

FIRST PERSON: CHURCH PLANTING IS IMPORTANT

Tim Shrader – Baptist State Convention of Michigan

FENTON, MI – Click, click, click... most of us know the sound of the roller coaster as it climbs to the pinnacle and then drops us into an exhilarating thrill ride. This metaphor isn't perfect, but in many ways it describes the emotions my wife Debbie and I have felt in our journey to living and ministering in Michigan.



(Photo courtesy Rollercoaster.com)

The clicking sound would relate to the efforts of buying a home, setting up utilities, transferring our vehicles from Illinois to Michigan and the like. While still unpacking boxes; yes, we are still unpacking boxes after three weeks; we set off on the thrill ride of working with church planters, meeting pastors, looking for a church home, and learning our way around the area of southeast Michigan where we now live.

Everyone we have met has been wonderful. They have been so kind and welcoming. I love working with the BSCM staff and my fellow NAMB church planting catalysts. The Great Commission is still Christ's calling on our lives; all of our lives as believers. To carry the gospel into spiritual darkness in Michigan is both challenging and exciting. That's where the exhilaration of this "thrill ride" comes in; we, you and I, by the power of Almighty God, get to see lives transformed forever by the salvation only Jesus brings. We are the carriers of that message! Through our individual witness, through established churches and through the planting of new churches all over the state of Michigan, we get to see the darkness overcome and lives changed!

In the mid 90's, my family and I moved to Wisconsin and planted a church. I was an associate pastor over student ministry at a large church in Texas at the time. God's call to plant a church came out of the blue. We obeyed and moved to Wisconsin. Planting a church was both the hardest work I've ever done and the most fulfilling. We saw lives changed. We saw disciples grow. We saw a church birthed. Due to my father's health issues, we moved back to Illinois in 2002, and for the past thirteen years I have been serving as a pastor in central/southern Illinois. But my passion for church planting never went away. I led my church to be engaged with church planters in Wisconsin, Missouri, and Pennsylvania. And now I have the privilege of serving as a Church Planting Catalyst here in the great state of Michigan.

Church planting is important. Across the realm of evangelical Christianity in America, statistics have shown that more lost people come to faith in Christ through church planting than through any other means. Church planters are focused on evangelism and discipleship. They are gospel centered, and God is using church planters to start new church plants.

Earlier this week I met with three men desiring to be church planters in the greater Lansing area. Two of them are Korean-Americans, having emigrated from South Korea in the 1990's. One desires to plant a church that will reach the Korean population in East Lansing and Okemos with the truth of the gospel. The other is already working with international students at Michigan State University and wants to plant a Southern Baptist collegiate church focusing on internationals at Michigan State. The third man is an Anglo with a passion for discipleship and meeting peoples' needs. God is raising up Christ followers of every ethnicity and culture to carry the gospel to Michigan. By God's grace, I get to be a part of what He is doing!

I pray that you too will be a part of this exhilarating move of God.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tim Shrader is a BSCM Church Planting Catalyst serving the Central, Huron, Lendale, and Southeastern associations.

AFRICAN AMERICAN CHURCH EMBRACES HISPANIC NEIGHBORS

Megan Sweas - Facts & Trends

LA PUENTE, CA (BP) – At the end of a Black History Month-themed service at St. Stephen Missionary Baptist Church, pastor Anthony Dockery rose to tell about his recent mission trip to El Salvador. The mission team had served in the hometown of Jose Rivas, one of the pastors at St. Stephen. Beyond "good morning" and "God bless you," Dockery had relied on Rivas for Spanish translation while in the Central American country. The African American congregation enthusiastically applauded the news that 500 people came to the party hosted by St. Stephen in El Salvador.

Nationally, denominations and church networks are looking to bridge the gap between Anglo and African American churches. But in La Puente, Calif., about 20 miles east of Los Angeles, St. Stephen finds itself bridging African American and Hispanic communities. St. Stephen, a 4,000-member church with a 51-year history, has seen La Puente change dramatically. Years ago, the neighborhood surrounding St. Stephen was primarily African American. Latino residents now account for 85 percent of the city's population, with African Americans at less than 2 percent, according to the U.S. Census. Longtime church members have moved further into the Inland Empire region east of Los Angeles, Dockery says, yet many remain loyal to St. Stephen and commute back on Sunday mornings.

Still, it's not certain that younger generations will continue the practice, Dockery says, noting, "It's important for the church to be relevant to its community as well." Seeking to reach its transitioning neighborhood, St. Stephen has welcomed Rivas as its Spanish-language minister. A native of El Salvador, Rivas came to La Puente to establish a new church, and St. Stephen volunteered its space to his congregation. In December 2013, however, the Spanish-language ministry decided to merge with St. Stephen's existing community rather than start from scratch. "Their way of doing ministry aligned with what we wanted to do with our Spanish church," Rivas explains. "St. Stephen has a tremendous program in leadership and Christian education."



The Spanish emphasis Block Party in the church parking lot was a excellent way to welcome the Latino community into the church. (Photo courtesy St. Stephens Missionary Baptist Church)

hometown in El Salvador. He and his sister brought cake on a visit seven years ago and invited neighbors to come to a "birthday party." Sixty kids came. The next year, they repeated the party and spread the invitation further, with 300-plus kids on hand. At that point, they started to organize Bible study classes and establish a church. Dockery and two African American women from St. Stephen accompanied Rivas' most recent mission team last year. The congregation at St. Stephen donated 243 backpacks to the town's children.

Whether in El Salvador or their own backyard, missionary work "has united us more in serving God," Rivas says. "We believe church is to serve the families, obviously starting at home in our Jerusalem, which is here in La Puente. "Whenever you bring races together like this, it's God's power," Dockery says. "Love indeed conquers all."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Megan Sweas is a freelance journalist in Los Angeles. This story first appeared in the Winter issue of Facts & Trends <http://factsandtrends.net>, published by LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.



St. Stephens Missionary Baptist Church has begun promoting their Latino gathering to the community. (Photo courtesy St. Stephens Missionary Baptist Church)

About 100 people now attend a Spanish-language service while the predominantly African American English speakers are in Sunday School classes. The Spanish speakers have their own adult Sunday School, using the Spanish edition of the Bible Studies for Life curriculum from LifeWay Christian Resources. Children and English-speaking young people are incorporated into the English Sunday School. While services remain separate due to language, other activities, such as the basketball league and church picnics, are for everybody, Rivas says.

One of his challenges is making sure the wider community knows that the historically African American church has a Spanish-speaking ministry. St. Stephen reaches out to the local community through a food bank and a block party where people can access donated clothing and basic medical services. Since the Spanish ministry began, more Hispanics have started attending the event which Rivas describes as "a blessing to the church." St. Stephen's approach to reaching its community is similar to how Rivas started an outreach in his

REPLANT BRINGS CHILDREN BACK TO DYING CHURCH

Meredith Yackel – North American Mission Board

ENGLEWOOD, CO (BP) – Nancy Elliott found herself crying alone in the nursery. She had attended Calvary Church in Englewood, Colo., since she was 14. Now, for the first time, they had no children at church on a Sunday morning. “Not one child,” said Elliott. “I went into the nursery and started crying and praying to God to bring children.”

Little did she know God was orchestrating a plan larger than she could ever imagine.

After serving in youth ministry for several years in the Denver area, Mark Hallock felt God leading him toward intergenerational ministry. “A lot of youth ministries are completely separated from the larger church,” said Hallock. “As I began to see kids graduate from youth group they eventually graduated from church because they were never connected with the rest of the body. I started to think about what it would be like to truly have an inter-generational ministry.”



Members of Calvary Church, a church replant in La Junta, Colo., gather for corporate prayer following a worship service. The church is a replant of Calvary Church in Englewood, Colo., itself a church replant. The Englewood church has helped replant six churches in the metro Denver area. (Photo courtesy Calvary Church)

Hallock and his wife, Jenna, began to pray and felt God calling them to a dying church they had heard of in Englewood, Colo., in metro Denver. “I had been seeing church plants pop up, and I started to think about who was going to the declining churches, because God is glorified when dying churches come back to life.” Calvary Church was established in 1952, in what was once suburbia. As the demographics of Englewood changed, like many churches, Calvary did not change along with the community. Over time attendance dwindled. “I don’t think churches realize how quickly you can go from 150 to 30 people,” said Jeff DeClue, a long-time member and now associate pastor and elder at Calvary. “There was nothing different about Calvary from any other Southern Baptist church. It wasn’t that we weren’t passionate about the community—the community around us had changed and we didn’t know how to reach them.

“Sadly, I was tired. There was a big church down the road and I wanted to take my family and go where no one knew me.” But Dave Elliot [Nancy Elliott’s husband] was really influential and said to me, “God is not done with this church. He put it here in 1952 for a reason.” DeClue decided that day to trust God for a greater plan. It was the same day that Hallock was meeting with the search committee of Calvary, and feeling God’s call to come and help revitalize the dying church. Although they could only pay Hallock a fraction of what he had been making as a youth minister, Hallock’s previous church committed to cover what they could not afford for one year.

The remaining 30 members at Calvary noticed change almost immediately. “Within the first month we seemed to go from 30 to 60, and then to 90, and we were over 100 in just a few months,” said DeClue. “It is really scary when you have a few pastors who aren’t really what you thought they were going to be,” said Elliott. “They come in and just want to change everything, but Mark wasn’t like that. He is just so humble. I am truly grateful that I have stayed and endured the hard times because now we have so many children we barely have room for them. To see children run up and down the sidewalk on Sunday is just amazing.”

Hallock has now been at Calvary for seven years and they have continued to see growth. So much so, that they have planted six other churches in the Denver area. “What is cool is that church planting was in the DNA of Calvary from the start,” said Hallock. “They actually planted three churches back in their heyday, and we were really just tapping into our history. We get to continue the story of that narrative. I love church planting, but my personal goal has always been to see churches replanted as well. I want to see God bring dead things back to life.”

This year, Calvary has had their first experience in replanting a church not far from the Englewood campus as well. “This church was just like we were,” said Hallock. “They knew they needed radical change. We met with them and reassured them that God wasn’t done with their church. We see them starting to grow now, which is really exciting. “It is exciting to see what the Lord is doing through NAMB to replant. What a statement it is to a community when they see a dead, irrelevant church come back to life. God loves the underdog and when we surrender everything over to Him, He steps into our weakness. That is when He does some of the most amazing things.”



REPLANT BRINGS CHILDREN BACK TO DYING CHURCH (continued)

The North American Mission Board (NAMB) will host the first-ever National Replant Conference June 11-12 in St. Louis before the Southern Baptist Convention this summer. "This gathering will connect those who are replanting with other replanters as we learn from each other how God is replanting dying churches across North America," said Mark Clifton, NAMB's senior director of Replant. "It is also to help declining churches explore next steps to finding new life and new hope." The event will feature practitioners who are successfully replanting dying churches, and offer resources and tools that have proven effective in reclaiming dying churches.

Learn more about the conference at <http://www.eventbrite.com/e/national-replant-gathering-tickets-21301961741?aff=replant> and register for free. Want to learn more about church replanting? Visit the Church Replanters Blog at churchreplanters.com.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Meredith Yackel writes for the North American Mission Board.

PRAY DETROIT

Kevin Litchfield – Baptist State Convention of Michigan



FENTON, MI – In 2006 54,000 prayer intercessors were mobilized to impact the darkness in Cleveland, Ohio. As a result of these prayers, more than 15,000 volunteers were called to serve, 30 new churches were started, and more than one hundred student missionaries were mobilized, leading to major kingdom expansion.

On a much more personal note, my family saw the power of prayer firsthand when God asked us to move into the city of Cleveland to a very tough neighborhood. In our first year, we were robbed 6 times. But that all changed in the second year when we were reminded of the priority of prayer. We mobilized 1000 people within the state of South Carolina to pray for Lee Avenue and to pray over our house there.

As a result, the street changed. The city chose this one street among all the possible streets in the city to bring some beautification improvements, including a new park. A mission team came and planted flowers at homes on our street including the home called the "Red Flag House" where drugs were sold. Mission Teams brought two weeks of VBS to my house where two young boys accepted Christ. God brought a young man in his 20's who lived across the street from me. His name was Darrell, and he participated with the mission team. Later, Darrell would say to me that he would personally put the word out for no one to mess with our house again. These actions caused an elderly lady to have the courage to walk her street for the first time in 10 years, and to take her grandkids to VBS at our house. This same lady said to us this is not the same street, it has changed.

When God moved our family to Detroit, I was overwhelmed with the level of darkness, but I was once again reminded of the power of prayer. In 2015 a prayer website was created called PrayDetroit.net. Currently, more than 300 people representing 22 states have committed to pray. I was reminded recently to remind people to pray. I wonder what would happen as "we punch holes in the darkness" if thousands of people were mobilized to pray. If you have not already, will you join us on this journey. The website will be updated regularly with prayer requests and praise updates.

Would you pray about joining us on this journey?

What this would mean? First, you would sign up by registering on the website. Second, you would commit at least twice a month to check the pray Detroit website for updated prayer requests and praise reports. Third, you would continually invite other friends and family to link arms with us in this prayer Initiative.

Our Metro Detroit area is made up of many streets as dark and hopeless as Lee Avenue. I wonder how many amazing miracles we will see if every street, block, neighborhood, and city were saturated and penetrated with prayer? PrayDetroit.net



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kevin Litchfield is a BSCM Church Planter Catalyst for Metro Detroit.

EVANGELISM INITIATIVE KEYED TO SMALL GROUPS

Baptist Messenger and Baptist Press Staff

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP) -- The call to biblical evangelism is becoming a person-to-person, small group initiative in Oklahoma as well as a dozen other states.

The Connect>1 Evangelism Campaign, created by the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, aims to "take the Gospel to every corner of our state by engaging Sunday School classes and small groups in personal evangelism," said Bob Mayfield, BGCO Sunday School specialist.

Sunday School or small groups, as the single largest organization in most churches, are integral to the mission of the church, Mayfield said.

"By using the church's small group organization, the church will be able to engage greater involvement in evangelism from its members than by any other means," he said. "They will not have to create a new organization that will need additional leadership, budget and space on the church calendar."

Bible studies by LifeWay Christian Resources will support the Connect>1 initiative's first six weeks starting in September, with the Bible Studies for Life curriculum teaching specifically on the Gospel. Blake Gideon, pastor of First Baptist Church in Edmond, Okla., authored the six-session study titled, "The Unvarnished Truth."



Bob Mayfield (standing, left), Sunday School specialist with the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, listens to a question about the Connect>1 Sunday School/small groups evangelism initiative during an orientation for directors of missions at the Falls Creek Baptist Conference Center. (Photo courtesy Brian Hobbs)

Michael Kelley, LifeWay's director of groups ministry, said, "When we learned of the opportunity to align our most popular curriculum series with a strong evangelism plan, we decided God was in this and wanted to make it work."

"The six Bible Studies for Life lessons will support Oklahoma's plan, while providing an excellent study on sharing the Gospel for the 140,000 groups that will discuss them beyond Oklahoma and other Connect>1 participating states."

"It is our hope that the seeds of the Gospel will produce a spiritual harvest this fall and beyond," Kelley said.

The Oklahoma convention is promoting Soulwinning Commitment Day on Oct. 2 to its 1,800 churches, aiming for the state's Baptists to make a minimum of 100,000 Gospel presentations to Oklahomans in the ensuing weeks.

"On Oct. 2, Oklahoma Baptists will be asked to take the '3151 Challenge' as the engagement phase of the campaign begins," said Mayfield, who has partnered with BGCO evangelism leader Mike Napier in the Connect>1 initiative.

The 3151 Challenge, Mayfield said, is an opportunity for every Oklahoma Baptist to do the following during the month of October: 3) Pray for three lost friends by name, 1) learn one Gospel presentation, 5) invite five people to your group and 1) share the Gospel at least one time."

As envisioned by the BGCO: "Imagine a plan to equip and engage every church member to be a fisher of souls," the Connect>1 online resource pages state. "A simple plan that any follower of Christ can do. A basic plan that is organized through the church's Sunday School or small groups strategy to disciple members to become exactly what Jesus called His small group of disciples to be: soulwinners!"

The Gospel message undergirding the evangelism initiative is titled "One Great Hope." As described on the Connect>1 resource pages, it focuses on four points of conversation -- "One Great God, One Great Problem, One Great Hope and One Great Decision" -- drawn from Romans 5:8, which states: "But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us!"

Mayfield added that "One Great Hope," in addition to a version for mass distribution, also is available as a "k2k" (kid to kid) tract "so that a 9-year-old can share the Gospel with a friend. It definitely has the 'cool' factor."

BGCO leaders mailed Connect>1 resource kits to every Oklahoma Baptist church the first week of March.

One Oklahoma Baptist church, however, already had taken up the 3151 Challenge.

"First Baptist Church of Rosedale decided to try the 3151 Challenge in January. They did not have any resources, but the pastor [Mike Ridgway] understood the plan well enough to challenge the church to try it," Ridgway said. "One month later, they had more than 20 first-time guests and five professions of faith. This is a rural church with an attendance of about 100 people."

EVANGELISM INITIATIVE KEYED TO SMALL GROUPS (continued)

Yet Oklahoma is not alone in the Connect>1 initiative, as Baptists in other states also are participating with a similar evangelism campaign adapted to their respective conventions. Alabama, South Carolina and Mississippi Baptists were among the first states to tap into the Connect>1 resources. Mayfield said nine other state conventions also are utilizing the resources.

Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, affirmed the 3151 Challenge and the BGCO's development of the Connect>1 evangelism initiative.

"We borrowed this idea from our brothers and sisters in Oklahoma. They saw fruit from the emphasis, and we pray we will as well," Lance wrote in an article titled "Easy Arithmetic" on his blog at www.RickLance.com.

Lance praised the concept of inviting five people "to come to church. This may sound old-fashioned, but relational touches like personal invitations to church are needed now more than ever. We live in an increasingly disconnected society in terms of personal relationships. Inviting people to church is a warmhearted way of reaching others."

BGCO Executive Director-Treasurer Anthony L. Jordan said Oklahoma pastors are "excited to see the SBC partner like this. Our state conventions, associations and LifeWay have partnered together to provide evangelistic resources to the local church.

"Because of the contributions of Oklahoma Baptists to the Cooperative Program," Jordan added, "we are able to provide these resources to our churches at no cost, making all of the Connect>1 resources available to other state conventions to customize for their state."

Across the SBC, meanwhile, Mayfield said LifeWay's involvement is saving "hundreds of thousands of Cooperative Program dollars that would have otherwise been spent on developing curriculum by Oklahoma and other state conventions."

For more information about the BGCO's resources for Connect>1, visit www.bgco.org/connect1. Materials include teaching materials, leader guides, Gospel tracts and other materials suitable for mass use.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Compiled by Baptist Press senior editor Art Toalston, with reporting by the communication staff of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma. Also contributing to this article were the communications staffs of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention and the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

58TH ANNUAL WMU CELEBRATION AND ANNUAL MEETING

Sharon Greer - WMU President, MI

FENTON, MI – Michigan WMU invites all women to participate in our annual training as part of the Church Equipping Conference. On October 15, 2016, the Church Strengthening Team of the BSCM will host this conference at Cornerstone Baptist Church in Roseville, Michigan.

Registration begins at 8 am with the opening session starting at 8:30 am. Cost of this event is \$10.00 thru August 15, and \$15.00 from August 16-September 15. Registration after September 15 will not include lunch. So, register today at bscm.org/register.

Conferences that are specifically planned for women by the Women's Ministry/WMU include:

- Women Mentoring Women-Mentoring/Coaching
- Leading a Bible Study-Resources and Practical Helps
- Missions Education-A Fresh Look at Praying, Giving, and Going
- "By All Means!" Your Church Can!

This year, for the first time at the CEC, women can join together to participate in the 58th Annual WMU Celebration and Annual Meeting. Condensing this meeting to a one hour time slot means that it will be packed with testimonies, presentations and a challenge to be personally involved in missions. See a presentation of missions that are going on all over our state. Hear of opportunities to come alongside church planters. Elect the WMU Officers who will serve in the coming year. Meet and greet your leadership team who are available to help you and your church as you become more involved in missions education and being on mission in your setting.

Together as Michigan WMU and Women's Ministry, we can stand with the churches in Michigan to punch holes in the darkness.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sharon Greer is the WMU president in Michigan, Associational Secretary for the Northwest Baptist Association, and a member of the Orchard Church in Traverse City.

DRIVE-BY PRAYING

Chuck Lawless – ChuckLawless.com

WAKE FOREST, NC (BP) – Think about how much time you and your family spend in the car. Then think about how you use that time. Whatever you typically do, I challenge you to use your time to pray as you drive -- even to pray aloud as a family as you go. Think about how many places and people you pass every day for which you might do "drive-by praying":

- Other churches. How many churches do you drive by daily, but don't think about praying for them?
- Schools. It's important that somebody be praying for the teachers, the teens and the children. If you drive by a school, be that intercessor.
- Centers of other world faiths. When you see a mosque, a temple or some other religious meeting place, pray that the leaders and the people who attend there might turn to Christ. You might be the first person and family ever to pray for them.
- Hospitals. Inside those walls are people likely to be dealing with life and death. Who's lifting them to God?
- "Pockets of sin." I don't know what that might be in your community. It might be an abortion clinic, an adult entertainment venue, a gang-ridden area or another pocket of sin. I do know that prayer for that place matters.
- Bad drivers. You know, the person who cut you off in traffic. Rather than curse under your breath, why not pray for him or her instead?
- Military bases. These men and women put their lives on the line for us. We have an obligation to pray for them and their chaplain leaders.
- Unchurched neighbors. How many neighbors do you see as you drive to church on Sunday? Interceding for them is a great idea.
- Fire stations and police departments. As a former firefighter, I'm partial to this one. In fact, every siren you hear indicates somebody may be in trouble. Let that familiar wail be a call to prayer for you and your family.
- Government buildings. The apostle Paul reminded us to pray for those in authority over us (1 Timothy 2:1-2). Do that when you see government buildings and offices as you drive.
- Truck drivers. Some drive long hours and spend days away from home. Why not say a quick prayer as you pass a semi?
- Highway workers. Only God knows what might happen if every believer who passes a highway worker prays for her or him.

All of us can take this challenge. Use your drive time wisely by watching and praying. Get your family involved and I can almost guarantee that your young kids and grandkids won't miss opportunities to pray. A short ride in the car can change eternity.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chuck Lawless, on the Web at www.chucklawless.com, is a vice president and missions and evangelism professor at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

MAKING EVENTS COUNT

David B. Smith – Daily Dose Radio

FENTON, MI – It's that time of year again! The time of year when we begin planning for the Pig Festival, Apple Harvest parade, Cow Days, Cherry Blossom Festival or whatever your version of the community festival is called. But why go to all that bother? Why do we recruit volunteers, purchase supplies, make reservations, pay the fees, and put in the time? Is it really worth it?

My church participates in a local festival every year. We've been doing it for 12 consecutive years. Let me say right up front it is a lot of work for a two-day event. When this opportunity first presented itself we decided to create a food vending booth out of which we would sell grilled corn-on-the-cob. None of us are professional chefs but we felt called to be part of our community through the festival. The Lord gave us the idea and the energy to follow through.



County fairs bring communities together. (Photo courtesy Mayfield County, MI)

We created a menu with three varieties of corn-on-the-cob. The first year we had mostly lookers, not buyers and we lost money on the produce. Everybody wanted to know why the Baptist church was at the festival selling corn. But we continued to come back year after year serving the same menu and after a while people began asking for us by name. Now the festival planners expect us to be there. Around April or May when I see people in the store they say, "You're gonna be at the festival this year, right? I love your recipe."

Is praise for a mediocre grilled corn recipe reason enough to continue to go to all the trouble? The answer to that question is easy – no. So why do it? Let me give you three reasons to be engaged this year in your local event:

First, we are part of a grand company whose job it is to publish glad tidings especially in our community. One of my favorite verses from the Psalms, "The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it." (Psalm 68:11) The workers in the front of the tent are

trained to provide a gospel tract with every ear of corn. The tracts are also prominently displayed on the serving counter.

Because we are long time participants we've created relationships which often lead to gospel presentations. We usually get the first spot in the line of booths called restaurant row. This gives us a little extra room for our two grills and washing station. However, it also allows us to put up a canopy. We stock it with lawn chairs and coolers for the workers and for anyone else who wants to come by. Since we are on the end it creates easy access to the entrance. We see everyone who comes into the festival and they see us. Every year we have the opportunity to organically share the gospel with folks as they visit and take a break from the heat.

Next, we are interested in just being good neighbors. People drive by our church all the time and wonder what we're like and what we are doing behind those glass doors. Without fail every year at the festival someone comes up to me and says, "So you're the pastor of the Baptist church." Without sweating over a hot grill on a hot July day I doubt I would have ever had the opportunity to hear those words and to make a connection. The community really does want to get to know us. By being at the festival every year we've let them into our circle.

Finally, we have created strategic relationships over the years with local government leaders, police, and fire officials. They feel comfortable with us simply because they've gotten to know us through the festival. This is especially important for my congregation because we are situated in a Northern city where being a Southern Baptist is a little different. Because we've been faithfully engaged with our community it has produced many benefits for us. We are trusted. I've had opportunity to engage with city leadership on a spiritual level because my congregation was willing to put itself out there.

So is it worth it? My answer is a whole hearted yes! In so many ways the goodwill, community engagement and gospel witness really do make it all worthwhile. Would I recommend it for you? Yes! Please don't pass up an opportunity to touch lives and make a difference for eternity even if it's over a piece of grilled corn-on-the-cob.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David B. Smith is a pastor and the founder and broadcaster of Daily Dose Radio, a five minute podcast studying the Psalms verse by verse.

FIRST PERSON: MY PARENTS DIDN'T LET ME CHOOSE MY GENDER

Maggie Sandusky – Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Student

FORT WORTH, TX (BP) – There is a growing trend today that we see repeated in news headlines: Parents choosing to raise their child genderless or as the opposite gender due to the child's preference. Simply put, if a little girl says she wishes she were a boy or a little boy prefers to play with dolls, the parents seek to grant their wish.

If I had been raised in a different time, by different parents, I fear I could have been one of them.

I had two older brothers who, from my 4-10-year-old tomboy perspective, got to do a lot of pretty great things that I didn't. They didn't have to wear a shirt when they were hot, they didn't have to wear complicated dress clothes and they were in Boy Scouts. Everything about Boy Scouts seemed awesome to me -- camping, learning about animals, racing little wooden cars. I had no desire to be a Girl Scout. Large groups of girls intimidated me, and much of what Girl Scouts seemed to do was sell cookies, have sleepovers and wear mud brown. I liked to run with the boys. I remember on multiple occasions as a little girl questioning why God had to make me a girl.

Now in our culture, one option for my dilemma would be for my parents to grant my desire and either raise me as a boy or genderless so I would have time to figure out "who I am" without the pressure of nurturing.

Amid this trend, we need to first and foremost look to Scripture when engaging culture, when advising friends how to handle this or when dealing with our own children's views about their gender.

First, we must remember that God created gender (Genesis 1:27) and He created our gender to be a blessing (1 Corinthians 1:11-12). Ephesians 5:22-33 shows how God uses gender to teach us about Himself and to paint a picture of His love for the world. While there may be some aspects of being a woman that our carnal nature isn't thrilled about, such as submission, we should also acknowledge that manhood brings its own set of challenges (Ephesians 5:25, 1 Peter 3:7). The grass isn't greener on either side.

Second, we should understand that children need nurturing to understand their world and grow up to honor God (Proverbs 22:6). Any parent can think of examples of irrational requests or desires their child has expressed. When my husband was little, he would tell people he wanted to be a fire truck when he grew up. As silly as it seems, it is about as reasonable for his parents to start keeping him in the garage and paint him red as it would have been for my parents to raise me as a boy. Mothers and women in the church should help girls learn to be women of God. Men in the church and fathers, likewise, need to model and teach manhood to boys (Titus 2).

Third, we should acknowledge the wide spectrum of femininity and masculinity and not seek to force stereotypical preferences on our children. Dorcas was crafty (Acts 9:39) while Rachel was a shepherdess. David was a fierce warrior (1 Samuel 18:7) but he also liked poetry (Psalm 23). Ultimately, I'm glad my mom made me wear a shirt, taught me to dress like a lady, and didn't fight to let me be a Boy Scout. I'm also glad my dad took time to show me outdoor skills and that my mom gave in to my begging to join the pole vault team, though she was sure I'd break my neck. My parents nurtured my femininity without forcing me into stereotypes.

I fear that many children raised counter to their God-given gender will, with age, question what their parents were thinking. Just like a parent who allows their child to play with matches, the excuse that it's what they wanted, or it wasn't culturally acceptable to tell them "no," won't cut it. As believers, we need to be loving enough to tell our children and our culture "no" when we see them destroying themselves.

Ultimately, a few years of perceived injustice in my life gave way to being very glad that I am not a boy and enjoying my God-given gender. I love Pinterest and I'm always up for a pedicure, but I still love being outdoors and doing physically challenging activities. I couldn't claim to be a girly-girl, but I've come to realize and to love that it is simply not the kind of girl that God made me.



Maggie Sandusky is glad her parents didn't raise her as a boy, though she liked boy adventures, and still does, such as rappelling. (Photo courtesy Baptist Press)



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Maggie Sandusky is a master of divinity student, with a concentration in women's studies, at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. This commentary first appeared at the seminary's Biblical Woman website (www.biblicalwoman.com). For the Southern Baptist Convention's 2014 resolution "On Transgender Identity."

MINISTERING TO OUR DEAF COMMUNITY

Phyllis Harbaugh – Mission Service Corps



FENTON, MI – The Deaf Ministry here in Michigan never tires of sharing Christ at every opportunity. The “Sign Choir” was invited to minister to five senior centers during Christmas and Easter. They bring the songs of faith to life as they sing using their hands. Audiences love the enthusiasm expressed, finding encouragement in their own lives.

Since the first of the year the choir has participated in two cultural exchanges and one citywide cultural community event raising awareness to the deaf community. Their message is deafness touches all people groups around the world. More importantly, they amazed attendees at how much deaf people can enjoy life, especially music.

One area of ministry that is growing is to the Iraqi deaf refugees. Sign language classes have become quite popular. Plans are to begin a new class soon as well as one on American culture to help families acclimate to their new land. Hearing families are also building strong connections with instructors as they teach the entire family to communicate together. Through each opportunity, the ministry is able to be the face and hands of God.

During one of the monthly fellowships across the state a deaf man who had been attending for some time committed his life to follow Christ. It was a time of celebration and reminder of how important it is to create these times of gathering and worship each month. In addition, four from the deaf group served in Warren, MI with the Disaster Relief team serving dinner to the teams working in the community.

Anyone interested in being involved can contact us at joybellsinger@wowway.com or call 586-615-4607.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Phyllis Harbaugh and her husband are part of the Mission Service Corps (MSC) serving the deaf community across Michigan as volunteers. Memorial Deaf Ministries (MDM) 12651 Clinton River Road, Sterling Heights, MI 48313.

8TH ANNUAL BIKER BLESSING & MEMORIAL CANCER RIDE

Darrel Manuel – MRBC F.A.I.T.H. Riders



GARDEN CITY, MI – On Saturday May 21st the Merriman Road Baptist Church F.A.I.T.H. Riders will be hosting the 8th annual Biker Blessing and Memorial Cancer Ride. In 2008 three members of MRBC felt the calling of God to start a motorcycle ministry. After praying and seeking God's will in this, He led them to F.A.I.T.H. Riders, a national motorcycle ministry that was started in a Southern Baptist Church in Lakeland, FL. In the April of 2009, the chapter was commissioned and went to work. They held their first Biker Blessing in May of that year and had about 35 motorcyclists participate. In 2014 there were an estimated 258,413 registered motorcycles in the state, making Michigan the 9th largest in the country for registered bikes.

As Christian bikers, this chapter is reaching into this huge mission field that is right in their own backyard. Unlike other "Bike Blessings", Merriman Road Church focus is on the motorcyclist, not the motorcycle. "Our goal is to show the love of Jesus to each and everyone who steps foot on our parking lot that day. In addition to the 'biker blessing', we will have door prizes, food, music, a bike wash" said Darrel Manuel, Chaplain/director for the Merriman Road Baptist Church F.A.I.T.H. Riders. A 40" flat screen TV will be given away using the 3-Minute Story raffle. The 3-Minute Story raffle requires participants to sit through a three minute story to receive a raffle ticket. Those are a precious 3 minutes where we share the gospel presentation.

This annual event is part of the National F.A.I.T.H. Riders. After the Biker Blessing event, the Merriman Road Church Chapter will embark on a 105 mile round ride through Irish Hills, Michigan, a beautiful area full of lakes and rolling hills. The ride is a fundraiser in support of the Pediatric Brain Tumor Foundation Ride for Kids. In 2010 our Merriman Baptist and the chapter were rocked by cancer when two members lost brothers to lung cancer. One was the F.A.I.T.H. Chapter director who was diagnosed with stage 4 throat cancer, and the other was a sweet young boy named Matthew diagnosed with a terminal brain tumor. This inspired what is now called the Matthew Brotherton Memorial Cancer Ride, The ride cost is \$20 single and \$25 with a passenger. All the proceeds will go to the Pediatric Brain Tumor Foundation Ride for Kids.



Motorcycles shining brightly in the morning sun at the 8th Annual Biker Blessing. (Photo courtesy Merriman Road Baptist Church)

For further information you can visit the website at www.mrbcfait riders.com or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/mrbcfait riders, follow us on twitter [@MRBCFAITHRIDERS](https://twitter.com/MRBCFAITHRIDERS) or you can email director Darrel Manuel at ChaplainD13@gmail.com.



Christian bikers begin to arrive for the annual ride. (Photo courtesy Merriman Road Baptist Church)



Though rain moves in it can't stop these bikers. (Photo courtesy Merriman Road Baptist Church)



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Darrel Manuel was born and raised in Michigan, graduated Garden City High School in 1986, married his wife Theresa in the fall of 1994, has 2 sons - one 20 and one 17. Employee of Ford Mo.Co. (Millwright). Saved and baptized in the spring of 2001 at 32 years of age, at Merriman Rd Baptist Church, served in many capacities within the church, currently youth worker, and Chaplain/Director of the MRBC F.A.I.T.H. Riders Chapter, Commissioned as a SBC Chaplain in 2010, He is a LifeChangers board member, Mayors Committee for Underprivileged Children board member, Ride for Kids Task Force Member, Wolverine State Victory Riders Victory Motorcycle Club Chaplain, and Bambi Lake advisory team member.

AN INSTRUMENT OF GOD TO THE CHIPPEWA

Bill Haas – Baptist State Convention of Michigan



Bill Haas dressed to stand before a group of Michigan Native Americans. (Photo courtesy Bill Haas)

SAULT SAINTE MARIE, MI – Michigan and the surrounding Great Lakes region is the homeland of the Anishinaabe people. Anishinaabe includes the Chippewa, Ottawa, and Potawatomi people. In the 1830s, they were forcibly expelled from Michigan and northern Indiana to reservations in Kansas and Oklahoma. Through God's call and miraculous grace, Bill Haas has been brought back to the land of his forefathers with the message of God's love for his people. Haas is serving as a North American Mission Board (NAMB) Church Planter in Sault Sainte Marie, home of the largest tribe in the state of Michigan: the Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians. He says, "I am so thrilled to be an instrument in God's hands here in Michigan."

Bill Haas is an enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation of Oklahoma. God blessed him with something that very few of his people enjoy: a father and a mother who knew and walked with Jesus. His parents raised him to walk with Christ. Haas says, "My heart breaks for my 'earthly' people because so many are lost and without a knowledge of Jesus. My heart breaks for my people because of the power and control that Satan has over them, especially through the extremely high suicide rate." Even though his parents were followers of Jesus, there was alcoholism in his extended family. He says, "There are so many tools that the enemy uses to blind man's heart and mind to the Gospel message of salvation."

Haas used to ask his uncle why he drank so much, "His response was always the same. He would say that he drank 'to hide the pain'. Native or Non-Native, there is so much pain here." Haas' uncle was a veteran, and saw and experienced troubling things in combat. Like many of the men in his family, they followed the warrior tradition and fought in the armed forces. Haas says, "Now only Jesus can heal the pain and sorrow of his heart. He alone is the Great Physician and the Gospel is the medicine for our souls. My uncle represents so many just like him, seemingly stuck in desperation."

In Sault Sainte Marie, there is a lady in Haas' ministry named Deborah. Her background is Chippewa and her family comes from the Ontario, Canada side of the border. She came to the Lord Jesus as a young child. She was given a free book about Jesus and she has read it many times. The Christian life became even more real on her son's first birthday. On that day her husband, James, also gave his heart to Jesus. Her children, now ages 19 and 28 still recall their mother reading that book to them over and over again, and telling them about the love of Jesus. Her dedication to the Gospel message has found its way into the lives of her children.

Deborah also recalls her native family that lives on the Thessalon Reserve in Ontario, Canada. She grew up visiting there with her grandmother, playing on the rocks along the lakeshore, and getting to be with aunts, uncles, and cousins. Her heart aches for the terrible experiences her family has suffered on the First Nations reserve in Thessalon. She prays and desires that they would be introduced to Jesus' love and salvation. Deborah pleads, "how important it is to introduce Jesus and salvation in love to these reserves, giving hope for a better life through Jesus. It's a wonderful gift to be saved and even more to also have salvation groomed and molded in love. It is certainly a lifelong journey for all." Haas says like Deborah, this is his heart's calling as well. He adds, "Your prayers and support keep our feet moving one in front of the other as we work to share Christ in the darkness."



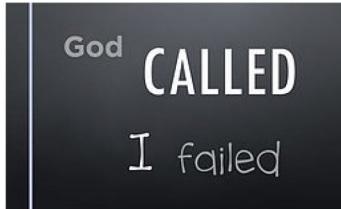
One of the highlights each year is taking Native American youth to Warrior Leadership Summit which promotes evangelism, discipleship, and spiritual awakening among our young Native American people. (Photo courtesy Bill Haas)



Hanging out with some of young men before church. (Photo courtesy Bill Haas)

FIRST PERSON: GOD CALLED, I FAILED

Terry Wilson – Harmony Baptist Church



MT. PLEASANT, MI – It was an unusually warm fall Saturday afternoon. It was my day off. I was free from the labor of stress of a normal workday, and free from the mind-crunching ordeal of college classes. It was just myself accompanied by my two children, both toddlers. I decided not to prepare a meal that day, but instead to treat us to some fast food deliciousness packed with yummy fattening calories. I was standing in line waiting for my chance to order. My patience by this time was wearing thin. Asking two toddlers to remain quiet and still was an impossibility. I was trying to keep these two unruly children in line. I didn't care about any other people around me, and a smile could not be found on my face. By this time, I wanted to get my food, sit down, and maybe, just maybe, just enjoy that yummy calorie packed meal. I did not have any desire to converse with anyone around me.

Little did I know that someone else there in the restaurant that day did not have that same desire. A man in line behind me decided he wanted to talk with me. As he attempted to engage me in conversation, I just put a fake smile on my face and nodded in an attempt not to be rude or disrespectful. By the time I had received my food, however, surprisingly I found myself engaged in a conversation with this man.

We spoke of children. We spoke of jobs. I found I could relate with this man and his story. I admit that I was intrigued and wanted to just listen to him. He spoke in a manner that was captivating. As he shared with me his story, he began to describe how God had impacted his life. I indeed was captivated. I wanted more. He shared with me love. He shared that God loved all regardless of the life we lived or how bad we failed in life. He told me and showed me that it was Christ who empowered him. By this time, he had my undivided attention. Miraculously, my two children were sitting in the booth quietly and content with their happy meal and toy. The kids did not need or desire my attention. So, with this man having all my attention, he led me to accepting a savior, giving up control of my life and giving it to Jesus Christ.

To this day, it amazes me how two unruly kids suddenly were calm and content, and in that moment, a strange man saw in me a struggle. He knew he needed to speak with me, and share that wonderful message of love and grace. God calmed the storm that day; a storm that raged in two toddlers, and a storm that raged in the form of bitterness within me.

I was a single dad raising two children out of wedlock, but God still called me into His loving family that day. Little did I know, I would later fail Him. To this day, I am unaware of this guy's name, but I know he led me to the Lord which changed my life forever. He invited us to Peoples Baptist Church that Sunday which started my life-long obsession with scripture, and would eventually awaken me to His call on my life.

I served at that church for a couple years until I moved north. When I moved, I immediately started visiting churches, looking for that "perfect church" that felt like home. I was looking for the same connection that I had at Peoples Baptist Church. I was unsuccessful in my search. I used the excuse that "until I find a church that feels like home, until I feel that connection, I'm not going". I eventually stopped looking and soon found myself fallen back into the world. That's when I failed God.

On a Saturday afternoon unusually warm, and much like the day I first accepted Christ, I found myself on my knees. I had suddenly realized I was at the lowest point in my life. I believe God brought me to my knees to the point where the only way to climb was up. He spoke to my heart that day and told me "it's not the connection with the people or the church you seek, it's that connection with me, and the best place to get that connection is in my house". I immediately rededicated my life to Christ and to serving Him.

From that day forward, I went to church and invested myself to Him and His work. A year later, I met my beautiful wife, Melanie, who also had adopted two children. We eventually married and God blessed us with a miracle, a baby boy! You see, my wife did not think she could ever have children. However, God revealed to us His power.

After a few years serving in His church, I felt the Lord's calling on my life, but I denied it and used Moses' excuse, "Why me? I'm not good at talking to people", then I said, "but I already failed you once. What if I fail at preaching?" Many things came into my head. I was reminded of my life of sin before I knew Christ. Satan tried to get in my head. But, God said to me, "my grace as well as my forgiveness is more than sufficient, I called you, I can use you." God was not taking 'no' for an answer. So I replied, "I will follow you." I took my love for scripture and enrolled in a Grace Bible College. I am now almost four years into ministry.



Pastor Terry Wilson with his family. (Photo courtesy Harmony Baptist Church)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Terry Wilson is the pastor of Harmony Baptist Church in Mt. Pleasant.

FROM SCARS TO BEAUTY

Tricia Johnson – Warren Woods Baptist Church

Michigan Baptist women gathered over a weekend to learn how God can use the deepest scars to transform lives into the greatest beauty. It was all part of the "Scars to Beauty" conference held at the Warren Woods Baptist Church in Warren, Michigan, April 15th and 16th. The message of the conference was that scars can be overcome and lives can be transformed into beautiful women through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The event was filled with a roster of women whose personal testimonies bore witness to God's transforming power. One of the speakers, Toni Cooper shared that her mission is "to help women look in the mirror and love the person that they see". Cooper shared her personal story of how scars have been changed, and are still being changed, into God's beautiful work in her own life. She also led the group of women in a series of activities that taught the process of changing their scars, and reminded them that it was a process, not an instant fix.



Women offering praise to our Lord at the Scars to Beauty conference. (Photo courtesy Warren Woods Baptist Church)

Another keynote speaker was Julie Ziglar Norman of the Zig Ziglar ministry. Ziglar Norman shared many of her own life battles and her realization that in each and every one, God was there. It was clear across the room that many of the women were personally touched by her stories.

In addition to the speakers, Cassandra Perkins shared her personal story of struggles with depression and thoughts of suicide. The group also heard testimonies from women who had attended previous conferences and the impact they have had on their lives. They shared how great it was to have an event like this where women can come together, connect, and learn how to grow out of their own life struggles.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tricia Johnson, reporting from Warren Woods Baptist Church in Warren, MI, part of the Motor Cities Metro Association. She is Women's Ministry Leader at New Life Baptist Church.

AROUND THE STATE: CHURCH EVENTS & STAFF CHANGES

Church Musical

A church musical will take place on May 15th at 3:30p at Gateway Baptist Church located 5603 S. Henry Ruff Rd., Westland, MI 48186. Gateway would also like to ask for choirs, gospel groups, soloists, musicians, or praise dancers to help us in this music ministry. We are looking for your support as Gateway rebuilds the ministry to serve the community and members. Please contact interim pastor Stan Sargent at stanses.1@gmail.com or (734) 680-2917 for more information.

Evangelism Training

Genessee Baptist Association office on May 17, 2016 at 9:30am. Speaker: Joel Southerland. Register at www.bscm.org/register.

Free Tickets

Free family and group tickets to visit the Henry Ford Museum and the Greenfield Village are available at the GDBA office. For more information, contact the Greater Detroit Baptist Association at (313) 533-2663.

SOUTHERN BAPTISTS & THE POWER OF GOD

Ronnie Floyd – President, Southern Baptist Convention

SPRINGDALE, AR (BP) – Far too many pastors, leaders, laypersons and churches live life and do ministry without the power of God. Spiritual mediocrity leads to a lukewarm spiritual condition. Jesus severely rebuked a lukewarm life and church.

An honest evaluation of ourselves as Southern Baptists

The Scripture warns us against deceiving ourselves. Modern-day leadership warns against leaders who are not aware of their limitations. Both can happen personally, in a church, and even to a convention like Southern Baptists.

Almost 74 percent of our churches are plateaued or declining in attendance. The number of people we have reached and baptized has been declining for a number of years. In fact, this last year, we reached the same number of people as in 1948. Additionally, we are now witnessing our global missions personnel diminish by over 1,000 people, more than 900 of which are God-called missionaries.

Simultaneously, many churches are filled with schisms and divisions. Our Southern Baptist family comprised of churches, associations, state conventions and national entities has continual challenges both internally and externally as we strive to walk in unity.

What are the answers to these challenges and others not mentioned?

The power of God

I will never forget what Dr. Adrian Rogers and Bob Sorrell, senior associate pastor of Bellevue Church in Cordova, Tenn., told me years ago: You cannot spiritualize management problems.

I agree with their words 100 percent! Some challenges we face in our churches and within our convention are management issues that cannot be fixed by trying to spiritualize them. This only leads to further and deeper problems.

Yet, I am convinced that our greatest problem today is a lack of deep conviction of our need for the power of God. Far too many of us are living life, providing leadership, conducting and attending worship services, and doing ministry without the power of God. This has become so glaring within our churches and convention that we must not be deceived by where we are and what we do.

Activity is not spirituality. And spirituality by itself does not result in effective leadership. We need spiritual leadership! An effective spiritual leader maximizes their giftedness and is ignited by the power of the Holy Spirit at the same time.

When the power of God is released

I am convinced the power of God is released upon us when we walk in obedience to Jesus. Although this is not an exhaustive list, I humbly submit a few ways we can become recipients of His power together.

1. Preaching the Word of God

A practice I began years ago is standing upon 1 Corinthians 2:4-5 in prayer before I teach and preach the Word of God. It says, "My speech and my proclamation were not with persuasive words of wisdom but with a powerful demonstration by the Spirit, so that your faith might not be based on men's wisdom but on God's power." Oh, how I want to preach God's Word faithfully, but I also want it to be with a demonstration of God through me.

Eloquence of speech or cleverness of mind is nice, but without God's power upon the preacher, they are empty. Charles Spurgeon knew deeply his need for the Holy Spirit in preaching. In fact, Spurgeon stated that he or any other preacher were "only skeletons without the Holy Ghost."

Too much preaching today is done by nothing more than skeletons absent from the power of God's Holy Spirit. Pastors, preach the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit. Crying out to God in prayer is a major part of your preparation in preaching. Do not minimize it. Laypersons, call upon God to anoint the preaching of your pastor with His Spirit.

2. Sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ

We read these words in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek." The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation.

When my evangelism professor, Roy Fish, taught personal evangelism at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, he talked about how the power of God is always commensurate with our sharing the Gospel. As he taught us this from Acts 1:8, he said God's power will go to the level of our willingness to witness for Jesus Christ.

By the present state of affairs in our convention, the evidence is clear and convicting: We need an awakening in our commitment to personal and church evangelism. The power of God will go to the same level that we are willing to be witnesses practicing evangelism.

SOUTHERN BAPTISTS & THE POWER OF GOD (continued)

3. Crying Out to God in prayer

Acts 4:31 says, "When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak God's message with boldness." Prayer was dominant in the New Testament church. The power of God shook the place where they were meeting because of prayer!

The church has never needed to pray more than today. We need the power of God to shake us and shake the churches of America! This will lead to a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit and we will speak the message of God to this world with boldness.

We need to cease giving more time to promoting the church in our worship services than we give to calling out to God in prayer. No great move of God ever occurs that is not preceded by the extraordinary prayer of God's people.

4. Walking in unity

The power of God comes upon the church that walks in unity. Jesus said in John 17 the world will only know we are His by the oneness we have together. Walking in unity is imperative to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon us.

Before the outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost, they were in one accord. The power of God is released upon a church when a church walks in unity. The power of God is released upon a family when they walk in unity.

The Southern Baptist Convention needs to recommit to walking in unity. When we are unified in our doctrine and mission, we will position ourselves for the release of the Holy Spirit's power upon us.

This is why

This is why we all need to come together in St. Louis, Mo., on June 14-15, 2016. We need to agree, unite and pray. We need the power of God more than ever before. Please adjust your schedule, find the funds, and make your way to St. Louis.

Let's refuse to do ministry apart from the power of God.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

This column first appeared on Ronnie Floyd's website, www.ronniefloyd.com. Ronnie Floyd is president of the Southern Baptist Convention and senior pastor of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas.

GREEAR ENDORSEMENTS RAISE QUESTIONS

Compiled by Jennifer Davis Rash

A YouTube video promoting J.D. Greear for president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) has raised concern. The question is the participation of three SBC entity presidents who appear to be endorsing Greear's election. The "It's Tricky" video is a parody of the late 80s rap song with the same name by Run-DMC. The concern emerged when Greear — pastor of The Summit Church in Durham, North Carolina, and a leading member of Acts 29, a church network that rejects non-Calvinist church planters and solely promotes Calvinistic governance — began circulating a promotional video on March 14 as a campaign ad for SBC president.



YouTube video promoting J.D. Greear for president of the Southern Baptist Convention

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R2P2tqFIMnQ>

The use of social media for individuals who have agreed to be nominated for SBC president is a relatively new move by nominees, as is straight-up endorsements by entity heads on social media. Greear will be nominated by Jimmy Scroggins, pastor of First Baptist Church, West Palm Beach, Florida, at the 2016 SBC Annual Meeting to be held in St. Louis, Missouri, June 14–15. Also being nominated are Steve Gaines, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee; and David Crosby, pastor of First Baptist Church, New Orleans. Gaines will be nominated by Johnny Hunt, pastor of First Baptist Church, Woodstock, Georgia. Crosby will be nominated by Fred Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans.

While a number of Southern Baptist personalities appear in Greear's video, it is David Platt, president of the International Mission Board; Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission; and, Danny Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest,

GREEAR ENDORSEMENTS RAISE QUESTIONS (continued)

North Carolina, who are of concern. Platt denies he knowingly endorsed Greear for president of the SBC, stating he was not aware Greear's request for a video clip was for the purpose of creating a campaign ad. Platt responded to an IMB trustee via email March 23, explaining, "while I was overseas in the Middle East, J.D. asked me to shoot a 2-second video saying, 'It's tricky,'" a phrase repeated throughout the video. But Platt said Greear did not divulge how the clip would be used. "I had no idea what it was for," Platt clarified, although he said he knew beforehand Greear had been nominated.

Platt said it was only when he came back into the United States that he heard about Greear's use of his image and words for the electioneering piece. "Please be assured (and please assure anyone who asks you about it) that I am not personally (and we are certainly not organizationally) endorsing anyone for SBC president," Platt wrote, noting he would "be thrilled" to serve alongside any "faithful Southern Baptist pastor who might be nominated to serve in this important role."

Platt also noted apparent disappointment with how Greear's use of him in a campaign video had created an unnecessary distraction, saying "It's definitely frustrating to come back to issues like this after a couple of weeks overseas, seeing massive needs among unreached refugees who are suffering and dying, and spending concentrated time with our front-line leaders around the world discussing how we can take the gospel to them. 'May God give us grace together across the SBC to keep our focus on that which matters most, here in the U.S. and around the world.'"

Akin said he did not think "being an entity head" should prohibit or prevent anyone "from expressing their support of a candidate or several candidates." "I told J.D. ... I thought he would do an excellent job," Akin explained to The Alabama Baptist, noting that at the time of his endorsement no other candidates had been declared. Greear was announced as a candidate March 2, Gaines on March 9 and Crosby on March 24.

"Steve Gaines is also a close friend and has been so for many years," Akin said. "I do not know David Crosby well, but I was grateful for his willingness to nominate Fred Luter as the president of the SBC (in 2011). I have no doubt that each of these men would serve our convention of churches well." Akin said his top priority is that the SBC president be "passionately committed to theological integrity, as embodied in the Baptist Faith & Message 2000, North American church planting and international missions." Attempts to reach Moore for his response to appearing in the video were unsuccessful. An ERLC representative responded to the Tennessee Baptist and Reflector that Moore was "unavailable."

SBC Executive Committee, generally seen as an honest broker for promoting and protecting the interests of SBC churches, will not weigh in on the issue. Executive Committee President Frank Page told the Louisiana Baptist Message via email, "Southern Baptist history is illuminating. At various times, entity heads served as SBC president. At other times, they nominated SBC presidents or commented on SBC presidential nominees." He added that it was a free speech issue, something the Executive Committee had "never attempted to regulate" to his knowledge. "I don't anticipate that changing anytime soon." Page also said social media is changing the medium, but not the "practice of Southern Baptists speaking their minds in an active exchange of ideas." "This all seems healthy," he said. "Can it be distracting? That would seem to depend on the spirit in which it is done."

EDITOR'S NOTE

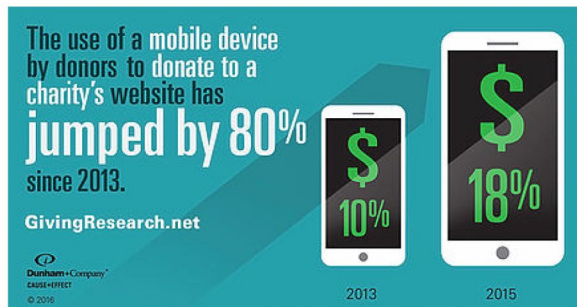
This story was a joint project by the Association of State Baptist Publications. Contributing to the report were Will Hall, editor of the Louisiana Baptist Message; Lonnie Wilkey, editor of the Tennessee Baptist and Reflector; and Neisha Roberts, editorial production coordinator for The Alabama Baptist (TAB). The story was compiled by Jennifer Davis Rash, executive editor of TAB.

ONE OUT OF FIVE DONORS HAS GIVEN USING MOBILE DEVICES

Steve Yount – A. Larry Ross Communications

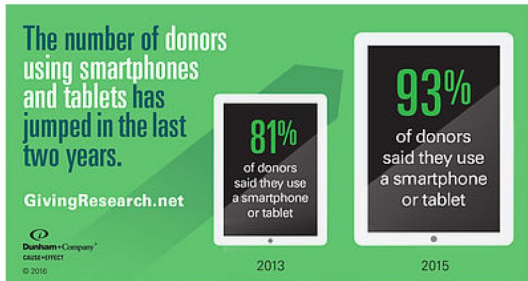
DALLAS, TX – The use of a mobile device by donors to give to a charity's website has jumped 80 percent since 2013, according to a survey commissioned by Dunham+Company and conducted by Campbell Rinker. Nearly 1 out of 5 donors (18 percent) surveyed in September 2015 said they have used their mobile device to give to a charity's website, up from just 10 percent in a similar survey two years before. Although the largest jump was among donors younger than 40 (9 percent in 2013 to 21 percent in 2015), even the segment of donors 60 and older nearly doubled, increasing from 7 percent in 2013 to 13 percent in 2015.

Overall, smartphone usage increased significantly among donors. In 2013, 62 percent said they used a smartphone and in 2015, 79 percent said they did. The biggest increase came among those ages 48-65 -- 44 percent in 2013 to 78 percent in 2015. Use of mobile tablets by donors also jumped from 33 percent in 2013 to 51 percent in 2015. Overall, only 7 percent of donors said they don't use a smartphone or mobile tablet compared to 19 percent in 2013. Even the oldest generation of donors (66 and up) has increased in its use of smartphones and mobile tablets. Smartphone usage among this generation grew from 37 percent in 2013 to 56 percent in 2015, and mobile tablet usage more than doubled, jumping from 20 percent in 2013 to 44 percent in 2015. Ten percent also said they have used their mobile device to give a gift to a charity.



ONE OUT OF FIVE DONORS HAS GIVEN USING MOBILE DEVICES (continued)

"What this study makes clear is that the adoption of smart technology by donors has really jumped from 2013, as nearly all donors are using some sort of smart device, with nearly 8 out of 10 using a smartphone," said Rick Dunham, President and CEO of Dunham+Company, which consults with nonprofits on their fundraising and marketing needs. "What is especially telling is that donors are increasingly using their mobile devices to make donations on a charity's website. This makes it all the more imperative for a charity (church) to have a mobile responsive website and giving form."



The Dunham+Company study was part of a Campbell Rinker Donor Confidence Survey conducted Sept. 9-11, 2015 among 400 U.S. adult donors who had given at least \$20 in the previous year. The online responses were weighted by age to reflect the general U.S. population per the 2010 census. The margin of error was plus or minus 4.6 percent at the 95 percent confidence level.

For the complete findings from the study, please visit <http://www.givingresearch.net>.

BILLY BOB WINGNUT

Tim Patterson – BSCM Executive Director/Treasurer

For the sake of the story let's call him Billy Bob Wingnut. He was born and reared in Iron County, Michigan and has never ventured farther south than a hunting camp in the Pines region of North Central Michigan. The one exception being, he did take his family to Cedar Point in Ohio, so that, in his opinion, makes him a world traveler. Everything he knows and does comes from the combined learning experiences he has accumulated from the people and surroundings of his Northern Michigan hamlet.

He drives a four-wheel-drive truck that has for its major color "bondo-pink" and carries a four-wheeler ATV in the back that is worth more than the truck. He pays more for his annual hunting lease than he did for the truck and ATV combined. Just a few days ago he decided that he really wanted and needed a new Ford F-250 4x4. He had spotted one at the Ford dealership and knew his buddy that he went to high school with was now a salesman there and would give him a "Yooper" deal.

He took the day off from work and loped his old clunker over to Marquette and pulled into the lot where a fleet of brand new 2016 model trucks were waiting his selection. One glistening gem after the other were lined up like ladies in a beauty pageant just waiting his inspection, but his mind was already made up. The bright red one with an engine big enough to pull a locomotive and wheels all shiney and bright, was the only girl for him. Her curves were as supple and smooth as the Boone and Crockett qualifying deer mount that hung proudly over the fireplace in his den. As he walked around her, she flashed with the passion and appeal of a thousand WWF pay-per-view programs. She exuded an excitement in him that could almost not be contained. She was the only one he had looked at that brought tears to his eyes. He knew she was the one for him and he had to have her. No waiting. Now or never!



2016 Ford F250 Pickup truck (Photo courtesy Ford Motor Company)

His high school chum guided him into his office and started drawing up the papers that he would have to sign. There were at least a dozen places for his full signature and many more for his initials. It was at that very moment Billy Bob told his friend that he really didn't want to sign a piece of paper, but that he just wanted to take her home for a year or so and see if this was what he really wanted. He wanted to make sure that she would do well in the woods of the U.P. and that a good trial run for a number of months would be the best proving ground. Besides, he really loved this truck and wanted to prove it would all work out. His friend, looking incredulous said, "Listen Billy Bob, if you want to take her home you have to commit to being responsible for her and sign on the dotted line." "But dude, what difference does a piece of paper make if I really love her?" responded Billy Bob.

BILLY BOB WINGNUT (continued)

You might be saying, "No one would be so foolish as to try to buy something as expensive and as important as a new vehicle without a commitment in writing." Yet over my 40 plus years of ministry I heard a myriad of individuals tell me, "Well if we really love each other, what difference does a piece of paper matter? We're just going to try it out for a couple of years." Friends, a marriage relationship is far more important and of greater worth than any four wheel drive. If a car dealer demands a written commitment for something as temporal as a vehicle, shouldn't you demand as much for that which is supposed to last for a lifetime? Trucks and cars come and go. Marriages should not! Girls, the next time Billy Bob Wingnut tries to tell you that a piece of paper really does not matter, tell him you are not in this for an extended test drive. Either sign on the dotted line or find yourself some other ride. "I'm worth a lot more than a truck and we will have a written commitment."



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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

NEW CHURCH BEGINS AT AN ICE CREAM STAND

Tony Lynn – BSCM State Director of Missions



Ice cream stands are reopening up all over Michigan. It's an annual tradition. Mom & Pop stands clean their windows. Signs out front say something like, "Two for one sundaes on Saturday." Parents with bicycles corral kids as they coach them on the flavors. Elderly people who once visited the stands 60 years ago in worn black & white saddle oxfords request the same ice cream they've tasted for 6 decades. It's an American scene.

One day, three pastors with their families in tow coincidentally showed up at an ice cream stand on the other side of town. Pastor Countyseat licked his melting chocolate cone as quickly as he could. Pastor Tradition sipped his hot, black coffee boasting that he hated ice cream. Pastor Hipster stirred his special order smoothie supplemented with spinach and protein powder. What happened next was incredible.

Each pastor made his own observations about people in the crowd. The pastors took a quick eyesight survey. They guessed at what people groups lived in the community. They listened for the languages spoken. They looked for indicators at how well the families were doing. Before they knew it, the three pastors talked about how this community needed a church. Then they asked, "What next?"

Pastor Countyseat said, "I will go home and register my church on <http://sendme.namb.net/involve-my-church> and you guys can do the same." He added, "I learned that once we contact the North American Mission Board that we will receive access to all kinds of resources."

Pastor Tradition tipped back the last of his lukewarm coffee and rubbed his lips with the back of his wrist. He retorted, "I don't have a computer or one of those intelligent phones. You guys can register for me; but I will host all of the meetings at my church after you enlist leaders to help us plant this new church."

Pastor Hipster chuckled and said, "I've got all of us covered. I registered all of us on my smartphone while you two were talking." He added, "What's more I sent an email to Tony Lynn, at tony@bscm.org. He's all things church starting. I told him what we're doing and invited him to meet with us."

As the three pastors and their families gathered to say their goodbyes, Pastor Tradition informed all the wives, children, and grandchildren about the plans for planting a church. Smiles spread across every face, some with tracks of dried ice cream over their lips and at the corner of their mouths.

Without a word, Pastor Hipster joined hands with his wife and children, and then another clasped the hand of the next person. A solemn prayer circle formed beside the 4 freshly painted blue picnic tables.

Pastor Countyseat prayed, "Lord, we thank you for bringing us here today. We don't know all the answers yet; but Lord we know your heart. You want a church for everyone. By this time next year, Lord, when Patterson's Ice Cream Stand reopens, it's our desire to have a new church planter and a new church planted in this part of town. Thank you Lord for creating a partnership between our three churches, the Baptist State Convention of Michigan, the North American Mission Board, and us. It's in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen."



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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.

OUR MISSION IS OUR HEART

Mike Durbin – BSCM State Director of Evangelism

I ♥ My Church

(Courtesy Harmony Baptist Church)

It is exciting to see and hear what God is doing in churches across our state. I recently had the privilege of representing the Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM) at the grand opening of Harmony Baptist Church's new worship center in Jackson and celebration of their 57th anniversary as a church. The new building was packed as people gathered to celebrate and thank God for what He has done. Both the current pastor, Rod Walker, and the former pastor, Chuck Turner, brought inspiring messages. Together, these two men have served the church for the last 23 years.

Rod and his wife Kelley began attending the Harmony Church in 1994, at the invitation of their children's babysitter. Chuck was the pastor back then and he sensed very early that God had his hand on Rod. He says, "Rod reminded me a lot of myself. He tried

every excuse he could for why he shouldn't be in the ministry. He did a lot of jobs around the church, but none satisfied the calling God had on him. God wanted him to serve as pastor." When Chuck left to serve as a Director of Missions, Harmony asked Rod to fill the pulpit while they searched for a new pastor. "I was 34 years old when I came here," Rod says. "I started as an usher, then they asked me to pray. It wasn't long until the church asked me to preach. The church sensed my call before I did," Rod says. "I did pulpit supply - running from God."

He was asked to submit his resume to the Pastor Search Team. He didn't even have a resume. He had been working for the last 25 years in the printing business. Despite what he calls his lack of experience and education, the church called him as their pastor in March of 2004. Rod says, "God called me. I went through a lot of fear and spiritual struggles only to realize God didn't call me because of my ability. It was my availability." That availability has been used by God. It was evident at the Grand Opening and church anniversary.

Construction on the new building began when a group from Texas called to volunteer from Christian Builders. They arrived in June of 2015 and spent 6 weeks doing the rough-in phase of the building. The team of 14 couples ranged in age from 63 to 88. Pastor Rod says, "They were one of the most inspiring groups I have ever worked with."

Two weeks after the Grand Opening, the church celebrated again as 10 people publicly proclaimed their faith in Christ and followed Him in baptism. Nine people joined the church by Statement of Faith, and three returned. Pastor Rod tells about one little girl who backed out of being baptized at the last minute. As a result, her mother who recently started attending the church, decided to profess her faith in Christ and get baptized with her daughter.

"Our mission and our heart is simple: to reach the lost for Christ. That has been our mission for the last 57 years. We are thankful for what God has done. We are grateful for our new building, but it's not about the building. We are here to meet the needs of people and make Christianity personal for those who come. Advancing the Kingdom is foundational to our ministry at Harmony Baptist Church."



Construction of new building begins in 2015. (Courtesy Harmony Baptist Church)



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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



CLASSIFIEDS

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.

Help Needed With Church Music Ministry

A church musical will take place on May 15th at 3:30p at Gateway Baptist Church located 5603 S. Henry Ruff Rd., Westland, MI 48186. Gateway would also like to ask for choirs, gospel groups, soloists, musicians, or praise dancers to help us in this music ministry. We are looking for your support as Gateway rebuilds the ministry to serve the community and members. Please contact interim pastor Stan Sargent at stanses.1@gmail.com or (734) 680-2917 for more information.

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.

Student Pastor Needed

Oakland Woods Baptist Church is currently seeking a Student Pastor to lead our Jr./Sr. High Ministries. This is a full or part-time position and will work under the Senior Pastor's leadership and direction. OWBC is a Baptist Church in the northern suburbs of Oakland County. Send a cover letter and resume to Pastor Steve Sheridan at OWBCstudentsearch@gmail.com or Oakland Woods Student Search, 5628 Maybee Road Clarkston, MI 48346.

New Church Needs Items

Praise the Lord! Eastside Community Church (eastsidecommunitychurch.com) in Eastside, MI had its first service. God is good. We are in need of several items. If anyone has any of these things they would like to share please contact Pastor Mathew Vroman at (313) 657-1100 or pastor@eastsidecommunitychurch.com.

1. 30 cup coffee maker
2. Microwave
3. Table for corner on the main
4. Folding chairs

Part-time Youth Pastor Needed

Bethlehem Baptist Church, located at 960 E. Huron River Drive, Belleville, MI 48111 is searching and hiring for the position of Part-Time Youth Pastor (20 hours/week). The Youth Pastor will be ministering to our Youth – ages 13 to Young Adults. If interested, you may send your resume to: actanap@yahoo.com. To schedule an interview, please call Pastor Aaron Tanap, Church: (734) 697-0566 or Cell: (734) 658-5097.

CLASSIFIEDS (continued)

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 \(BSCM\)](http://www.bscm.org), 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.

Editor: Tim Patterson - tim@bscm.org

Managing Editor: OneMissionTV, LLC - baptistbeacon@bscm.org