



Newsjournal of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan

Telling the story
of Michigan Baptists

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Run at your own pace

by Ken Nether

SOUTHFIELD, MI – I am sure we all know the routine by now. The school bell rings for the end of the year and summer as a family officially begins. For us, summer is our favorite time of the year as we get a chance to reconnect as a family, check off some items on our bucket list while skipping church a time or two as our feet are kicked up somewhere on the beach down south.

This goes without saying, but you know, vacation with the kids is actually not a vacation at all!

Whether we are ready for the school year or not, in just a few days we all will be rushing our kids out the door as we force them to take their annual “back to school” photo for their first day of school. Consequently, once the photo is snapped, we are thrust back into the fast pace of family life. But do we have a choice not to participate in the hustle and bustle of family life?

Every year, Tolice and I start to look at our calendar for the fall. We have no idea how we can fit all the demands from school, kids' activities, and church responsibilities into a weekly calendar. Oh yeah, and by the way, if we want to continue having a healthy marriage, I guess we need to fit in a date night, right?

This goes without saying, but parenting is not easy. Can we take it a step further? Parenting while pastoring can be problematic if you don't run at a pace that your family can sustain.

This summer we learned a valuable lesson. After our much needed “vacation” our family participated in our first annual “Nether Family” 1-mile race. As the runners approached the starting line, our family stood in the back as we knew our pace would be slower than all the other runners.

We are competitive by nature, but the goal of this race was different. This particular race was not about competing against other runners but was intended for us to finish the race together as a family.

In life, we have learned that looking at how other families are running their “race” is not a healthy way of determining how we should run ours. This is what we discovered; the goal of our family is to finish the race that God has placed before us.

Our “race” may be faster in some seasons and slower in others. Through prayer and heartfelt conversations, we can discover the grace that God has placed on a family during each season of life.

Hebrews 12:1-2, says “...Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us. Keeping our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.”

When we decided to embark on ministry, our goal was not to just start our ministry but to finish our ministry, and we knew that would take endurance. Tolice and I have learned that if you want to be successful in ministry as a family then you have to run the race at your own pace.

So, friends, when your family is getting tired, and ministry is not looking inspiring; slow down, take a deep breath and remember what you signed up for is not a sprint but a marathon. Don't worry, God will give you the resources and mental fortitude to run the race He has specifically designed for your family if you continue to seek Him and allow Him to set the pace for your family.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ken and Tolice have been married 11 years and have two beautiful children Kennedy (10) and Lincoln (8). In 2016, they planted Crossover Church in Southfield, MI where their mission is to grow people into passionate followers of Jesus.

Don't fall prey to the school checklist

by April Martin

PLYMOUTH, MI – September in Michigan is one of my favorite times of the year. The remnants of summer still linger, but the glow of fall begins to surround us. Storefronts filled with golds, browns, and oranges that entice us to begin decorating our homes for fall. Coffee shops begin promoting spiced lattes and all things pumpkin line the store shelves. Yet, as much as I love this transition of seasons, it is also paired with one of the most potentially stressful times of the year for both kids and parents - the return to school!

As parents, it is easy to get overwhelmed with the "to-do" list that back to school brings. Gone are the days of a new Scooby Doo lunch box and a pack of sharpened #2 pencils. Now it is Clorox wipes, classroom supplies, new clothes, expo markers, Kleenex and so many other specific items we spend time searching for. We run from store to store trying to secure the best deals as we slowly check off each box to have our kids 'prepared' for a great school year.

What if getting our children prepared for the school year was less about the school issued supply list? What if it has little to do with the most popular brand of shoes or cutest pencil pouch? What if it isn't about a checklist at all, but an intentional time investment we make as parents to prepare them spiritually and emotionally for transitioning back into the school year.

This year, let's do it differently. Instead of falling prey to the checklist, let's purposely PRAY with our kids! Involving them in the process as we ask God to guide the school year. Start a family school-year prayer journal. Use a prayer jar where they can add requests that as a family you'll pray for each week. There are even family prayer apps now that can help guide you in the process of praying as a family! There are so many tools but let's start with a simple way to make this a great school year:

PRAY SPECIFICALLY FOR THE NEEDS THEY VOICE:

So, let's walk this out. What is the best way to know how to pray specifically for your children? By asking them! Even my teenage children want to share what they are feeling about the upcoming school year. We just need to know how to ask the right questions and LISTEN when they share!

- *What are they most excited about?*
- *What do they think will be their favorite subject/activity of this year?*
- *What do they think will be their biggest challenge?*
- *What do they think will help them be the most successful in the classroom?*
- *Is there anything that they are worried about?*

PRAY SPECIFICALLY FOR THE NEEDS THEY DON'T VOICE:

There are challenges our kids will face regardless if they know it or not. As parents, let's be faithful to pray for these things as well.

- *Pray for their Hearts: That they will come to know Christ and grow in relationship with Him. (3 John 1:4)*
- *Pray for their Character: That they will make good choices and show integrity. (Luke 2:52)*
- *Pray for their Friendships: Good solid friendships can play a major role in your child's school experience.*
- *Pray that God will bring the right friends into your child's life. (Proverbs 12:26)*

Our kids need us more than they need the "stuff" that comes with a new school year. They need our attention, our focus and our time. Before we allow ourselves to drown in the details - let's decide to draw close to our Savior and make prayer our priority to be prepared for this school year.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

April Martin is the Director of Children's Ministries at Mile City Church. She is a mom of three super cool teenagers, history nerd, podcast junkie and adores local coffee shops. Her heart and passion is helping parents authentically lead their families towards Christ.

NAMB's Champion Jorge Altieri on mission in Michigan

by BSCM Staff

PLYMOUTH, MI – *“Forging Kingdom bridges because unifying God’s diverse people is worth the work”* is one of the four values of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM). With the partnership of the North American Mission Board (NAMB) who provides the wisdom and input of Jorge Altieri in Michigan, we are poised to better achieve our mission which is to *“help churches take their next step to accelerate Gospel movement.”* That Gospel movement has intensified among the Spanish-speaking audiences of 50-80 church leaders, during these recent nine-months with large cohorts focused on evangelism, and discipleship. During the spring of 2023, another cohort will focus on leadership.

Altieri is the SEND Network Español (Spanish) Regional Champion Catalyst for the Ohio Valley Region which includes the states of Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio. Tony Lynn, Church Planting Leader for Send Network Michigan says, *“Altieri has made big impressions on all of us with his organizational skills, his profound theology, his intense missional focus, and his ability to work in Spanish and English in such a rapid, fluid way. He is the catalyst we have needed for decades. His tireless work is helping us pursue focus which clarifies our actions, making the most of our resources and time.”*

Altieri describes his personal aspirations like this, *“My desire and prayer for this new season in our ministry life is to see a biblical movement of new Hispanic church plants all throughout our Ohio Valley Region. We are committed to help and serve our existing Hispanic churches in areas of development and revitalization, so we can see the birth of new Hispanic churches in Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio.”*

Altieri was born and raised in San Juan, Puerto Rico. He came to saving faith at the age of 16 in 1994. Since his salvation, he has served in many ministry opportunities through local churches in the areas of Bible education, evangelism/outreach, and church planting in Puerto Rico.

In 2003, Altieri and his family moved to the state of Delaware to assist a church planting team in the process of planting a Hispanic church in the southern part of the state. In Delaware, Altieri served in various ministry opportunities with local churches as a Bible teacher, musician, and in other church leadership roles.

After many years serving God in various aspects of ministry in Delaware, the Lord guided the Altieri Family to begin the process of planting Iglesia Bautista Faro de Gracia, a new Hispanic church in the town of Milford, Delaware in 2015.

Over the past 7 years since planting Iglesia Bautista Faro de Gracia, Altieri had the opportunity of serving the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware and the North American Mission Board by providing support and assistance to the Hispanic churches in those two states as a volunteer in assessments and training modules for pastors and planters.

Now Altieri and his family have transitioned from Delaware to Ohio and where he will continue to serve the North American Mission Board through SEND Network Español (Spanish) as a Regional Champion Catalyst for the Ohio Valley Region. Jorge has been married to his wife Jerica for 22 years. They have two sons: Jorge, and Jonathan.

Altieri loves guiding others in learning while simultaneously learning all he can to increase his knowledge and sharpen his skills in ministry. Altieri received his bachelor's degree in Christian studies from Global University. He was awarded a church planting diploma from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and is currently pursuing a master's in theology at Southeastern.

Pastor Tim Patterson, Executive Director-Treasurer of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan, unreservedly endorses the partnership of NAMB and Altieri when Patterson said, *"Jorge Altieri has been and continues to be a great Hispanic leader among many of our churches here in the Midwest. We are so blessed to have him help coordinate, motivate, and encourage pastors and leaders among our Hispanic congregations. I wholeheartedly endorse and encourage Jorge and his work here among Michigan Baptists and pray that you will also. He is a man of integrity and a man of great passion and vision."* Altieri takes part in one of the state's highest values which says that we *"strengthen leaders because they shape the culture and set the pace."* Altieri's influence is shaping a bolder and brighter future.

Jorge Altieri can be reached through the [BSCM website](#), or at (302) 393-6400 or at jaltieri@namb.net. We are grateful for our partnership with the North American Mission Board and the generosity of the members of multitude of churches who faithfully give through the Cooperative Program and the North American Missions Offering which makes this type of productive collaboration possible.

Finally, because of your prayers we are in the early stages of interviewing five new men who think that planting new Hispanic churches in Michigan may be in their future. We are living in the excitement of anticipation as we see the Lord moving and people responding to God's call. Would you join us in a fresh season of prayer for the ongoing development of Hispanic churches throughout Michigan where we can easily find one-half million people or more, who use Spanish every day in their lives while living among us?

Disaster Relief Digest: DR teams see salvations in Virginia, Kentucky, Arizona

by BP Staff

Georgia Baptist volunteers lead 5 to Christ at drive-in restaurant

by Roger Alford/The Christian Index

POUND, VA – Eddie Johnson had stopped at Robo’s Drive-In restaurant in rural southwest Virginia for a burger and fries, but he got far more than that.

An unexpected encounter with a team of Georgia Baptist Disaster Relief workers at the roadside restaurant would lead to Johnson rededicating his life to Christ and four others accepting Jesus as their Savior.

“Our meeting was no accident,” said Johnson, a disabled coal miner who had grown up in church but had strayed away later in life. “It was meant to be. God put them and us here in the same place at the same time for that to happen.”

Nearly 40 Georgia Baptists had been deployed to central Appalachia to help in the aftermath of flashing flooding that killed 38 people and damaged or destroyed thousands of homes and businesses.

Members of one of the Georgia Baptist crews decided to stop for a quick meal on their way into the flood zone. They found Robo’s, a throwback to earlier generations when the custom was to drive in, walk to a small window to place an order, and wait for it to be cooked up. The restaurant’s popularity is reflected in the crowded parking lot where people lean against pickup trucks as they talk and eat.

Robo’s has no dining room, but there are two wooden picnic tables off to one side.

Longtime Georgia Baptist Disaster Relief volunteer Chris Fuller took a seat at one of the tables and struck up a conversation with Johnson and his 22-year-old son, Hunter. Fuller’s teammates, Ronnie Register and his wife Linda, joined the conversation, which quickly turned to the Gospel.

While Johnson recommitted his life to Christ, Hunter said he wasn’t ready to make a decision. After finishing their meals, they went their separate ways. But that wasn’t the end of the story.

Back at home that evening, Johnson explained, the conversation with the Georgia Baptists was bearing on Hunter. He couldn’t get it off his mind. For a diversion, he looked at Facebook. His feed seemed to be filled with church posts. He looked at TikTok. More of the same. Each one of them seemed to be speaking directly to him.

“He looked at me and, with tears in his eyes, said ‘I need to be saved,’” Johnson said.

It was nearly 10 p.m. The Johnsons, along with one of Hunter’s friends, jumped into a vehicle and drove to Calvary Baptist Church in Pound, where the Georgia Baptists had set up a basecamp. Both Hunter and his friend prayed to receive Christ that night.

Johnson said the Georgia Baptists triggered a domino effect that also led to Hunter’s grandmother and his girlfriend making salvation decisions.

Fuller said the Georgia Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers are always vigilant for people with spiritual needs when they’ve been deployed to disaster areas.

“When people experience the raw power of nature, they can’t help but look to God,” Fuller said. “In times like that when people are feeling helpless, they realize their need for God.”

While in central Appalachia to help with the flood cleanup, Georgia Baptist teams led 17 people to faith in Christ. That makes more than 50 people introduced to Christ by Georgia crews responding to disaster areas since last year.

“We pray for opportunities to share the gospel, not only with actions but with words,” Fuller said. “If you pray for those opportunities, then God will give you those opportunities.”

Kentucky DR reports 78 salvations during flood recovery

by Mark Maynard/Kentucky Today

Astounding stories continue coming from the eastern Kentucky mountains as residents enter the fourth week since the historic flooding devastated the area.

Volunteers from Kentucky Baptist Disaster Relief and many others from numerous churches continue to be the hands and feet of Jesus, helping in recovery, providing food for thousands and sharing the Gospel whenever they can.

KYDR Director Ron Crow said 18 state conventions are assisting in Kentucky, including Alaska.

“We are grateful to all who have come to assist,” Crow said in a social media message. “We are grateful to all who have come to assist. Much has been accomplished but there is so more to be done.”

Imagine doing 3,308 loads of laundry or preparing 25,419 meals. That’s what has happened since KYDR volunteers arrived with hope and healing for the mountains on Aug. 1. The days can be long but the reward great as some of the hardest-working Kentucky Baptists clean out mud or provide meals and then begin a gospel conversation.

Crow said there have been many “wow” moments “that only God could orchestrate” through KYDR volunteers and church volunteers.

Seventy-eight professions of faith have been recorded, 417 gospel conversations presented, and 741 Bibles distributed throughout the southeastern and eastern parts of the state over the past three weeks. The work has not slowed down since flooding practically swept away towns. Much like when tornadoes swept through west Kentucky in December, the flood recovery in eastern Kentucky will be a long-term project.

Here are some KYDR numbers about the work being done:

- 6,406 Volunteer Days
- 52,800 Volunteer work hours
- 25,149 Meals
- 3,323 Showers
- 3,308 Laundry loads
- 250 Flood Recovery jobs completed
- 481 Flood buckets distributed
- 741 Bibles distributed
- 417 Gospel presentations
- 78 Professions of Faith

To support the work and ministry of Kentucky Baptist Disaster Relief, visit www.kybaptist.org/flood. One-hundred percent of your contribution will support the work in eastern Kentucky. All administrative costs are covered by the Cooperative Program, which allows 100% of your gift to support the relief, recovery, and rebuild effort.

Arizona DR workers’ unexpected visit leads to salvation

by Irene A. Harkleroad/Arizona SBC

FLAGSTAFF, AZ (BP) – Recovery teams were busy reclaiming the foundations of homes that burned to the ground during the Tunnel Fire in Flagstaff, hauling twisted metal, rebar and melted box springs and appliances and transforming them into massive heaps inside industrial-size walk-in dumpsters.

Arizona Southern Baptist Disaster Relief incident command coordinated efforts with Coconino County and managed work orders and teams.

A two-person assessment team met with property owners to evaluate the scope of the jobs and get them on the schedule. A chaplain lent an empathetic ear, ready to listen and pray at any moment.

An Arizona Baptist DR set up a feeding team and a shower/laundry unit at First Southern Baptist Church of Flagstaff.

Of course, workers prayed for a chance to share Christ with homeowners, as well as the workers who brought the dumpsters, the heavy equipment operators and anyone else they came in contact with.

Before long, the opportunity came.

At the end of a long day, while teams were waiting for dinner, a woman stopped by the church. One of the volunteers met her on the sidewalk. Although the woman seemed hesitant, she was looking for someone to talk to.

She explained her situation as “temporarily homeless” and asked if she could park in the parking lot overnight. First Southern Baptist’s pastor, Jim Maynard, spoke with her. As a rule, the church does not allow anyone to park overnight for safety reasons. Since the Disaster Relief teams were housing there, he made an exception.

“Our volunteers invited Sandy* to stay for dinner,” said Patty Kirchner, director of Arizona Southern Baptist Disaster Relief.

“Over the next few days, several of our chaplains and other volunteers began to learn her story. We invited her to join us in the morning and evening devotions.

“As we shared our lives and Christ’s love with her, she began to ask questions. Later, she told us that she saw and experienced something she hadn’t in the church she had been part of since she was a child.

“On the morning the teams were packing to leave Flagstaff, one of our chaplains had another conversation with Sandy*. That’s when she asked if she could receive Christ. Chaplain Sue led her to the Lord.”

Some team members stayed in touch with her and report that since their last meeting with Sandy, God has blessed her with a new job, an apartment and a church family.

Wailing Wall

by Tim Patterson

PLYMOUTH, MI – Here in Michigan the shift in temperatures has begun, and the fall toward the frigid climes that will embrace us for too many months has started in earnest. Whether we are ready or not, this inevitable change in our weather is upon us. Most of us “sun loving” people are not particularly prepared for the climatic shifts on the horizon. Yet, the changes will come, prepared or not.

The truth is that I love the winter months as much as basking in those warm and sunny ones. It really is a matter of choice. Embrace that which is inevitable and part of God’s grand scheme, and your attitude toward your station or place in life will improve remarkably. One sage said, *“your attitude directly affects your altitude.”* Whether you soar or are sore, depends on this.

Accompanying these coming autumnal days are other changes that can be very difficult to embrace. This is the time of returning or beginning the educational process for millions of American children and their families.

I know parents who will rejoice and throw a party as soon as their kids are out the door. Not all have that perspective. Some parents are sending their little ones off for the very first time. Those in this category can have the most difficult and emotionally traumatic experience. Especially those mothers who are sending their “babies” to school and this is their initial experience with releasing their children to the care of a stranger. It is also a severe shock to their psyche as this event signals a rite of passage from being a baby in their arms to “growing up” way too fast. In many ways it is a time of intense grief and profound loss.

When I was pastoring in Florida and in my inaugural year in a small rural community, I was made aware of this difficult rite of passage when the first day of school commenced. For no reason that I could understand, mothers from our church and the community who had just left their children at a school for the very first time started gathering on our church campus. They would huddle together as they cried and hugged one another. Honestly, I had no idea what was going on or how to handle the situation. I thought someone had died. The sobs and tears were so intense. Finally, after conversing with older mothers of my congregation I began to understand the matter. They were grieving the loss of innocence within their babies and the change in their own lives.

From that day forward my staff and I prepared for the first day of school each year. We set up our fellowship hall and publicized that we were the gathering place of mothers who were experiencing the loss and heartbreak this season in life delivers. It became common knowledge in our community that our church was the “Wailing Wall” for first time school moms.

We provided coffee, drinks, pastries and as much comfort and understanding we could supply.

Out of this simple act of kindness and concern for our community, many became part of our church family, and many relationships were built.

As a result of these open doors, many of those who did not identify with our church, came to a saving faith in Jesus in the months and years to come. The seed of compassion and understanding that were planted that one day a year, grew to produce the fruits of His Grace and Righteousness.

I would like to encourage all our churches and their leaders to be always sensitive to the needs of your community and especially during the days of this season. It is the small things and acts of kindness that can open the door for Gospel conversations and the building of life changing relationships.

Every church needs a “Wailing Wall.”

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.

Increasing diversity

by Dr. Tony L Lynn

PLYMOUTH, MI – Church planting in Michigan looks and sounds different, and I am loving it!

Synonyms for diverse, or diversity, are fun words like these:

Assorted
Different
Dissimilar
Distinctive
Divergent
Like night & day
Medley
Mixture
Potpourri
Mixed bag

*Unlike
Varied*

I love variety! A vacation with mixed experiences fills my senses. I enjoy contrasting flavors, a morsel of chocolate pressed between a piece of sourdough bread. I listen to an assortment of music in one day's time: Christian, classical, jazz, and the oldies. I am not monochrome when it comes to life and ministry. My days are filled with diverse skin colors, assorted sounds of languages that I can and cannot understand, and an explosion of experiences that are challenging to describe in words but let me try.

Arabic Language

I live with a new anticipation. I believe we will see many new church plants in Michigan among those whose heritage comes from North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Middle East. For the first time in years, I have two new valuable partners in the ministry who help me connect more effectively with Arabic-speaking church leaders and potential planters. I often refer to both men as Arabic Consultants for Send Network Michigan: Pastor Amgad Beshai of Evangel Baptist Church of Troy, Michigan and Pastor Amer Safadi of the Arabic Church of Cincinnati, Ohio. Both men exhibit the fruit of the Spirit, as they serve their churches, state conventions, and the Send Network.

Recently, Beshai, Safadi, and I had an online morning that we concluded by taking turns voicing our personal prayers aloud. I introduced our time of prayer, reminding them that while an international missionary for thirteen years, I used three languages in my daily life: sharing Christ, writing sermons, speaking to audiences, and teaching students. I invited Beshai and Safadi to pray aloud from their "heart-language," meaning the earliest language they used when they were raised by their mothers. I wanted them to feel a liberty to pray deeply from their hearts and souls. They did so, each one taking a turn, and the time was so sweet as I heard a melody of language as all three of us were before our Heavenly Father. I was swept by emotion as I was reminded that the Lord, we serve, understands every language of every single person in this world. We serve an amazing God.

Asian Indian Dialects

During July and August, if you follow me on Facebook, you will remember I made new friends. During those two months, I completed my research, interviews, and introduced Abraham and Sheila Sekhar, who are originally from India to others throughout southeastern Michigan. Contacts from my days with the International Mission Board helped me complete my research from thousands of miles away.

The reputation of Abraham as a multiplying leader was overwhelming. Abraham with a background in engineering, and Sheila with a former career as a medical doctor in India are investigating whether the Lord can use them, in their semi-retired status, to help us reach the people of India who live among us throughout Michigan. Abraham and his wife speak up to five

dialects from India. Their spirit of gentleness, humility, mixed with their burden to see others, from their homeland, come to know Christ is obvious to everyone who meets them. Our Lord orchestrates meetings when he is ready.

I laughed when I invited Abraham and Sheila to dine with State Executive Director-Treasurer, Pastor Tim Patterson, and our wives. Why did I laugh? Because when I asked Abraham for his preference, he responded, “We like authentic Mexican food. It’s the closest to our home cooking when it comes to local restaurants.”

Spanish Speakers

The images show only a portion of the eighty people who were registered attending the second bilingual Spanish/English conference in recent months. The audience keeps increasing, at each event, with this gathering focusing on Discipleship. We have seven potential, Spanish-speaking church planting candidates at different levels of intake who might plant a new church in Michigan.

Send Network Consultant Jorge Altieri recently moved his family to Columbus, Ohio making his ease at serving those of us in Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana more convenient. His hard work and networking in two languages are showing obvious results. We are so thankful for the first Latin American Baptist Church of Detroit and Pastor Kevin Casillas who generously share their newly dedicated community center with us.

Korean and Japanese Languages

Let me wrap things up by making an announcement; during August, a Korean couple was assessed as a church planting couple for a community here in Michigan, and they were approved! Now an entire new community here in Michigan will have the prayers and support of many churches as they reach out, in the Korean language, to their local community and the world. Our network of churches helps churches take their next step to accelerate Gospel movement – in every language possible! That is what the Lord desires.

Finally, please mark October 16, 2022 on your calendars for Hikari City Church, which is a new church plant led by Planter/Pastor Maki Umakoshi. That date represents their official launch date in Plymouth, Michigan. The young church start whose name, Hikari, means “light,” will share space with an English-speaking church so the children can share discipleship-life with one another while the adults meet in separate worship spaces with each service in the heart-language of the audience. Isn’t the Lord amazing?

I love variety, don’t you?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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

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

A New Journey Begins

by Coye Bouyer

PLYMOUTH, MI – We pulled away slowly, siblings with tears in their eyes, a mother waving expressively shouting the words “I love you,” and a father trying desperately not to make eye contact looking forward out of the windshield of the van. As the van rounded the curb and Sierra was no longer in sight, our family began to realize that our once household of six had suddenly become a household of five.

In Psalms 127:3 we read, “Children are a gift of the LORD...” and understood appropriately a parent knows that their children are not only a gift from God, but also on loan to us while here on earth, for our children, just like us ultimately belong to the LORD. However, as loving and committed parents we can’t help but feel at times as if these precious, yet dependent sometimes perplexing and imperfect little people grow up to become independent young adults who will go off to college, pursue professions and fulfill the purpose(s) in which their Heavenly Father created them for in the first place, actually belong to us.

In certain moments of their lives, such as their first day of school, first athletic, academic or public accolade, a driver’s license or high school graduation, we as their earthly parents are overwhelmed with emotions as proud parents who not only experience the excitement of their growth but also reflect on where the time has gone.

In each of their first steps (walking, graduation, getting married, buying their first home, or having their first child), our roles evolve over time from that of parent and guardian with complete control over where they go, what they do and when they will be home; to parent and friend no longer in complete control but like cheerleaders watching them grow and mature into adulthood.

It is at moments like these that we as parents must be willing to embrace the new relationship we will have with our children; as well as remember that this was the intent from the day in which they were first given to us by God. This reality really begins to hit as we move them into their new dorm room where we spend an afternoon getting them organized, buying sheets, towels, bedding, dishes, soap, hangers, shoe racks, portable refrigerators, microwaves and anything else we think they will need before we kiss, hug, cry, wave and drive off leaving our

babies behind (who are no longer babies by the way) to begin their journey of taking on the world without our daily provision and protection.

Now they have to depend on the daily provision and protection of their heavenly Father, who has been there the entire time working through us but will reveal Himself to them in a more personal way.

As the we drove off, rounding the curb where we could no longer see the firstborn of the children God had put on loan to us, I remembered the words of Proverbs “train up a child in the way that they should go, and when they are older they will not depart,” (v. 6).

I was encouraged by the voice of the Holy Spirit and I said to myself, I/we have done our part LORD, and I know that your daughter is in Your hands, for as one journey with Sierra ends, a new journey for Sierra begins!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Coye L. Bouyer is the founding pastor of Kingdom Life Church in Lansing, MI where he has served since March of 2010. Pastor Bouyer recently stepped into the Diversity Ambassador role for the BSCM and firmly believes that he was not only called to Preach the Gospel as part of the process of reconciliation of man to God, but also using any platform as a bridge of reconciliation of man to man, and even more so amongst the brethren. Pastor Bouyer and his lovely wife Keturah (Gen. 25:1) have been married four over 20 years and have four children; Sierra, Seth, Cayla and Coye II.

Bambi Lake...a spiritual destination

by Phyllis Harbaugh

ROSCOMMON, MI – It was the 1960's when I went to Bambi Lake for the first time. It was a long drive and I remember the excitement and anticipation I felt as we arrived at the registration building. For the first time I was in a place where I felt safe and wanted to stay. The music, lessons, and sermons inspired me to trust God more and challenged me to trust God for everything.

I carried deep family secrets that often left me feeling helpless and a victim to things I could not change. Year after year I would return for camp. It was at Bambi that I met people who would greet me with a smile or kind word, encourage me, pray with me and help me refocus. I knew I was loved and accepted and somehow, I knew God was there. I always left my burdens and came home closer to God.

I have returned yearly, whether going to retreats, camping in the campground, or just visiting for a short time. My childhood excitement and anticipation returns every time I arrive at the entrance.

I have returned yearly, whether going to retreats, camping in the campground, or just visiting for a short time. My childhood excitement and anticipation returns every time I arrive at the entrance.

This year (60 years later) I was able to serve at Bambi for 3 weeks. Just as many people blessed me through the years, I wanted to give back. My prayer and mission were to be the one who might make a difference in the lives of those who came for retreats and camps those 3 weeks.

Bambi Lake belongs to the Southern Baptist Churches in Michigan. Our churches support the camp through financial giving, and by going there for events, retreats, and camps. It is not just a great place to visit, it is a spiritual destination...a place to “get away” from the stresses of life and meet God.

Don't miss out on the things God can do in your life through Bambi Lake!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Phyllis Harbaugh is a missionary to the Deaf in Michigan. Her husband, Herb, has been the Lead Pastor of Memorial Baptist Church, Sterling Heights, MI since 1983. She is a mother of 3 daughters, 3 son-in laws, and 6 grandchildren.

East Texas planter discovers compelling – and surprising – need in hometown

By Erin Roach/Southern Baptist TEXAN

GLADEWATER, TX (BP) – When God called Teddy Sorrells to plant a church in 2020, he expected to be sent to San Francisco or Denver, one of the popular church planting cities. Instead, a quick demographics study led him to plant in the small East Texas town he'd been trying all his life to leave.

“I was born in Gladewater. I joined the Army to leave Gladewater. I came back to Gladewater and raised my sons here. I pastored a little country church just south of Gladewater. I thought, ‘Now is the time for me to leave Gladewater,’” Sorrells said.

At his wife Marilyn's prompting, Sorrells requested demographics data on Gladewater from the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention. "I didn't think I was going to read through it and find anything surprising because I'd been in Gladewater my whole life," he said.

God used two statistics in particular about the town of 8,000 to grab Sorrells' attention: half of the town's residents are millennials or Gen Z, and a quarter of the homes are led by single mothers.

"Marilyn was raised by a single mom. I was raised by a single mom. These families are next-generation families that need a church that will love them and care for them and minister to them," said Sorrells, who was saved and called to the ministry 20 years ago at age 29.

He was surprised to learn of so many younger residents because he doesn't necessarily see them around town, he said. Maybe that's because 83 percent of homes in Gladewater are rentals housing laborers who commute to nearby Longview or Tyler.

With a strong motivation to plant in Gladewater, Sorrells began building a core group and casting a vision. "I put the word out, and real fast God started bringing folks that were either in my past or folks that I had known just by acquaintance that wanted to be a part of what we were going to do."

Living Water Church launched in September 2021 with 122 people attending the first day. Something unique is that they started with a building and with two services. Sorrells had driven by a Family Video store in Gladewater and mentioned to Marilyn that he didn't see how they could stay in business with so few people renting videos anymore.

Days later, a "going out of business" sign appeared, and Sorrells was able to lease the building for his church plant. Now the church has a prime location on the main road in Gladewater.

"God has met and exceeded every expectation we've set in planting Living Water Church." Also, the worship space accommodates 70 chairs, so two services allow room for growth. Living Water is averaging 70 people between the two services now, and they've baptized eight people.

"One of the things I wanted to do was partner with our city," Sorrells said. "I wanted people to come to our church on Sundays, but I wanted people to know us by what we're doing in our city."

They've had multiple block parties, and for teacher appreciation week they provided food for teachers at the local middle school and gave them gift baskets. Sorrells was invited to be the chaplain for the high school football team.

“It just blows me away how many students we have in Gladewater that have no idea who Jesus is,” he said. At the end of football season, the church hosted the players and coaches and offered games, food, a worship time and a Gospel presentation. Four students were saved and six rededicated their lives to Christ.

Sorrells contacted the local code enforcement office to ask if any residents were having trouble getting their homes in compliance. A missions team from a partner church helped an elderly couple clean up their home and yard as “the hands and feet of Jesus.”

“Our city is impoverished, so there are like five housing projects in our city, and low-income earners live in our city,” Sorrells said. “There are not a lot of churches that are excited about reaching that demographic, but I am.”

Church planting is important even in a church-saturated small town like Gladewater, Sorrells has come to realize, because it’s biblical. God has called the church to advance the Gospel, he said, and that means churches need to multiply exponentially.

The apostle Paul traveled to communities planting churches, Sorrells said, and that’s the model.

“That’s why it’s important to plant churches in places like Gladewater, Texas, where in the middle of the Bible Belt you have 100 churches in our area that are either plateaued or dying because there hasn’t been a new work of God come through here in forever because we’ve quit multiplying,” Sorrells said.

“That’s small town and big town, rural and urban. All of those have the same problem: Lost people need Jesus, and God has called the church to go tell lost people about Jesus.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Erin Roach is a writer in Mobile, Alabama.

Back to school anxiety

by Kristie Anderson

It is once again that time of the year when a collective groan is echoing in the early morning hours as children rise for school. For some, the new school year arrives with the excitement of new subjects and experiences. For others, the new school year brings new stress and worry. Whether your kids are attending public school, private school, virtual school, or homeschool; let

us consider how to encourage and prepare them for the days ahead.

As the mother of four children from elementary to high school, here is some counsel I have received that has been particularly helpful for my children.

1. Pray

Help your child learn to pray about their day and their worries. Model prayer in your family. We often remind our children of Philippians 4:6, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” Encourage your children to take their fears and worries to the One who can help them.

2. Rehearse their day beforehand

My girls especially like to know exactly what is going to happen. Walk through what the day will look like. Will they switch classes? Will they already know some kids in their class? Are there assignments due or tests to take? We usually go over the schedule to address areas of worry. We also highlight things that are a blessing in the day ahead.

3. Start or continue back to school traditions

This can be as simple as getting new school supplies together. We start our first day of school with donuts! We will periodically surprise our kids with a special outing or treat on Friday to celebrate the end of the school week.

4. Memorize scripture

Tuck verses on fear or anxiety in the backpack or lunchbox of your child. Work on memorizing the verses together as a family.

5. Make time for communication

After school, set aside time to talk about their day. What was the best part? What was the hardest part? Come alongside your child and encourage them with time together.

Certainly, as parents, we may also struggle with worry. Am I making the right schooling decision? Will my child turn out okay? Apply some of the same disciplines to your own life that you are seeking to instill in your child. Memorize scripture. Remind yourself of the truth of God’s word through memorization and meditation. The Lord is in control and He loves us and our children more than we can imagine.

My favorite memory verses this time of year as a mother...

Matthew 6:25 – “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?”

1 Peter 5:6-7 – “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.”

The following resources may help encourage and equip you and your children:

- *5 Things to Pray for Your Kids* by Melissa Kruger
- *Risen Motherhood* by Emily Jensen and Laura Wifler
- *The New City Catechism* by Crossway (available as a free app as well)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kristie Anderson is a wife, mom and homeschooler. She is a native of Kentucky which is still really clear in her accent, but has called East Asia and Michigan home. She loves Jesus, hanging out with her husband, reading aloud to her kids, and drinking good coffee.

Strength for today

by Karen Blanchard

SHELBY TOWNSHIP, MI – Have you ever been through a season of life where you just felt weak? Maybe unsure how you even got to that place? I found myself there not too long ago. I kept asking the Lord, “How did I get here?” When we find ourselves in a tough season of life, the circumstances we find ourselves in can quickly begin to consume us.

One thing I have learned about myself is I get overwhelmed as I begin to look ahead at all the things I have to do, especially when I am in a busy season, and I have little margin. I can easily begin to feel the weight of it all. As a result, I pick up and carry the burden or I begin the process in my mind of how to “figure everything out.” As you can imagine, this can be very draining and exhausting. This is not what God wants us to do!

During this season, I didn’t see an end to the overwhelming situation I was in. My family rallied around me during this time, in which I am so thankful. I remember one evening I was talking to my dad on the phone and he said, “Karen, God is strengthening you during this time.” I remember thinking, “How is God strengthening me, when I feel so weak?” However, over the next few days and weeks the Holy Spirit kept bringing that phrase back to my mind, and He started illuminating verses on God’s strength. The Lord is so good in how he speaks to us!

One of the verses God gave me that I clung to was in 2 Timothy 4:17a where Paul writes,

“But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength...”

I knew God was with me, but he reminded me that he was right by my side ready to give me what I needed. God spoke to my heart that I needed to rely on Him to give me strength for the day I was facing - strength for just *that* day. Not strength for the week ahead. Not strength six months down the road. Only strength for what I would need for that day for what I would face and need to accomplish.

He began to change my perspective and reminded me that I don't need to worry about how to “figure everything out” but that I just need to trust Him for the strength I need to face each day and trust that he will carry me through the days to come.

In Matthew 6, I was reminded that if God feeds the birds and clothes the lilies, then He cares even more for me and what I am going through. I can trust that he is working it all out.

My One Word for this year is focus. I have had to constantly remind myself to get my eyes off my current circumstance and fix them on Jesus. Sometimes I needed to remind myself to do this multiple times a day. I am also learning not to focus too much on the future, which is when my anxiety tends to rush in. God doesn't expect or want us to plan our lives out way in advance. I am learning this. He wants us to rely on Him and Him alone for the strength we need for today. When we feel overwhelmed and defeated, he wants us to run to him.

This is a great passage of scripture to memorize, journal, and speak over your life when you are feeling weak.

Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. – Isaiah 40:28-31

I am so thankful that when we are weak, God is strong! Keep running to Him! It is in Christ we find the strength we need for each day! Don't worry about tomorrow; trust God for today!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Karen is married to Scott Blanchard, pastor of Lakepointe Church, and moved from Florida to Michigan in the summer of 2009 to plant Lakepointe Church in Shelby Township. She enjoys mentoring and discipling women and also leads women's life groups through her church. She is passionate about helping women find their purpose in who God created them to be. She is on staff at Lakepointe Church and loves being part of what God is doing in the Metro Detroit area!

Unique school paths

by Becky Ferraro

GARDEN CITY, MI – I pulled up my calendar today to count how many days of summer vacation we have left, and could not believe that it is almost over. As we enter another school year, our children can have many different emotions; excitement, fear, happiness, loneliness, and nervousness are just a few. These feelings are very real to our children.

This is a fantastic time to disciple them, and point them to their Creator. During the weeks leading up to the first day of school, talk to your children about what things they are excited about, and what they are nervous about. Pray with them about these things, guide them to Scriptures that teach God's truths in the situations they will be facing, and write them down on note cards.

As fears arise and triumphs come during the school year pull out the cards, and write out the testimony of what has happened. This is a wonderful way to help your kids lean on their Heavenly Father's promises to them and reflect on how God has answered their prayers.

Many of us are on different educational paths with our children. As parents, we can be tempted to think that one way is better than another. As Christian parents, our job is to lead, disciple, teach, and love these children given to us to raise. Just as our children are all unique, our educational paths will also be unique.

Do not let Satan divide us on which educational path we feel is the best. I want to encourage you as parents to always take several weeks to pray about which educational path is best for your children (public school, private school, or homeschooling). During the school year pray for all the families in your social circles and encourage each other.

May you lean on God's wisdom and protection this next school year. I pray that you enjoy these incredibly special years of raising children for His glory. As your children enter this new school year, look at it with anticipation to the amazing things God will be doing in their hearts and enjoy being blessed with a front row seat as you watch what God has planned for them.

"Therefore, since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that lay before Him endured the cross and despised the shame and has sat down at the right hand of God's throne." -- Hebrews 12:1-2

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Becky Ferraro is the wife of Pastor David Ferraro. She is the mother of 7 children and has been homeschooling for the past 13 years. In her free time, she coaches baseball, substitutes in the

public school, serves on the leadership board of Homeschool Academy, Wayne, MI and is the Preschool Director at Merriman Road Baptist Church, Garden City, MI.

Sending our children out as missionaries

by Art Werry

CLINTON TOWNSHIP, MI – Where has the summer gone? For that matter, where has 2022 gone? And here we are, at the beginning of a new school year. As Tricia and I get ready to send Hannah off to her senior year, it's a good time to think about how we should face the coming year.

The last few school years have been difficult to say the least. School shootings. COVID-19. Unbiblical practices and values being taught to our children. Our Christian faith is being tested in ways we have never experienced in our lifetime. Is it any wonder we are seeing a dramatic rise in cases of depression and anxiety?

In previous years, along with our children, we've experienced nervousness as the start of school draws closer - but not like this. Now for the good news, as we think about the coming year, let's be reminded of two important truths.

First, let's remember God is in control. Yes, if we are not careful, this profound truth will ring in our ears like a hollow cliché. But within those four words lies great comfort and assurance.

We can take comfort in trusting that God is in control of whatever will happen to our children at school and even at home, for that matter. The psalmist reminds us, our great God never sleeps (Psalm 121:3-4). Through all the ups and downs of the coming year, we want to send our children out the door with confidence that God is in control.

We may feel like we are sending our children off into a war zone, but in reality, they are never out of God's sight or away from His presence - no matter where they are. Make sure your children hear you speaking your faith and not your fears. Look for ways to calm their fears by pointing to our faith in God. Our children need us to help them keep their feet firmly planted on the Rock.

Second, in addition to remembering God is in control, we should remember that we have a job to do. Each year, it seems like the light of the gospel shines less brightly. Instead of pulling back in fear, let's step into the new school year with a renewed commitment to living out our faith.

What better way than to regularly remind our children that they are going out as missionaries for Jesus? Find fun ways to help them start gospel conversations, maybe with a t-shirt or a notebook with a Christian message on it.

When they come home and tell you about their day, use these teachable moments to help them learn how to weave the gospel into their day. Unfortunately, there will be days that provide the opportunity to teach “turn the other cheek” and “forgive as you have been forgiven.” But school provides perfect real-life examples of how we are to integrate our faith into our everyday lives. Going over the basics with our children is also a good way for us parents to be reminded as well.

This year, when we kick the kids out of the nest to go face the world - let's do it with confidence and purpose. As the missionary William Carey said, “Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tricia and Art Werry live in Clinton Township with their daughter, Hannah, and their dog Luna. Art has been pastor of New Life, Fraser for over 30 years. Tricia is the Administrative Assistant at Audio Sentry, a security firm in Fraser.

Life on the road extends to a never-ending mission for campers

by Scott Barkley

GRAND BLANC, MI (BP) – Rick and Cindy Truesdail's retirements a few years ago came with plans. They took their camper and drove to Florida, setting up close to the beach. The couple prepared to take life easy.

“We loved it,” said Cindy, “but we also loved working for our church. We figured that God doesn't want us just sitting on a couch.”

In 2019 a friend introduced them to Campers on Mission, a national ministry that includes many Southern Baptists. Chapters exist in 30 states and look for ways to connect missions opportunities to those who have made life on the open road anything but temporary.

The Truesdails, members of Heritage Baptist Church in Grand Blanc, had always camped with their kids. They built family memories courtesy of a 37-foot pull-behind camper before moving up to a 40-foot motorhome.

But soon after Cindy retired as a paralegal in Flint's 68th District Court and Rick after 32 years with General Motors, the couple joined others for a different kind of building.

Campers on Mission (CoM) was formerly funded by the North American Mission Board, but now chapters generally fund themselves. The Michigan Baptist State Convention has pledged to help fund its chapter's annual meeting next month as well as the national gathering in 2023.

Speaking from Moorcroft, Wyo., CoM national directors Jerry and Renee McGovern noted that much of CoM's work is with helping Christian camp facilities. But they also work in nursing homes, pregnancy centers, Christian schools and other locations.

"We also communicate with pastors," Renee said. "You name it, they're dealing with it and need to talk to somebody about it. That takes a lot of our time."

The Truesdails lead the Michigan chapter of Campers on Mission, which will have its annual meeting Sept. 8-10 at Bambi Lake Baptist Camp in Roscommon. The chapter will also host the annual CoM meeting next year, June 7-9.

Like the Truesdails, the McGoverns did not feel God wanted them to slow down in retirement.

"I started working as a plumber when I was 19 and worked my whole life at it," Jerry said. "I owned my own business and retired as a master plumber at 55 but then realized, 'You're still young. Get up and go.'"

More are doing just that.

At CoM's most recent annual meeting, the McGoverns shared that membership had grown from 2,460 in 2020 to 3,256 in 2021 to partner with 146 churches and associations. Work hours increased as did the professions of faith, with 71 recorded in 2020 before jumping to 228 last year.

Like other ministries, the COVID-19 pandemic left its mark on CoM in several ways. A significant increase was noted in food ministry work, for instance. But COVID also made people want to get outdoors and go exploring.

According to Kampgrounds of America, Inc. (KOA), the number of people camping at least once during the year increased by 36 percent from 2019-2021. In 2021, 57 million households reported camping during the year.

Initiated in 2015, the KOA annual report revealed another significant finding. Most respondents said in the past that they rented or borrowed a recreational vehicle (RV). Now, 77 percent are owners. In addition, 32 percent said they want to purchase an RV in 2022.

CoM doesn't require you to have an RV. You can go [glamping](#) or stay at facilities nearby. But having your own space brings advantages.

RVs today like the ones used by the McGoverns and Truesdails are also mobile offices and need the space and amenities for one. This fits with the KOA report, which said 46 percent of campers work remotely.

And, of course, there's the mobility. Cindy Truesdail can continue her sewing ministry from their RV. Jerry McGovern had a wish list that he and Renee found in their 40-foot American Tradition – a Spartan chassis for a small turning radius, a Cummins diesel engine for more durability, service trays that slide out.

Many CoM members are retired, but not all. Kids can be involved. It's not unusual for members to take their pets on the road, though not to the work site. And again, you don't need a camper to be a member of Campers on Mission. Some members stay in a van or a camper on their truck bed. Some even stay in tents.

While the organization's strength is in the South and Midwest, it's expanding. "We have strong chapters in California and Arizona," Renee said.

The strength is in the people, and the work they bring. Jim Shields is quick to correct his initial perspective on this.

"I've been here nine years, and when I heard there were some retirees going to be here for a week, I thought they might just piddle around," said Shields, Camp Team leader for Highland Lake Camp & Conference Center in Martinsville, Ind., which is part of the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana.

He proudly admits he was wrong.

"Honestly, our camps would not be able to function without them because of their dedication and tireless efforts. There's never a complaint. They park in the designated camping area and we provide their meals while they work for a week or two.

"They do a tremendous job, whether that's painting the interior of a building, hanging drywall or constructing a small building. They're skilled craftsmen and when we give them a project and materials, we just get out of the way.

"Every time they're here I'm amazed at what they accomplish."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Scott Barkley is national correspondent for Baptist Press.

The Chick*

NOTE: *The following poem is very long but has short verses. I am recommending it as a sample of the encouragement that God gave His people in times of hardship times of suffering and persecution.*

Doru Radu

Golgotha Romanian Baptist Church, Warren, Michigan

The Chick*

Forlorn, all by himself in the shell
the bright golden chick
has finally felt ill at ease --
downright uncomfortable!
For he discovered his world
had somehow shrunk!
“What could this be?” he thought.
“What tragedy has befallen on me
that I should live
in this tiniest of homes
that’s here becoming, smaller and smaller?...

That I should find
insufficient room lying on my face
or on my back.
And if this were not enough,
Look, there’s this silly beak
getting in my way.
Alas, let me speak in bitterness,
as fools do...
But the beak is deaf
as it falls limp now on the left, now on the right,
like a beam in a useless dangle.

On top of it all,
two beady eyes appeared.
And heavy wings have sprung out.
To what purpose I know not!
And here below
there appeared a pair of
long, crooked claws,
that did pierce my belly.

Lord, why ever did you give me
these gifts that are so burdensome to me?
And, turning on his side,
The chick began to softly cry
for the very first time in his life...
But, knock-knock, who
on the outside is calling?
Fear grips him so...
Whoever could it be, but really who?...

And so, as if in a dream
the chick responded to the call.
Look! While knocking away,
a window to the outside world is blown!
Oh, Lord,
what wonder, matchless sight this is!
There, how wide it all is,
for him to play at will,
to lie down to sleep!

And a voice so sweet does break
a mother-like echo is being heard:
Do come now!
And jumped our chick
out of his old nest.
What joy it is to have eyes,
and ears, too!
How wonderful light is ...
To drink it all in!

But what is this?
A tender blade of grass ...
And lifting his eyes
into the bright sunshine,
the chick his first move did make!

And then, as time flies,
his eyes upon a well ripened grain did fall.
Mmm! It tastes so good!

And on a leaf of sweet basil
a small beetle could be seen.
But Lord, my beak is not at all misplaced!
For here in the new land,
what could I have done?
if I had no wings, no claws;
what was so burdensome
in his hermit-like cocoon?
Poor little chick ...

Brethren, his story is but ours ...
Honesty, purity, mercy, sacrifice,
a humble heart, and heavy tears,
kindness, and long sighing for the stars –
well, what could we do with all these
down here below?

To be speechless as the sheep,
when led to the sheerer;
to be longsuffering,
to aspire after no riches
no name to try to make;
to love him, who would if he could
completely bruise you –
well, what use would all these
be in the world?

When under the sun
only the sly grin,
only the heavy, grave pace
only the gloved hand
who looks after its own best;
yea, when life is but a game
where all come to the crossroads
and throw at you only thorns
and shards unlimited,

you, should take up the cross
and quietly carry,
humble though with spittle covered ...

Oh, Father, Merciful Creator,
Why ever did you give us
Gifts that seem such a burden?
Why? Don't you know?

But wait a minute ...
There comes a time,
when over this world
a shout will be heard ...
Knock, Knock, knock!
And in this old house
a window will be opened
to that marvelous world out there.

And then, my brother,
how good it will be
to have done all this sighing?
to have cross marks on your shoulders,
and your temples furrowed by thorns?
To have your face shining
by the tears you shed!

For all these will turn into
white wings and light tunics
and a ruby-filled crown
and a kingly rod,
that worlds will know how to handle
(as John told us!),
when across our foreheads
the eternal Name will brilliantly shine:
JESUS !

**Translated from Romanian by Dorin Motz of
Washington, D.C. Published with his approval*

Costache Ioanid

(Romanian poet, born 1912 in Ukraine, died in 1987, in Portland, Oregon) {1}

This Christian poet could not publish in communist Romania, but God used his work to enhance the faith of His children who learned his poems by heart, copied them by hand or tape-recorded them.

N.Y. churches prepare to minister during Winter World University Games

by Timothy Cockes

LAKE PLACID, NY (BP) – As the areas around Upstate New York prepare to host the Winter World University Games in January, Southern Baptist churches are preparing to serve.

Scheduled for Jan. 12-22, 2023, the World University Games is an international sports competition for collegiate athletes from across the world taking place every two years in a different location.

More than 1,600 athletes will compete in events such as skating, skiing, hockey, snowboarding and curling, and more than 40,000 people are estimated to be in the region for the games. Attendance is expected to rival that of the 1980 Olympics held in Lake Placid.

Ryan Schneider is pastor of Saranac Lake Baptist Church and lead chaplain for the University Games. He said the event will be a [great evangelistic opportunity](#) for those in the area, including his own congregation.

“If our population is jumping by so much, we have a responsibility to share and reach people with the Gospel,” Schneider said. “My challenge that I laid down is I would love to see all our church members at Saranac Lake to serve at least three of the 10 days of the games in some capacity.”

Much like the Olympics, competing athletes will be housed in four villages across the four geographical areas across the Upstate region where events will be held – Potsdam-Canton, Saranac Lake, Queensbury and Lake Placid.

At each of the four sites, Schneider explained, there will be an evangelical chaplain there to minister to the athletes. All of the chaplains have either competed in high-level athletic competition themselves or ministered as a chaplain during an Olympic games.

Though the chaplains are important, Schneider said it will take more than their work to minister at such a big event. For this reason, the chaplains will also be highlighting and promoting the work of local churches.

Schneider said there is one Southern Baptist church near each of the four areas where events will be held, and supporting them will be a high priority.

“We realize that each community is unique and so the ways that they will reach their communities will be different, and so we’re just empowering the local SBC church and that pastor to really drive the train in their community for the ministry,” Schneider said.

Several other churches in the local Baptist associations – Adirondack and Hudson – will be sending volunteers to help the four churches in their ministry at the games.

Additionally, some mission teams will be traveling from out of state to volunteer with the churches during the games.

Many volunteers helping with the games will be trained to use the [3 Circles evangelism method](#) by representatives from the Baptist Convention of New York.

Ministry plans among the four churches leading the way will include holding worship and evangelistic sermons at off-campus sites around the games, as well as volunteering in an official capacity at the games themselves. Volunteering at the games will include anything from ticketing, ushering, security and hospitality.

One of the four churches located near a site of the games is Lake Placid Baptist Church.

Jim Koenig is the senior pastor of Lake Placid Baptist Church, which is one of the four Southern Baptist churches located near the sites for the games.

Lake Placid members will be serving as official volunteers for the games, Koenig said, and the church will be renting out a local theater downtown to have daily afternoon worship services where they Gospel will be shared.

Koenig said he believes there is always value is simply being present with people.

“We have been praying for the Gospel opportunities God will create for us just because we showed up,” he said.

“Evangelism is no longer an event or an activity that we do quickly, it is a process and serving at the games creates relationships and evangelistic opportunities for us. I think there is great value in showing up and being invested in a community that will reap a harvest.”

Showing up and ministering during athletic competition has always been a part of the DNA of Lake Placid since the 1980 Winter Olympics were held there. The church actually traces its origins to that time, when Southern Baptists began to gather in the area to prepare for the upcoming Olympics.

In addition to smaller athletic events happening regularly, the Upstate New York area is home to the second-oldest Ironman Triathlon events in the North America.

“Serving at these events has given the church a good standing in the community, because we’re seen as good neighbors that are involved in the activities that make our community thrive, and that’s really celebrated,” Koenig said.

Schneider said the games will be an important evangelistic moment for New York churches.

“Through all of these great plans, it all comes down to being Spirit-led and available for God to use us during the games,” Schneider said. “We’re asking people to pray and fast before the games and during the games for us. I would people to pray for boldness in sharing the Gospel.

“In Matthew 28 we are sent out to go to all nations with the Gospel, but this event brings all nations to us, so our responsibility is to share the Gospel and be available to do that. When I look at what God is bringing here, we have a responsibility to share.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Timothy Cockes is a Baptist Press staff writer.

30 years later, Southern Baptists recall Hurricane Andrew as disaster relief turning point

by Tobin Perry

ALPHARETTA, GA (BP) – Mickey Caison and his team of South Carolina Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers were exhausted when they pulled into First Baptist Church of Homestead, Fla., on the evening of Aug. 25, 1992, just one day after Hurricane Andrew barreled into South Florida with winds of around 141 miles per hour.

The team had arrived in the area that morning and spent the day preparing to distribute food to those impacted by the hurricane. After getting to the church, they had a short team meeting and prepared for bed. That’s when the team heard police car sirens rushing toward them. A police officer in full riot gear met Caison outside of the church.

“You can’t be here,” he told Caison.

“We have permission though,” Caison said.

“You don’t understand,” the officer told Caison. “There are hundreds of people outside waiting to steal everything you have. You can’t stay here, and I can’t protect you here.”

That’s when the officer led Caison and the rest of the team to a nearby middle school surrounded by a chain-link fence so the police could provide better protection.

Despite the difficult beginning, the next few weeks would be full of productive ministry for Southern Baptists responding to one of the most damaging natural disasters in American

history. Southern Baptist Disaster Relief (SBDP) volunteers prepared 2.5 million meals to help those affected by Hurricane Andrew. That was the highest total until 2005 in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Caison led SBDP for more than 23 years at the Brotherhood Commission followed by the North American Mission Board (NAMB). He calls the SBDP response to Hurricane Andrew – along with its responses to 9/11, Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Sandy – key turning points for the ministry.

The Southern Baptist response to Hurricane Andrew was one of the SBC's early multi-front disaster responses, deploying volunteer teams to both South Florida and Louisiana. Although Caison says the hurricane's destruction didn't cover a large land mass, it hit high-population areas hard.

"There was massive damage in a high-population area," Caison said. "So, when it came through there and the damage that was done, it afforded us not only a longer response in feeding operations, but it gave us an opportunity to engage more volunteers. It gave a taste of this kind of ministry to people who had not been involved in it."

Caison says that back in 1992, SBDP didn't have the strict requirements for training and background checks, which made it easier to get involved.

"It gave us a larger television presence, which was a public relations opportunity with new news media covering the activity," Caison added. "It didn't just cover the damage and the deaths and injuries, but it moved into the response activity for not only Southern Baptists, but other organizations, as well."

As the director of Florida Baptist Men at the time, Cecil Seagle knew business as usual for disaster relief wouldn't work with the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew. Until then, most disaster relief work centered on feeding units. While Southern Baptists fed more people after Hurricane Andrew than any preceding disaster, Seagle wasn't content with leaving the work there.

John Sullivan, who served as the Florida Baptist Convention's executive director from 1989 to 2015, had made available all non-essential state convention employees to disaster relief work.

"They slept on floors. They slept in hot, hot buildings, and they stayed with us through this entire time," Seagle said. "So, I rejected the notion of one-and-done feeding and we're done because we knew that the devastation was at such a magnitude that we could make an impact."

Seagle dispatched disaster relief teams throughout communities, discovering needs and then networking in the evening with other volunteers about how they might meet those needs. He says Florida Baptists, with the support of all Southern Baptists, were committed to staying and

meeting the needs of South Florida until all the money and volunteers ran out.

“God miraculously gave us crew after crew after crew as we organized,” Seagle said. “And lumber – North Carolina absolutely overwhelmed us with materials that let us stay in there. And hundreds and hundreds of homes were rebuilt over those years.”

Seagle says Florida Baptists learned several important insights through their experience serving South Florida during that time. They took those insights and created the state’s first disaster relief manual, which was critical as the disaster relief ministry in the state grew.

The state initially had 500 trained disaster relief volunteers and a single feeding unit. Realizing through their response to the hurricane that they needed more volunteers and more resources, Florida Baptists began to emphasize disaster relief. In time, the state built one of the most effective disaster responses in the country.

“I thank God for Southern Baptists who came,” Seagle said “Somehow, the Father allowed us to survive all of that and actually to thrive. It was a marker and a half for Kingdom work across South Florida.”

Caison, a South Carolina Baptist pastor at the time, describes it as a spiritual marker in his own life. He had first gotten involved in SBDR when Hurricane Hugo devastated the area north of Charleston in 1989.

Through his church’s response to Hurricane Hugo, Caison had met and started relationships with several leaders at the SBC’s Brotherhood Commission. But during Hurricane Andrew, as he led teams into South Florida, he strengthened those relationships. At one point, he was asked to represent Southern Baptists at the Red Cross headquarters in Miami. In June 1994, he became the first national director of Southern Baptist Disaster Relief, a position he held for 23 years.

Richard Brunson had become the director of North Carolina Baptist Men just a few months before Hurricane Andrew, and the response was the first as the leader of the state’s disaster relief work. Like Caison and Seagle, Brunson says Hurricane Andrew belongs in a long list of defining moments for SBDR.

“In the life of most of us who worked in disaster relief, [Hurricane Andrew] was the first,” Brunson said. “It was the most devastating at the time, and it was different. We had to create new ways of [serving]. I think God inspired all those new ways and gave people vision. God was the one leading in that and bringing us along with how we could serve, in what we needed to do, and what kind of equipment we needed and how we needed to train people so that we could glorify Him in a greater way.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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