay adult leaders. “I think, for some, this will be the final sign that it’s time to go,” said Dr. Moore.

Research studies have shown that up to [93 percent of children](#) referred for gender dysphoria grow out of it naturally by the time they reach adolescence or adulthood. But many Christians fear that BSA’s decision will reinforce the gender dysphoria. “It is tragic that the Boys Scouts are making this misstep,” added Andrew Walker, ERLC’s director of policy studies. “Allowing transgender ideology to gain acceptance within the Boy Scouts will only further confuse children with gender dysphoria, and inject further confusion into one of America’s key institutions about what it means to be made male. The Boy Scouts are surrendering their merit badge for courage with this cowardly act of kowtowing (subservient) to the Sexual Revolution.”

Gabe Lyons, speaking on the [ERLC podcast](#), reminds us that continuing to seek truth in Scripture will enable us to be bold when faced with this opposition and confusion.

COLUMNS

Crazy Laws

By Tim Patterson

Fenton, MI - Have you noticed lately that there has been a great deal of discussion concerning the laws of our land? With a new president creating new regulations and removing others on a daily basis, I thought I would comment on the nature of laws that presently exist in our great nation and in others as well.

For the most part, the laws of the land are in place to protect and be a benefit to inhabitants of a country. Duly elected officials, who to the best of their abilities, are trying to represent the desires and wishes of their respective constituencies, have enacted the vast majority of these directives. Even though this may be the intention of our leaders, it is obvious that they do not

always carry out that representation in a fashion that reflects the people's desires and in some cases prove to be just the opposite.

At other times laws have been passed that apparently do not represent the thinking of any rational person. In fact, they seem to be created without any forethought or intellectual reasoning. But then again, I have been told that there is something released into the atmosphere of all of our state capitols and that of the U. S. Government that fogs the thinking of any intelligent person. (grin) Well, if you don't believe that then tell me what turns some of our good, rational, discerning, intelligent, wise, witty and duly elected officials into blithering idiots?

Let me just share with you a few laws that have been enacted in some of our sister countries and states.

- No one may enter a Canadian aircraft in flight. Also, no one may leave a Canadian aircraft while in flight, except by parachute. (You wouldn't need a jail to hold the law breaker, just a bucket)
- You can be fined \$500 for setting off a nuclear warhead in the city limits of Chico, California. (Who would be left to make him pay?)
- Trucks in Great Britain are forbidden by law from driving under bridges too low for them to drive under. (Duh!)
- A Texas representative introduced a bill requiring criminals to notify their victims 24 hours in advance, and to notify them of their right to use deadly force. (I know all of Texas is waiting with baited breath for the phone call from their next perpetrator)
- Baths may not be taken between the months of October and March. (Indiana)
- Spitting on a sea gull is not tolerated. (Norfolk , VA)
- Mustaches are illegal if the bearer has a tendency to habitually kiss other humans. (Indiana)
- Women who sit on men's laps on buses or trains without placing a pillow between them face an automatic six-month jail term. (Seattle, WA)
- The State Constitution of Alabama makes it illegal for any "idiots or insane" people to vote. (We would be better off if that was a national law!) (grin)

These are just a few of the hundreds of laws that make no sense whatsoever and for sure can and will never be enforced. The laws of a land are for the protection of the good citizens of that country and for the punishment of the evil ones. On the other hand, the laws of God were not only to protect and correct, but to also show us that it is humanly impossible to keep them all. We are all lawbreakers and guilty before God. Aren't you glad that our Loving Father made a way for our guilt and lawlessness to be forgiven and that we are made right with Him, not by keeping laws, but by Grace?

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."
(Galatians 2:16 KJV)

So may I encourage you in these seemingly crazy days of laws, rules and regulations not to despair? These laws will never make us righteous, and we cannot keep them all. Besides, some of them and their creators are just a few french fries short of a Happy Meal. Rest in Him who justifies by His Grace.

Planting Where God Leads

By Mike Durbin

Fenton, MI - Following Jesus took our family to the center of South America as IMB missionaries. The city of Cuiaba sits on the far western edge of Brazil in the state of Mato Grosso. The city was experiencing rapid growth. Construction was everywhere. A new housing development miles from the city caught our attention. There were hundreds and hundreds of new houses, but not a single church. By no church, I mean no church of any kind.

We had recently moved to Cuiaba, were in our second year of learning Portuguese, and didn't know anyone living in that area. God laid it on our hearts to plant a church there. We were praying and looking for a person to help us get started when an incredible moment in a supermarket led us to the first member of the church. The pastor of the largest, most dynamic church in the state was buying groceries. I met him briefly in a meeting, but didn't think he would remember me. I went up to say "hi" and reintroduce myself. During our conversation, he asked me what I was planning to do. I told him about the new community growing outside the city. He knew the area and was aware there were no churches there.

When I told him that we wanted to go there and plant a church, Pastor William Balanuce was thrilled. He told me about a young man in his church who just got married and moved there. "His name is Samuel," he said, "and his wife isn't a believer." He couldn't remember Samuel's address, but he told me that he lived on the only paved road in the community and that his house was at the very top of the hill. It wasn't much to go on, but we went anyway. We found Samuel. He owned a small convenience store attached to the front of his house. Pastor William told me to tell Samuel that he gave me his name and invite him to help us start the church.

Samuel told us two things when we met him that he had been praying for: his wife's salvation and for a church in his community. It was a God moment for us as we talked! We ultimately became best friends, but in that moment we were two men who met each other because of a pastor who saw what could be. Pastor William released Samuel without hesitation to advance God's Kingdom and challenged him to be a part of the church he was praying for. First Baptist Church didn't become the largest, most influential church in the state by keeping people. She became that by investing people in the work of the harvest in the city and beyond.

The first service was a disaster - at least, that's how I felt. Lightning took out a transformer just after I stood to preach and left everyone completely in the dark (the main worship service in Brazil is at night) and the roof was leaking on us. The next Sunday, we held our second service. Judith, a young mother of two, committed her life to Christ. Weekly services were underway. We visited every home in the community, inviting them personally when we could, or by leaving information. Some attended and the church grew.

In fun, I told people that listening to me preach in Portuguese was the best show in town. We had a crowd, but we needed to teach them how to be a community of Christ followers in covenant with one another as a church. My plan was to introduce them to the Brazilian Baptist Covenant, but I ended up preaching about the Baptist Duck. I meant "covenant" but one missing letter changed the meaning dramatically. I waxed eloquently, "We have an incredible Baptist Duck. We enter into fellowship with one another around the Baptist Duck. If you ever leave this place, you need to find a church with a Baptist Duck just like this one." Years later, we returned

for the anniversary of the church. Before I preached, they introduced me as the pastor who preached the "Baptist Duck" sermon.

These were exciting times. We built a building, started Bible studies, and shared the Gospel all over the area. Our first term as missionaries came to an end. It was time to return to the United States. One of Samuel's two prayers was answered: A new church was planted in his community.

Samuel and Dalva had become our dearest friends, but she had not given her life Christ. She was there through it all - every Sunday - listening, watching, and even helping. Dalva sang, prayed, read God's Word, and participated in everything in the new church, but she did not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Samuel's prayer for Dalva to know Christ had become our prayer. And, yet, when we left Brazil for stateside assignment, she still had not believed.

After six months in the USA, we returned to Brazil. Samuel and Dalva were still actively involved in the church. A Brazilian pastor had been called to lead the church. He invited me to preach. It was February 14th--Valentine's Day. Shar and the boys were sitting two rows behind Samuel and Dalva. By the end of the service, Dalva was crying and visibly shaking. As soon as the service was over, Shar pulled her aside and asked, "What's wrong?"

She was confused. Steady exposure to the Word of God had shown her some things about her life. She was a good person who believed in God, and she thought that was enough. She knew about Jesus her whole life, but she did not know Jesus. That night she realized she was following a religion. God showed her that she needed Jesus and Jesus alone. Dalva placed her faith in Christ. It was the God moment we had been praying for!

Shar and I went to another area even further from the city where there was no church. We continued our friendship with Samuel and Dalva. Several years later our work was done. We got together with Samuel and Dalva for one last dinner at our house before we left the country to return to the United States to live. That night Samuel told us that he felt God calling him to pastoral ministry. He was enrolling in seminary to prepare himself. Today, Samuel is the pastor of the church he helped start. And Dalva is an amazing pastor's wife! Planting where God leads always leads to lives being changed.

Pocket change changes the world

By Tony Lynn

Fenton, MI - For years, buckets & scales have been a part of Vacation Bible School (VBS). We are only months away from when many churches will conduct Bible studies, activities, Bible focused games and crafts for children. Because churches want to give children the opportunity to BE a part of missions while learning of God's love, plans for VBS often include the question, "What will we do with the money the children collect for Vacation Bible School?"

What would you think about contributing your church's VBS offering to one of the new church plants in the state of Michigan? You will find a list of the latest new church starts at bscm.org/SENDMEMI. This list contains brand new church starts (less than 3 years old) that could use your support and help to reach their community with the Gospel of Christ.

Years ago in one of the churches where I served as pastor, Susan was an avid fan of “Penny Wars.” It sounds more violent than it was. Simply put, children would concentrate on bringing to each day’s VBS meeting all the pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters they could find. Children would beg family members and search for coins throughout their homes and cars.

The entire population of VBS was divided into different teams to create friendly competition by weight or amount given. I would watch, as Susan would tip the scales of the competition in the losing team’s favor each day. Sometimes it was boys against girls. Other times it was the Blue, Red, and Green teams in competition with one another.

Who might your VBS children want to help? Our Michigan church planters are serving in different ways. Allow me to share just four examples:

1. One semi-retired Canadian couple in partnership with former international missionaries is planting a church in Sarnia, Ontario, Canada.
2. A Native-American is planting churches among other Native Americans in the Upper Peninsula.
3. A number of young couples with little children are planting churches throughout different neighborhoods in the Greater Detroit area.
4. A Navy Chaplain and his family are leaving military service this fall to replant a new church in Petoskey.

What would inspire the children to give? Creating reasons-to-give and explaining those reasons to the children will motivate them to generously give. Here are some ideas:

1. Contact a church planting missionary and ask what they need? (See the list of Michigan Church Starts, bscm.org/SENDMEMI). Then share those needs with the children prior to the collection. Create images or words on walls that can be crossed off as enough funds are collected.
2. If for example, the church planter says, “We need gift Bibles to give to visiting families.” Break that down for the children to understand, such as \$5 will buy 2 Bibles for the church planter to give to others. Set a goal to collect enough money to buy a specific amount of Bibles and find a way to demonstrate the shopping list.
3. Share an idea that seems normal to the VBS children. For example, explain to the children that church planting families need to have fun, too. Share that \$50 will help a family go out to eat or see a movie. Celebrate those moments when the children gather enough to allow a family a fun night out.
4. Ask the VBS children to help with a special need for a church planter. For example, one of our church planting couples, Garth and Patty Leno care for their special needs adult-daughter while planting a church in Windsor, Ontario, Canada. Please, watch the 3-minute video relating their personal story, [Leno: What Started as a Joke](#).

Imagine the immediate and long lasting impact of collecting coins for the upcoming Vacation Bible School. Children will see that even while they’re young, they can make a difference in people’s lives. They will also see the implications that giving is joyful and rewarding, which might lead them to become better and faithful stewards at an early age, which will bless your local church for years to come.

Let me encourage you to make a note on your calendar ahead of time for this year's Vacation Bible School. Jot down a note such as, "Collect for a Michigan church plant." In a simple manner, you can teach your children and your church that pocket change can change the world for Christ.

If you prefer to make your donations to any church plant in Michigan after this summer's VBS (or anytime!), you may direct your church treasurer to send a check in the amount of your collection directly to the church plant or to the:

Baptist State Convention of Michigan
8420 Runyan Lake Road
Fenton, Michigan 48430

We will make sure the church start of your choice receives the offering gift. Please, be certain to indicate the offering as designated for church starting or planting.

AROUND THE STATE

CROSS WALK

Pastor Tim Jones and members of the church will be carrying the cross on Southfield Road and Allen Road in Allen Park from 3:00 to 5:00 pm on Good Friday, April 14, 2017. The cross is 10 feet tall and made of 4x4 cedar posts. Southfield Road Baptist Church, 14880 Southfield Road, Allen Park, MI 48101. (313) 381-3979

GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE

Good Friday Service begins at 5:30 pm, April 14, 2017. Worship service may take place outside the church, weather permitting. Southfield Road Baptist Church, 14880 Southfield Road, Allen Park, MI 48101. (313) 381-3979

EASTER EGG HUNT

Children of all ages are invited to find thousands of eggs with candy and non-candy treats at the Old Lapham School Field (East of Allen Road on Horger Street) from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm, Saturday, April 15, 2017. Bring a basket if you have one; if not, there will be plastic bags available for the children to collect their eggs. Southfield Road Baptist Church, 14880 Southfield Road, Allen Park, MI 48101. (313) 381-3979

RESURRECTION WORSHIP SERVICE

11:00 am, Sunday, April 16, 2017. Southfield Road Baptist Church, 14880 Southfield Road, Allen Park, MI 48101. (313) 381-3979

FREE WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

Every Tuesday at 10 am or 6 pm. The ladies will be studying "WAR ROOM," by Stephen Kendrick and Alex Kendrick. You can attend either class. Southfield Road Baptist Church, 14880 Southfield Road, Allen Park, MI 48101, (313) 381-3979.

FREE YOUTH BASKETBALL

Every Tuesday from 6:30 to 9:30 pm. Southfield Road Baptist Church, 14880 Southfield Road, Allen Park, MI 48101, (313) 381-3979.

CLASSIFIEDS

Part-time Worship Leader

CrossPointe Church is seeking a part-time worship leader to work with the lead pastor in planning and implementing all areas of our Christ-centered worship ministry. We are a medium-sized church affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) located in Monroe, Michigan. We offer two identical gathered worship services on Sunday mornings which include; biblical preaching, scripture reading, prayer, theologically rich music, and regular observance of the biblical ordinances (Lord's Supper and Baptism). Our music style is considered "contemporary" as we are led by a team of musicians (piano, guitar(s), drums, bass, vocals). Within our "contemporary" style of music, we value both old and new songs that are theologically rich and seek to glorify God (examples: Citizens & Saints, Getty Music, Sovereign Grace Music, Indelible Grace Music). Please visit www.crosspointemonroe.com for more information regarding CrossPointe's doctrinal statement, leadership, history, and various ministries. To apply for this position or request more information, please email resume along with links to samples of your worship leading to crosspointeworshipleadersearch@gmail.com.

Bi-vocational Pastor Needed

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

Senior Pastor Needed

Roscommon Baptist Church is currently searching for a pastor. Please submit resume to roscommonbaptistchurch@gmail.com or mail to P.O.Box 178, Roscommon, MI 48653. For more information contact the church roscommonbaptistchurch@gmail.com.

Firewood needed throughout winter months!

The Ministry of Life Challenge of Southeast Michigan, has an on-going need of Firewood donations. If you cannot deliver it, they will come and make the pick-up. This ministry provides "hope, healing, and help for people who struggle with Addiction. We are located at 17667 Pierson St., Detroit - 48219. Call us at (313) 531-0111 or (313) 461-7618 to coordinate delivery. Thank you in advance for your assistance, Rev. Nathaniel Bishop, Sr.

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

Senior Pastor Needed

Crestview Baptist Church located in Clayton, OH is prayerfully seeking a full-time Senior Pastor. CBC recently celebrated 60 years as a Southern Baptist affiliated congregation. Our mission is to glorify God by reaching a developing people for Jesus Christ. We are seeking a man that reflects our Articles of Faith and can share through ministry his love for Christ with the church congregation and the community. Please send your professional resume, references, testimony of Salvation, personal statement of faith and calling into the ministry to cbc@crestview.org or:

Crestview Baptist Church
Pastoral Search Committee
6600 Salem Ave
Clayton, OH 45315

Senior Pastor Needed

Northwest Baptist Church, located in the greater Milwaukee area, is seeking a full time senior pastor. Information about our congregation may be found by visiting our [church website](#). The Pastor Search link will connect potential candidates to our [Church Profile](#). We are currently accepting resumes for the position.

With gratitude,
Bonnie Lee
Discipleship Team Leader
Chair of Pastor Search Committee

4373 N. 92nd Street
Wauwatosa, WI 53222
(414) 463-3630
www.northwestbaptist.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!

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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